

# The Impact of Latino Family Variables on the Sexual Activity of Latino Adolescents: A Mixed-Methods Study

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## Recommended Citation

Barber, Brittany Nicole, "The Impact of Latino Family Variables on the Sexual Activity of Latino Adolescents: A Mixed-Methods Study" (2011). *Dissertations (2009 -)*. Paper 126.  
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THE IMPACT OF LATINO FAMILY VARIABLES ON THE  
SEXUAL ACTIVITY OF LATINO ADOLESCENTS:  
A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,  
Marquette University,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

September 2011

ABSTRACT  
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Researchers' examination of Latino adolescents' cultural values and sexual activity has yielded questions regarding the cultural- and gender-specific attitudes and practices in this area (Deardorff, Tschann, & Flores, 2008). Cultural values include family-related variables such as different aspects of familism, parent-adolescent communication, and parental monitoring, which have been found to decrease adolescents' engagement in other negative activities such as aggressive behavior, (Dishion & McMahon, 1998), substance use (Estrada, Rabow, & Watts, 1982), and juvenile delinquency (Clark & Shields, 1997). Research investigating these risk behaviors has often implicated Latino adolescents' level of assimilation to White, mainstream society as a potential risk factor for higher engagement in negative behaviors, emphasizing the importance of better understanding the cultural context in which Latino youth live and how it may impact their risky behavior.

This dissertation study, therefore, examined the relationship between five Latino family variables (i.e., attitudinal familism, behavioral familism, structural familism, parent-adolescent communication, and parental monitoring), assimilation to White culture, and the sexual activity beliefs and behaviors of Latino adolescents. A mixed-methods project explored and tested the relationships between these variables. Four gender-specific focus groups were conducted with adolescents; data were analyzed using Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Also, 410 Latino youth completed quantitative surveys about their family-related behaviors, attitudes, and sexual activity. Relationships among these variables were tested using correlations and regressions.

Primary findings from the qualitative study indicated that gender differences in Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring behaviors impacts Latina girls' and Latino boys' sexual activity beliefs. Differences observed with regard to gender were such that Latina girls' felt sexual activity was not appropriate for teenagers, whereas the boys felt that it was acceptable for teenagers to engage in sexual activity as long as they used a contraceptive method. Quantitative results indicated parental monitoring and some aspects of familism were found to be related to a decreased likelihood of engaging in sexual activity for the girls and boys. High assimilation to White, mainstream culture was not found to impact sexual activity beliefs or behaviors in the current study.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Brittany N. Barber, M.A.

This dissertation study is foremost dedicated my parents, who have already given me a lifetime of support and love. Momma and Daddy, your guidance, your confidence in me, and your constant belief in my dreams made this study and my graduate degrees possible. Jeremy and Jordan, you helped make this dissertation a reality by asking, “how’s that dissertation study?” and encouraging me to keep going even though I know you still do not know the topic! Thank you, bros, for always keeping your sister grounded and helping me make it through “the program.” Red, Katie, Tiffy, and Sar – thank you for always believing in my goals and blessing me with your friendship and love. You are wonderful women and it is my great fortune to count you as friends! My Gabe – your deep and unwavering belief in my ability to achieve my goals has been one of the biggest blessings of our relationship. My gratitude for your support and love is unending.

This dedication would not be complete without acknowledging my graduate school “family.” Keyona, David, Jacqui, and Becky – you made graduate school fun! Thank you! Your constant support, help, and friendship are irreplaceable. Dr. Edwards, you started out as a terrific advisor and became a trusted mentor and role-model. Thank you for your constant understanding, guidance, and belief in me – I successfully navigated graduate school because of the extra time you were always willing to give. To the rest of the Marquette University CECP Faculty, and especially Drs. Melchert and Fox, thank you for giving me the opportunity to pursue this doctoral degree and for supporting me throughout my journey in your department.

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## **Chapter I: The Impact of Latino Family Variables on the Sexual Activity of Latino Adolescents: A Mixed-Methods Study**

At present, Latinos are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States (Villalba, 2007). Over 45 million Latinos<sup>1</sup> live in the United States, which accounts for over 14% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2007). Further, census data suggests that Latino adolescents are the fastest growing and youngest minority group in the US. In fact, 34% of Latinos are under the age of 18 years old (U.S. Census, 2005). It is becoming ever important for counselors, psychologists, and other service providers to understand the lives of Latino adolescents given the already substantial and increasing number of Latinos in the U.S.

### **Background Context**

Latino adolescents have been found to be at increased risk for greater sexual activity as compared to their peers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2007b), which is particularly concerning given that they are one of the fastest growing populations. Additionally, in youth, any early sexual activity (i.e., sexually activity occurring at age 18 or below for the purposes of this study) can be considered risky given their young age and lack of knowledge and preparation to deal with the consequences that can result from such activity. Specifically, it is clear that sexual activity among adolescents can have serious negative consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancies for all youth (Forste & Heaton, 1988; Holder, Durant, Harris, Daniel, Obeidallah, & Goodman, 2000), and Latino teens appear to be at an increased risk for these consequences. Despite declines in overall adolescent sexual activity over

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “Latino/Latinos” will be used to denote both males and females from Latin descent and it will be specifically stated when “Latino/Latinos” is used to refer to only males of Latin heritage. The terms “Latina/Latinas” will also be used to denote females of Latin descent.

the past decade (Miler, Farrell, Barnes, Melnick, & Sabo, 2005), sexual activity remains a high risk activity to youth, especially those of Latino descent (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwanted Pregnancy, 2011). For example, 75% of male and 64% of female high school seniors of Latino background reported having had sexual intercourse. Data from the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unwanted Pregnancy (NCPTUP) representing teenagers of all ages indicate that 53% of Latino boys and 47% Latina girls have ever had sex (NCPTUP, 2011). Of those reporting that they had had sex, 22% of Latino males and 10% of Latina females reported having had four or more sexual partners (CDC, 2007b).

Other literature suggests that while Latinos may have lower rates of early sexual behavior as compared to African Americans, they typically report higher rates than their European American counterparts. Statistics from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System have consistently documented lower condom use by Latino adolescents than by their African American and White counterparts (Villarruel, Jemmott, Jemmott, & Ronis, 2007). In 2009, only half of the sexually active Latino students reported using a condom the last time they had sex and only 14% reported using any other method of contraceptive such as birth control pills (NCPTUP, 2011). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System statistics in 2009 (NCPTUP, 2011) also demonstrated that Latino students are more likely than their non-Hispanic White and African American peers to report that they did not use a condom the last time they had sex. Of significant concern is that sexual activity and contraceptive use among Latinos adolescents has been thought to be underreported (Flores, Eyre, & Millstein, 1998) in this quickly growing population.

Research has suggested that one protective factor for Latino adolescents who are at particular risk for engaging in sexual activity and experiencing the negative consequences of sexual activity is connection to their families (Adolph, Ramos, Linto, & Grimes, 1995). One of the core values of the Latino culture is *familism* (Coohey, 2001; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Familism has been generally defined in the literature as those attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that give primacy to the family over the individual (Roschelle, 1997). Despite increasing empirical interest in familism, research regarding certain aspects of familism and its influences on the sexual attitudes and behaviors of Latinos has still been underdeveloped.

In addition to familism, two other family-related variables that have been found to be protective for Latino adolescents are parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring. Parent-adolescent communication is the behavior that occurs between a child and his/her parent when they talk with one another and perceive that they can be open and honest in speaking with one another (Barnes & Olson, 1985). Parental monitoring has been defined as a parent's knowledge of their teen's whereabouts and with whom they are spending time (Romero & Ruiz, 2007). These two variables have been found to correlate negatively with Latino adolescents' engagement in risk behaviors such as children's drug use, antisocial behavior, and safety (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). Therefore, it is likely that they will also be related to the risky behavior of engagement in early sexual activity.

In addition to family variables, gender may impact Latino adolescents' sexual activity. For example, Latina girls and Latino boys have been found to differ in their sexual activity, contraceptive use, and experience of negative consequences related to



sexual activity (e.g., pregnancy; CDC, 2007b). In general, data from the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System indicate that boys engage in sexual activity at a slightly higher rate than their female peers and Latino boys (18%) are more likely than Latina girls (10%) to report that they have had four or more sexual partners (NCPTUP, 2011). Additionally, Latina teenagers have been found to use contraceptive methods less often than their male counterparts (NCPTUP, 2011). Therefore, examining the differences between boys and girls will be critical to this study. Finally, Latinos' level of assimilation to White, mainstream society has been found to be related to several risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, delinquent behaviors, and sexual activity (Negy, 1993). Generally speaking, those Latino youth who are more assimilated to White society engage in risky behaviors to a greater extent than those Latino teenagers who report being less assimilated to mainstream, White culture. Therefore, assimilation to White society and other cultural beliefs and practices will be important to consider when investigating how cultural beliefs and practices may impact sexual activity.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Deardorff, Tschann, and Flores (2008) called for a focused examination of Latino cultural values, sexual values, and sexual behaviors. Similarly, Flores, Eyre, and Millstein (1998) identified a lack of literature regarding the cultural and gender-specific sexual attitudes, beliefs, and norms among Latino adolescents. Considering the prevalence of Latino youth engaging in sexual behavior identified in the literature and given the greater risk that Latino adolescents face for sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, and pregnancy due to attenuated contraceptive use, this research is critical. This study sought to explore relationships between Latino cultural values, other family-related

behaviors, and engagement in sexual activity. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the possible relationships between Latino cultural values, family variables, cultural variables, and Latino adolescents' sexual behavior.

Mixed-methodology was chosen for this investigation for two reasons. First, using qualitative methodology allowed this study to explore with greater depth the meaning of family to Latino youth and how their families impact their sexual activity, an area that has been neglected in the current literature (Villaruel, Jemmott, Jemmott, & Ronis, 2007). Second, the concurrent quantitative investigation aggregated the experiences of many Latino adolescents to provide a broader picture of the cultural values of Latino youth and how these are related to their engagement in sexual activity, another area of research that has been underexplored (Edwards, Fehring, Jarrett, & Haglund, 2008). That is, the results of this study provide both a broad overview of how Latino adolescents' views of their families may impact their sexual behavior, as well as a narrative description of this phenomenon, coming from the voices of the youth themselves.

### **Aims and Research Questions of the Dissertation Research**

This dissertation will provide a thorough review of the relevant literature related to Latino cultural values, family-related behaviors, and sexual activity among Latino youth. First, this literature review will generally describe the interaction of family and different cultures. The purpose of describing this literature is to inform the reader about the intersection of the life of the adolescent and his/her family. Next, this paper will provide a comprehensive discussion of one of the main constructs of this dissertation study, familism, which is a core Latino cultural value. The relationship between familism and acculturation, gender, and developmental stage will be explicated in order to provide

a context for how Latino adolescents' different identities are related to their beliefs about their families and to their practice of family-related behaviors. The literature review will draw links that have been made in the current literature between familism and different psychological outcome variables such as academic achievement, psychological symptoms, and problem behaviors. Typical methods of measuring familism among Latinos will also be addressed. Additional Latino cultural values of marianismo and machismo that have been known to relate to familism will then be explored.

From there, this dissertation reviews the second main area of research: sexual activity among adolescents. This review will include defining adolescent health risk behaviors, focusing primarily on the sexual risk behaviors and attitudes. It will cover the prevalence, beliefs, and risks associated with sexual activity for all adolescents and specifically Latinos. A discussion of how the Latino family variables have been studied in relation to early sexual behaviors among Latino adults and adolescents will be provided. Next, connections will be made between how other cultural values such as gender roles and acculturation impact the sexual activity of Latino adolescents. This review of the literature will close with a discussion of areas that would benefit from further research within the field of Latino adolescent sexual activity.

Based on the reviewed literature, this mixed-methods dissertation study will address a few specific areas of research. The overarching topic of inquiry in the investigation is the relationship between the Latino family variables of attitudinal familism, behavioral familism, structural familism, parent-adolescent communication, and parental monitoring and sexual activity beliefs as well as two sexual activity outcomes: whether or not an adolescent has ever had sex and the number of sexual

partners an adolescent has had. Specifically, four main research questions will be addressed: (1) How does familism relate to other family variables that are often seen as protective for youth (Clark & Shields, 1997; Teitelman, Ratcliffe, & Cederbaum, 2008), that is, parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring? (2) What do families mean to Latino adolescents and how do these beliefs influence sexual behaviors? (3) Are there differences in the relationship between the five Latino family variables and sexual activity for Latina girls and Latino boys? (4) What is the influence of adolescents' level of assimilation (i.e., how much they identify with predominately White, mainstream society) on Latino adolescents' cultural values and their sexual activity?

This dissertation will describe the methodology utilized for investigating the possible relationships between the Latino family variables and sexual behavior. The mixed-methods study approach will describe how Grounded Theory methodology was used (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to develop a protocol for focus group interviews and analyze the qualitative data yielded from focus groups conducted with Latino adolescents. Next, an overview will be provided of various statistical procedures used to investigate the quantitative data gathered via adolescents' responses to survey items on the topics of the Latino family variables, assimilation, and sexual activity.

Next, the results of both the qualitative and quantitative investigations will be presented individually. Quantitative results will be presented according to the research questions defined in the methodology section of this paper. Main qualitative themes will be discussed, giving careful attention to the aforementioned research questions.

Finally, a discussion of how the quantitative and qualitative results relate to the current literature will be presented in this paper. The implications of the findings will be

set in the context of the greater psychological literature base and will present how the quantitative and qualitative data converge and diverge in this study, creating both a broad and in-depth perspective of the results of this dissertation. The results from this study and their contribution to the larger body of psychological literature on Latino adolescent health, family-related beliefs, and sexual activity will be explained. A thorough discussion of limitations to this study, implications for prevention programming with Latino youth, and directions for future research will conclude this dissertation.

## **Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

### **Cultural Diversity and Families**

It has been widely recognized that many different social influences impact the psychological development of children and adolescents. Some of these influences have included peers, family, religion, communities, cultural values, and economic/social conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986). One of the influences on child development that has generated a wealth of research and theory is the influence of the family (for a review of how parents shape children's psychological functioning, see Parke & Buriel, 2006). Unsurprisingly, one of the areas of research that has received a considerable amount of attention in the literature is the influence of different parenting practices on children and adolescents.

Keller et al. (2006) described three different types of parenting models: independence, interdependence, and autonomous relatedness. The independent family prioritizes the perception of the individual as separate, autonomous, and self-contained. Each family member is first and foremost a singular unit. The authors described this model as typifying families from urban, educated families in industrialized countries and cities. The interdependent family honors the primacy of the family above that of the individual. Each family member in this model is believed to be important because of their interrelatedness with others and their contributions to the harmonic functioning of the family. Keller and colleagues (2006) proposed that this model of family may typically characterize rural, subsistence-based, mainly farming, families. The final model of parenting that was described by these researchers was autonomous related. This model essentially combines the two aforementioned models and emphasizes the importance of

the individual within the integrated family unit. This model was generally thought to typify the urban, educated, middle-class families in societies that value an interrelated cultural heritage. These three different models illustrate one way of classifying the types of values and beliefs that are passed from parents and children. Keller and colleagues (2006) concluded that different families may emphasize independence or interdependence more than others. The researchers acknowledged that while these models may help to describe certain types of families across the world, cultural variables also play a key role in shaping how parents care for, discipline, reward, teach, and nurture their children (Keller, 2006). While there has been a substantial amount of research about the roles of parents and children and how they interact with one another, there has been considerably less research on what family means to its members and how culture influences that meaning.

Peterson, Steinmetz, and Wilson (2003) argued that aspects of relationships within families and the implications they have for the development of children and adolescents must always be examined from a culturally sensitive perspective. They acknowledged that parent-youth relationships can be studied in one culture and then subsequently explored for generality in other cultures, however, they strongly advocated for the use of constantly trying to identify similarities and differences across cultures. Similarly, Roschelle (1997) wrote that any analysis of family meaning and organization should necessarily include an examination of the impact of cultural elements on the family. Minority families, in particular, must be examined within the context of their ethnic heritage. In the United States, racial and ethnic identification has been found to have a profound impact on family resources and subsequent family organization (Baca

Zinn, 1990). Specifically, Roschelle (1997) argued that minority families are structured differently from White families in three specific ways, which are: they have extended living arrangements, consist of informal social support networks, and typically have female-headed households. To continue, she wrote that these features of minority families were not the result of pathological views or norms, but instead, they were a consequence of macro-structural (i.e., economic disadvantage, lower societal status) forces and cultural preferences.

While not always explicitly acknowledged, many of the theories of diverse families have focused on the strengths of families that seem to have been a result of their individual cultural values and their place in society. Other researchers have asserted that the meaning of family may be taught to children by parents with specific goals and values in mind that vary according to ethnic minority subgroup. Specifically, Halgunseth, Ispa, and Rudy (2006) argued that parental goals are powerful organizers of parental emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. To that end, families from different racial and ethnic backgrounds have been found to have different strengths that perhaps come from a unique set of societal factors, cultural preferences, and individual values held by parents from different ethnic minority subgroups.

For example, Hill (1972) contended that one of the greatest strengths of African American families was their strong kinship ties. There is a great deal of reliance on social support networks for help with finances, child rearing, advice, and household help. Additionally, the mother is revered as the organizer of the household and the provider of emotional and spiritual stability. In Asian American families, strengths have been found in preserving nuclear families and valuing that children respect elders in the family.



Asian children are much more likely to live with both parents than the average American child; eighty-three percent of Asian children under age 18 live with both parents (New Strategist Editors, 2006). As another example, researchers indicated that Native American families are typically characterized by a desire to keep family and religion as central forces in their lives (Bucko, 2007). Further, Bucko (2007) wrote that as the dominant culture has generally deprived native peoples of their right to self-determination with regard to matters of religion and family, these are values that this resilient cultural group maintains as essential to this day. It is clear, then, that all families from the many different racial and ethnic backgrounds face diverse challenges and possess individual strengths that make them distinct (New Strategist Editors, 2006). The psychological research indicates that similar to other ethnic minorities, Latino families also have a distinct set of characteristics that make them a unique population of interest.

### **Latino Family Variables**

Just as there has been a wealth of literature determining the strengths of other racial/ethnic minority families, there has also been a considerable amount of research on Latino families. This is primarily because the family has been considered to be a core value of the Latino culture, and the term *familismo* (familism) was devised to refer to the importance placed on the family by Latinos. In fact, many researchers have gone so far as to report that familism is one of the most important factors influencing the lives of Latinos (Coohey, 2001; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006).

**Familism.** For more than 50 years, familism has been considered a core value of the Latino culture (Grebler, Moore, & Guzman, 1970; Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002; Marin, 1993; Moore, 1970; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal,

Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Familism has been generally defined as an attachment of individuals to their family members (both nuclear and extended) and a strong sense of identification with those family members. Further, familism accounts for intense feelings of reciprocity, loyalty, and solidarity among family members (Triandis, Marin, Betancourt, Lisansky, & Chang, 1982). Of note is that *la familia* (the family) denotes both a structure and idea; that is, the family is not only a structure, but it is also what the family stands for and refers to a way of life for Latinos (Luna et al., 1996). Other researchers have found that familism also means maintaining the family honor by behaving in ways that will be looked upon favorably by the family and by outsiders (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Additionally, valuing being around other family members and spending time with them have also been found to be a part of familistic values (Luna et al., 1996). The term was reportedly first coined in the 1940s to denote the normative commitment of family members to the family and to family relationships (Heller, 1970). One of the earliest and most comprehensive definitions of familism was provided by Burgess, Locke, and Thomes (1963) in their sociological book, *The Family: From Institution to Companionship*. They defined familism as:

- 1) the feeling on the part of all members belonging preeminently to the family group above all other groups and that all other persons are outsiders; 2) complete integration of individual activities for the achievement of family objectives; 3) the assumption that land, money, and other material goods are family property, involving the obligation to support individual members and give them assistance when they are in need; 4) willingness of all members to rally to the support of a member if attacked by outsiders; and 5) concern for the perpetuation of the family

as evidenced by helping adult offspring in the beginning and continuing an economic activity in line with family expectations and in setting up a new household (pp. 35-36).

Although Burgess, Locke, and Thomes (1963) were constructing an ideal of familism that they noticed in rural communities (*n.b.*, two of the five rural families they studied were of Hispanic origin), this term has become one that is most often associated with Latino families. Since the 1960s, the term familism, as it became more descriptive of Latino families, also evolved in definition. More recently, familism has referred to the feeling of closeness, getting along with, and contributing to the well-being of the family (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002). Important to note is that the family is usually considered to include multiple extended relatives, and sometimes includes individuals who are not blood relatives (Keefe, 1984).

There have been some discrepancies in the literature about how to construct the theory of familism. As noted above, sometime after psychologists began to assert familism as a characteristic typical of and unique to Latino families, rather than a sociological construct of rural families, many researchers began to conceptualize familism as those beliefs, feelings, and values which are associated with the Latino family (e.g., Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). Similarly, in 1981, Tamez conceptualized familism as a construct that describes that the family provides emotional and material security to an individual, who is expected to turn to the family rather than people outside the family in a time of need. Since the mid-1980s, however, the theory of familism has become more complex and researchers have noted the inconsistency among psychologists in dealing with this term (Baca Zinn, 1983).

Recently, there has been some agreement among researchers to utilize the conceptualization of familism that is composed of several different dimensions (Baca Zinn, 1998; Lugo-Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). The three dimensions of familism that are most often agreed upon in the literature are: attitudinal, behavioral, and structural (Coohey, 2001; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

*Attitudinal familism.* Attitudinal familism has been described as a cultural value that involves Latinos strong identification with, and attachment to, his or her nuclear and extended families (Cortes, 1995). One of the core components of attitudinal familism is that attention to the family supersedes attention to the individual (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Consequently, fervent feelings of and beliefs in reliability, mutuality, and unity among members of the same family is one of the main features of attitudinal familism (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994).

Researchers have further posited that attitudinal familism is comprised of three specific dimensions: familial obligations, family as referents, and perceived support from family (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin & Perez-Stable, 1987). Familial obligations have been defined as the perceived obligation of family members to provide both material and emotional support to other members of the nuclear and extended family. Family as referents is the perception that members take on the roles of being both attitudinal and behavioral referents for one another (Rodriguez & Kosloski, 1998; Sabogal et al., 1987). An example of using family members as referents is when a family member consults their family as a point of reference when making important decisions. Finally, perceived support from family is the perception that family members are seen as reliable providers of help and support to solve problems. Perceived family support has

been suggested as one of the key components of this value, as evidenced by research with Latino adults (Sabogal et al., 1987) that showed that as assimilation to White culture increased, familial obligations and family as referents decreased in respondents.

Perceived family support scores, however, did not differ by acculturation level, place of birth or growing up, or generation. Latino families serve as natural support systems for their members providing physical, emotional, and social support as well as acting as a buffer against stress (Gloria, Ruiz, & Castillo, 2004). This finding has been replicated numerous times in studies with Latino adults (e.g., Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003), but less research has examined the importance of family support to Latino adolescents.

In an effort to understand family support according to Latino youth, Edwards and Lopez (2006) completed a mixed-methods study of 266 Latino adolescents specifically examining the function of family support. Participants responded to the open-ended question: “What factors do you think contribute to life satisfaction and happiness?” Qualitative data analysis, which included a process of open coding and concept generation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), indicated that the core theme that emerged from this data was that family is necessary for providing support and love. Additionally, a multiple regression analysis examined the main effects of family support and Mexican orientation on life satisfaction. Edwards and Lopez (2006) reported that family support and a Mexican orientation were significant predictors of life satisfaction, which accounted for 28% of the variance in life satisfaction (i.e., change in  $R^2 = .28$ ). Researchers concluded that their results empirically evidenced that family is important in the lives of Mexican American adolescents. While this study had some methodological limitations (e.g., the qualitative data analysis process was not transparently described) and some participant

limitations (e.g., only English-speaking participants were recruited and adolescents were mostly part of educational and cultural programs, perhaps limiting the representativeness of this sample), it was also an important research endeavor as it specifically addressed if and how family support functions for Latino adolescents.

Even though some research has begun to explore the meaning of family support to youth, researchers still recommended that additional studies investigate how familism in adolescents operates as a strength in other areas of functioning. Way and Robinson (2003) similarly suggested that while family support has been clearly defined, the meaning of family support to members of families has yet to be examined. Finally, Lugo-Steidel (2005) noted that while the attitudinal component of familism has recently received greater attention because of its greater complexity, measurement difficulty, and possible relation to psychological functioning, empirical research regarding this aspect of familism is still limited.

***Behavioral familism.*** The second component of familism is the behavioral aspect. This dimension refers to the degree to which families and kin networks exist and interact with one another (Baca Zinn, 1998; Sabogal et al., 1987). Coohy (2001) conceptualized behavioral familism as the actual giving or receipt of support from relatives that family members give and receive, as opposed to the attitudes or beliefs about what other should give or get, even though those behaviors may be based on the attitudes toward their families (Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005). It is important to note here that behavioral familism, while not the same as attitudinal familism, does draw on the same beliefs and values, which is why looking at the physical act of providing support has been distinguished from valuing the support provided by family members. Valenzuela and

Dornbusch (1994) noted that behavioral familism involves multiple levels of attachment between family members and the level of affinity expressed for family members, which is then expressed through actions and behaviors.

Behavioral familism is perhaps best understood through examples. Mindel (1980) indicated that Mexican Americans were involved in a variety of activities that he considered to be behaviors or activities that were indicators of behavioral familism, such as: spending recreational time with family members, providing emergency help when needed, giving advice about situations, and providing other services for family members as well. Some additional behaviors that Latinos demonstrate which tend to indicate a high presence of behavioral familism are: providing and receiving financial and emotional support from relatives, visiting family members, calling family members on the phone, and seeking relatives help for services such as job placement or child care (Lugo Steidel, 2006).

*Structural familism.* Another dimension of familism that has been given a few different names in the literature is the structural or demographic component of familism (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Villarreal, Blozis, & Widaman, 2005). Keefe (1984) offered one of the first conceptualizations of structural familism indicating, based on her findings, that Mexican Americans tend to keep a more “traditional extended family” which included primary and secondary kin as part of the family. Keefe also postulated that Mexican Americans are likely to live near significant numbers of relatives, visit many of them frequently, and reciprocally exchange goods and services with kin. Similarly, Baca Zinn (1983) argued that perhaps contemporary patterns of kinships

among Chicanos can best be explained structurally, rather than by reference to the Mexican cultural heritage.

More recently, Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) defined structural familism as the “spatial and social boundaries within which the behaviors occur and attitudes acquire meaning” (p. 18). Villarreal et al. (2005) defined this dimension as the actual size (e.g., number of people considered to be in the family) and intactness (e.g., how often family members are in contact with other members) of the family. Lugo Steidel (2005) defined structural familism as the number of nuclear and extended family members in close geographical proximity to an individual’s home. Finally, Coohey (2001) conceptualized structural familism as the size of the family and the proximity of those family members. Typically, Latinos have been found to have a large network of extended family relatives that live within close proximity to one another (Keefe, 1984; Markides, Martin, & Gomez, 1983; Mindel, 1980).

To summarize, the construct of familism has been theorized to be multidimensional. Attitudinal familism refers to the belief that the needs and desires of the family supersede those of the individual. Behavioral familism is the component which refers to the behaviors that indicate those beliefs and values of the family. Finally, the structural component refers to the number of family members that reside close to an individual. Although the different aspects of familism have not been explored as often in adolescents, some studies have indicated that familism generally is present and important for Latino youth. For example, in a study with adolescents from Latino and European descents, Fuligni et al. (1999) indicated that Latino adolescents adhered more strongly to the values of respect for the family and future obligations to the family as compared to



those adolescents from European descent. Another study (Ramirez et al., 2004), found that Hispanic adolescents familism scores were significantly greater than those of their Anglo American counterparts ( $F(3, 1073) = 6.92, p < .001$ ) when a self-developed scale of seven items that were purported to measure familism was administered to over 1000 Hispanic and Anglo adolescents. Taken together, the majority of the research on familism has been done with Latino individuals because of the evidence in the literature that this cultural variable is present for Latino adults and adolescents; however, familism is a construct that was partly defined by comparing Latinos to members of other cultures and there has recently been a resurgence in the literature of researchers attempting to ascertain if familism is present in other cultures as well.

*Familism as a cultural variable unique to Latinos.* Luna et al. (1996) noted that one of the greatest inconsistencies in the psychological literature on the topic of familism is whether the phenomenon is characteristic of all cultural groups, to varying degrees, or if it is a phenomenon that is unique only to Latinos. There has been a large body of research that has attempted to address this exact research aim with researchers finding evidence to support both theories. On the one side, a number of researchers have indicated that Latinos tend to have higher rates of familism than other racial/ethnic minorities or White majority culture. In one of the first studies of familism values among Mexican American and Anglo Americans, Keefe (1984) designed a scale of nine items to assess the level of “closeness” (which has been since described as an aspect of familism; Lugo-Steidel & Contreras, 2003) participants felt with their family members. She found that while both groups highly valued the family and the extended family network, Mexican Americans were different on one fundamental aspect in defining “closeness,”

which was their greater need for the consistent presence of family members. Specifically Mexican Americans reported higher agreement with statements that the family should care for the aged and that relatives are helpful in times of need. She also reported that Latinos had higher rates of visiting with family members as compared to Anglos.

Similarly, another study with Mexican American, African American, and Anglo adults found that Mexican Americans had the highest rate of kin interaction (measured by the number of kin interacted with at least monthly) among the three groups (Mindel, 1980). Keefe, Padilla, and Carlos (1979) found that even when controlling for the number of kin living in geographical proximity to the participant, Mexican Americans were more likely to seek support from relatives, while Anglo Americans were more likely to seek support from friends. This study suggested that for Mexican Americans, family kin are the primary source of emotional support, which is one of the key components of attitudinal familism. The above study was replicated by Markides, Boldt, and Ray (1986), who also found that the family was the dominant source of advice and help for Mexican Americans in their sample.

In one of the earlier studies of the presence of familism in Mexican American and Anglo American adults, large differences on a measure of familism existed between 161 Anglos and 434 Mexican Americans across all levels of education. Even when levels of education were controlled for, the Mexican American individuals, appeared, as a whole, to be distinctly more familistic than the Anglos (Farris & Glenn, 1976). Congruently, a 1980 study by Buriel and Rivera of 86 Anglo- and 80 Mexican-American high school students revealed that Mexican Americans had higher familism scores than Anglo students (as measured by four self-developed items rated on a 4-point, Likert-type scale;

Cronbach's alphas were reported:  $\alpha = .74$  for Anglo Americans and  $.82$  for Mexican Americans). They related familism to two other variables: locus of control and family income. Mexican American adolescents tended to endorse an internal locus of control (i.e., they had control over their beliefs and actions) with regard to respect for self and others, while Anglo Americans were more internal on political topics. Buriel and Rivera (1980) also found that Mexican American families had lower incomes than Anglo families. Despite the general trend for lower incomes in Mexican American families, Buriel and Rivera (1980) noted that they had fairly representative samples, so they concluded that differences in familism between ethnic groups existed on a broader level.

In a similar vein, Negy (1993) also asserted that ethnicity differences exist in familism. In his study of 61 Hispanic American adults and 62 Anglo American adults, he found that Hispanic Americans scored significantly higher on a measure of familism (Family Attitude Scale; Ramirez, 1967, 1969) than did Anglo Americans. Hispanic Americans typically endorsed placing greater value on being loyal to one's family, being strict in child rearing, having respect for elders, and being religious. Another study of familism across cultures looked at caregivers of developmentally disabled adults (Magaña, Schwartz, Rubert, & Szapocznik, 2006). Researchers found that Hispanic caregivers accepted and fulfilled their care-giving role without complaint, hypothesized to be due to higher familism values. The same was not true of Anglo caregivers.

In concert with the studies presented above which have found that there are differences in familism among Latinos and Anglo Americans, Luna et al. (1996) indicated that while familism exists for Anglo Americans, there are aspects of it that are fundamentally different than how it is defined for Mexican American individuals. These

researchers argued that while attitudinal familism and behavioral familism remains somewhat similar in Anglo and Mexican American families, it is the kinship structure, or structural familism, that is strikingly different. This is similar to the assertion made by Keefe (1984) more than 20 years earlier. Luna et al. (1996) extended this theory, however, and argued that a cross-culturally equivalent definition and measure of familism for the study of Anglo Americans was critical for the continued understanding of families cross-culturally.

In their study of 29 Spanish-speaking Mexican American, 30 bilingual Mexican American, and 41 Anglo American adults, Luna et al. (1996) noted both similarities and differences in response styles to a familism questionnaire (which was termed “family solidarity” in order to avoid using a term that has been popularly associated with only Latino culture). They used the Family Scale which was comprised of 27 Likert-type items which had been compiled from various other familism sources. Internal consistencies were not reported for the present sample or for any other samples. Additionally, this measure does not appear to be used in any other places throughout the literature base. In their analysis of the results, they first noted that Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans and bilingual Mexican Americans scored significantly higher (more family solidarity values) than the Anglo Americans. There were no significant differences in familism scores due to Spanish-speaking only or bilingual Mexican Americans. Despite these general differences that existed on the whole measure, they also did an item analysis which revealed some similarities in Anglos and Mexican Americans on aspects of familism. For example, both Anglos and Mexican Americans reported a general willingness to consider accepting help from outsiders. Surprisingly, the other two items

that did not yield any significant differences between the responses of Anglo and Mexican Americans were related to living within close physical proximity to family members. As noted above, one of the aspects of familism for Mexican Americans that has been well-documented in the literature is that they live in close proximity to one another (i.e., structural familism); therefore, it was surprising that Mexican Americans did not endorse feeling it necessary for children to live close to family at a statistically significant higher rate than Anglo Americans.

While this study (Luna et al., 1996) yielded some interesting similarities and differences about familism among Mexican and Anglo Americans, some important limitations to note are the particularly small sample size, the lack of validation and reliability of the measure used, and the apparent goal of the researchers to “find” similarities on three items of the 27-item scale that yielded significantly different total scores between the two populations in order to support their hypotheses. One important theory that the authors did emphasize, however, was that continued research on the presence of familism in ethnically diverse and majority cultures is necessary to better understand how familism operates among different families.

As noted above, families have been found to be important for children and adolescents in all cultures. Despite the fact that familism was originally conceptualized as a characteristic of all families to varying degrees (Luna et al., 1996), the assumption in the literature for numerous years has been that familism is primarily applicable to those of Hispanic descent (Schwartz, 2007). Somewhat contrary to the plethora of research (e.g., that has been presented above) that has suggested that familism is a cultural variable unique only to those from Hispanic or Latin descent, however, more recent

studies have suggested that familism, as a holistic concept, is present for members of other racial or ethnic minority groups and for White individuals. Specifically, Gaines et al. (1997) found that familism was present in cultures other than Latin-based cultures. Research indicated that familism was highly endorsed by Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans. It was hypothesized that these cultures had higher scores of familism because they were collectivistic, as opposed to the individualistic, European American culture.

In 2007, Schwartz administered 318 Hispanic, non-Hispanic White, and non-Hispanic Black young adults the Attitudinal Familism Scale (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). He reported that there were few significant or noteworthy differences in his analyses neither of the factor structure of familism for each ethnic group, the mean differences in endorsement of familism for each ethnic group, nor the differences in associations of familism with collectivism and interdependence between Hispanics and other ethnic groups. Schwartz concluded that familism (at least measured by the Attitudinal Familism Scale) may take similar forms in Hispanic and non-Hispanic subgroups. Further, he recommended that future studies use larger and more diverse samples to fully ascertain the applicability of familism across ethnic groups.

Even though the current research is divided on whether familism is a value that is present for individuals from ethnic or racial backgrounds besides Latinos, it is clear that familism is a belief highly valued in Latino culture (Coohey, 2001; Gaines et al., 1997, Negy, 1993; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006). Further, when familism is found to be present in other cultural populations, it manifests differently than it does for Latinos. Specifically, it is apparent that familism is a combination of certain beliefs, behaviors,

and structures for Latinos (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Given that familism is highly valued by Latinos and given that it has been often cited in the literature as a construct unique to this population, it can be concluded that familism is a unique and valuable construct to explore for Latinos.

***Relationship between acculturation and familism.*** Familism has been explored in relation to many other cultural variables, one of which is acculturation. Acculturation has had various definitions since the concept was first used in the psychological literature. One of the earliest conceptualizations of acculturation described it as a sociological process in which cultural change resulted from contact between two autonomous and independent cultural groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). More recently, acculturation has been defined as the process of cultural involvement involving two subcomponents: (a) the extent to which the acculturating individual or group retains culture-of-origin involvement and (b) the extent to which host culture involvement is established (Berry, 1980; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008). As such, acculturation is an umbrella term to describe many ways that an individual might be connected to his or her culture of origin, as well as another culture. It is necessary to distinguish acculturation from assimilation, because these terms are often used interchangeably. Assimilation is one component of acculturation, and is the amount that an individual identifies with White, mainstream society (Berry, 2003). A number of studies have compared the process of assimilation and its relationship with familism (Herrera, Lee, Palos, & Torres-Vigil, 2008; Negy, 1993; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008). The widely supported hypothesis in the literature theorizes that there is an inverse relationship between assimilation (i.e., being low on the

amount that individuals have assimilated to White, majority culture; Fridrich & Flannery, 1995; Vega et al., 1993; 1995) and attitudinal familism. Specifically, higher degrees of assimilation are associated with lower levels of familism beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes are associated with lower levels of assimilation.

Researchers hypothesize that this inverse relationship exists due to familism being a belief that is strongly associated with the Latino culture. Therefore, the more one becomes assimilated to White culture, the less likely he/she may ascribe to the particular culture value of familism. A number of studies support this hypothesis. For example, in one study of 66 adult Mexican American caregivers, Herrera, Lee, Palos, and Torres-Vigil (2008) found that there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between assimilation and familism (Spearman's  $\rho = -.531, p < .0005$ ).

In order to better define acculturation for Mexican Americans and understand its relationship to family values, Negy (1993) completed a study with 62 Anglo and 61 Mexican Americans (*n.b.*, in the present study "acculturation" is used as a synonym for assimilation, rather than a bidirectional model of acculturation as described above). He argued that acculturation was more often than not assessed primarily with language preference and generation status, two constructs which were criticized for being "proxy" measures of acculturation from which one's acculturation is inferred instead of being assessed specifically. In an attempt to expand research on acculturation and better understand its relationship with family values, Negy administered the Family Attitude Scale (Ramirez, 1967, 1969) and the popularly used Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican-Americans (ARSMA; Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980) to participants in order to assess any relationship that may exist between two. The Family Attitude Scale has 33



statements that were assessed on a 4-point, Likert-type scale; high scores indicating greater endorsement of Mexican culture. The ARMSA is a 20-item rating scale in which each item was assigned a value from 1 (very Mexican) to 5 (very Anglicized). Internal consistencies for these scales were not reported.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed in order to determine if ethnicity was significantly associated with scores on the Family Attitude Scale. First, Negy (1993) reported that Mexican Americans scored higher than Anglo Americans (indicating a greater endorsement of the values) on four of the subscales: loyalty to family, strictness of child rearing, respect for adults, and religiosity. Secondly, in examining the relationship between familism, as measured by the Family Attitude Scale, and acculturation, the results of Negy's standard multiple regression yielded that subscale scores on the Family Attitude scale did not significantly correlate with the acculturation scores. An analysis of means indicated that while lower scores on the acculturation measure were typically associated with higher scores on the familism measure (which, as was reported above, is how acculturation and familism are typically thought to be related), there were no significant correlations. Negy concluded, then, that the Family Attitude Scale may not be a good substitute for a measure of acculturation; however, measures of acculturation are likely better suited to measuring this construct than proxy measures such as language preference or generational status.

Limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size, therefore limiting the power of the statistical analyses. Also, the subsample of Mexican Americans was relatively homogenous and there may not have been enough within group variance to detect meaningful differences. Nonetheless, this study raises important questions about

the typically accepted relationship between familism and acculturation. The two constructs may not be as concretely related as other researchers have hypothesized (e.g., Herrera, Lee, Palos, and Torres-Vigil, 2008).

In another study designed to examine the relationship between familism and acculturation (*n.b.*, again, “acculturation” is used as a synonym for “assimilation”), Cortes (1995) assessed differences in familism among two generations of families from Puerto Rico. Participants were 100 husband-wife pairs (90% of whom had been born in rural Puerto Rico and were primarily educated there) and one adult child of those pairs and that child’s spouse (half of whom were born and educated in Puerto Rico; the other half having been born and educated in the United States) accounting for 400 participants total. She measured familism using the five items from Sabogal et al. (1987) measuring attitudinal familism focusing primarily on the dimensions of familism related to familial obligations and support from the family. She also measured education, in number of years, knowledge of English, language use, and ethnic identity. Despite predictions that familism would vary according to acculturation (as measured by proxy through English language use), Cortes (1995) reported that education was the variable most strongly related to beliefs in familism for both the younger and older generations. Education consistently diminished the beliefs of familism within the two family generations and that the more education family members had, the more they moved away from traditional patterns dictated by their culture. This may have been because education was a vehicle through which they became aware of belief systems that were different from their own culture-of-origin beliefs. Interestingly, the education of the two family generations took

place in different social, historical, and cultural settings; still, however, this appeared to be the greatest influence of familism.

The major limitation of Cortes' (1995) study was that she measured relatively few other variables that may have influenced familism and did not utilize any standardized measure of ethnic identity, acculturation, or assimilation. Additionally, this study was unable to draw causation, so it is unclear whether migrants' beliefs in familism differ from those who did not migrate to the United States. It could be that those who migrate tend to hold less familistic values than non-migrants. Given these results, however, additional studies of acculturation and familism were recommended for future research.

Similar to Cortes' (1995) study finding that education was related to level of familism beliefs, Romero, Robinson, Farish Haydel, Mendoza, and Killen (2004) designed an investigation assessing associations between familism, language preference (as a measure of acculturation), and education in Mexican American mothers and their children. They found that in mothers and children of Mexican descent (in the fourth grade;  $n = 219$ ), higher familism was significantly, positively related with a higher level of household education; that children who preferred to use both English and Spanish, or English alone, had higher familism scores than those who preferred Spanish; and that there were no significant differences in child familism based on language preference differences between the parent and the child. All three findings were contrary to their hypotheses that greater degrees of assimilation to White culture would be negatively correlated with lower familism levels. These results called into question the conventional wisdom that assimilation is negatively related to familism. Romero et al. (2004) also reported that the retention of cultural values may be related to positive outcomes in youth

and encouraged future researchers to examine the protective influences of cultural maintenance and biculturalism in longitudinal studies in relation to the physical and mental health of youth.

Another study designed to assess the relationship between familism and acculturation was conducted by Smokowski, Rose, and Bacallao (2008). Besides just examining familism (using seven items originally designed by Gil et al., 2000;  $\alpha = .87$  for adolescents and parents), they also measured the constructs of parent-adolescent conflict using the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire-20 (CBQ-20; Robin & Foster, 1989;  $\alpha = .89$  for all participants), acculturation conflicts using a 4-item scale developed by Vega, Alderete, Kolody, and Aguilar-Gaxiola (1998;  $\alpha = .76$  for adolescents and  $.87$  for parents), and family dynamics using the FACES-II (Olson, 1989) which has two subscales: family cohesion, which is the emotional bonding of the family ( $\alpha = .77$  for adolescents and  $\alpha = .81$  for parents), and family adaptability, which is the family's ability to change its power structure, roles, and rules in response to situational demands ( $\alpha = .82$  for adolescents and  $.85$  for parents). They evaluated acculturation in terms of involvement in culture-of-origin and involvement in U.S. culture. In their analysis of 402 parent-adolescent pairs, they found that adolescent U.S. cultural involvement was not significantly related to family cohesion, adaptability, or familism, but was significantly inversely related with adolescent-reported parent-adolescent conflict. Additionally, Smokowski et al. (2008) reported that the adolescents' culture-of-origin involvement was associated with higher levels of family cohesion, adaptability, and familism. Therefore, while being acculturated to U.S. society was not associated with decreased familism, increased familism was associated with high involvement in culture-of-origin activities.

Results from the Smokowski et al. (2008) study evidenced that U.S. cultural involvement was a cultural asset generally related to higher family cohesion, adaptability, and familism, and lower parent-adolescent conflict. These results contribute to the debate about whether higher assimilation really is associated with lower familism for Latino adolescents because they found that while having more culture-of-origin was positively related to family cohesion, adaptability, and familism, they did not find that greater involvement in U.S. cultural activities necessarily related to lower familism, and in fact, it was related to higher familism. Similar to Smokowski et al. (2008), Rodriguez and Kosloski (1998) found that in a sample of 182 Hispanics from Puerto Rican descent, two dimensions of attitudinal familism (familial obligations and support from relatives) were positively related to acculturation (i.e., assimilation to White culture), and the third dimension of attitudinal familism (family as referents) was not related to assimilation. This was one of the only studies that separated the multiple dimensions of attitudinal familism in the study of its relationships with assimilation and the authors urged future research to attempt to use more sensitive and specific measures of familism and acculturation (both assimilation to White culture, and maintenance of culture-of-origin) in order to determine the relationships between these variables.

Early research exploring familism and assimilation asserted that greater familism attitudes and behaviors were associated with an attenuated identification with White, mainstream society. More recent studies, however, have called into questions this widely-accepted relationship in the psychological literature. Given that at least a few studies have found that higher familism beliefs and behaviors have not been associated with decreased identification with Anglo orientations, the relationship between these variables is unclear.

Additional psychological research needs to explore the relationship between familism and assimilation, especially for Latino adolescents of varying levels of bidirectional acculturation. Additionally, future studies should utilize more sophisticated measures of acculturation (e.g., the ARSMA-II which has a scale that specifically assesses Anglo orientation, or assimilation) in order to assess this construct more fully.

***Gender and familism.*** There have been a few studies that have differentiated between the experiences of male and female Latino adolescents in their families. As part of his study, Negy (1993) assessed gender differences on a scale of familism (Family Attitude Scale; Ramirez, 1967, 1969). He found that adult Latinos scored significantly higher than Latinas on separation of sex roles (i.e., believing that male and females carried out very different roles and functions for the family) and male superiority.

More recently, efforts have been made among researchers to determine if any gender differences exist for male Latinos and female Latinas and their experiences of familism. In one study of 534 Mexican adolescents (mean age = 13.35, males = 235), Bush, Supple, and Lash (2003) sought to understand the influence of gender on adolescents' sense of familism, parental monitoring, and self-esteem. Familism was measured by the Bardis Familism Scale (Bardis, 1959;  $\alpha = .63$  for females and  $.61$  for males) which consists of five Likert-type items tapping into family responsibility and primacy.

Researchers reported that there were differences in the influences of gender on familism (as determined by hierarchical regression models), but similarities existed as well (Bush, Supple, and Lash (2003). For both boys and girls, the age of the adolescent and parental education level were both significantly correlated with familism scores such

that younger adolescents reported higher familism ( $r = -.25, p < .05$ ) and higher parental education was related to lower familism scores among the adolescents (for paternal education level  $r = -.14, p < .05$ ; for maternal education level  $r = -.16, p < .05$ ). When identifying the differences between genders, they stated that for male's sense of familism, parental influence seemed to be less direct. Maternal and paternal education negatively predicted boys' familism scores, while perceptions that their parents served as sources of guidance were positive predictors of familism for boys. Mexican girls who perceived their mothers and fathers having legitimate authority over them and as facilitating connections between family members reported higher levels of familism. Bush, Supple, and Lash (2003) ultimately concluded that additional research dissecting the differences between male and female adolescents is critical to better understanding the processes underlying familism development and maintenance among Latino adolescents.

As another example of empirically-based gender differences in aspects of familism, Romero and Ruiz (2007) reported that in their sample of 56 Latino adolescents, males reported higher family proximity (i.e., spending more time with family members) than females. They also reported that typically girls were less satisfied with parental relationships than boys, but that girls tended to report higher rates of parental monitoring. They hypothesized that the greater extent to which Latinas are monitored by their parents (e.g., parents knowing where their daughters are, with whom, etc.) may be related to the less satisfying parental relationships. It is clear that additional research aiming to understand divergent parenting strategies among Latino parents, depending on the gender of their child, and how those practices affect adolescents, is critical to the clearer understanding of the role of parents and families in the lives of Latino adolescents.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate the need to further investigate how familism and parental monitoring may function differentially for girls and boys, especially in relation to the possible attenuation of risk behaviors. Romero and Ruiz (2007) stated that the gender of the adolescent is an important consideration in future studies about familism, especially considering the unique culturally bound gender roles (e.g., marianismo and machismo, described above) and expectations that these adolescents also face depending on these roles.

*Issues in the measurement of familism.* It has been noted in the field that one of the greatest deficiencies in the familism literature is the inconsistency with which this construct is measured (Luna et al., 1996). Numerous researchers have proposed many items, variables, and instruments that are purported to measure familism, and upon analyzing individual items, there are consistencies among them; however, researchers are continually creating measures based on varying definitions of familism and rarely give mention to measurement development issues such as internal reliabilities, external validity, internal validity, population characteristics, and appropriate uses. Luna et al. (1996) also noted that measures have ranged from simple to complex with some considering structural familism alone as a measure of familism by focusing predominantly on factors such as frequency of visitation with kin members. Other researchers have started to view familism as a multidimensional construct and have started measuring it as such (e.g., Coohey, 2001; Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). In addition, numerous scales have been devised to measure familism. These scales have been normed on varying populations (e.g., Mexican Americans, Anglo Americans, Latinos, Puerto Ricans, etc.) and it is not clear if they are also for use with members of



different racial/ethnic groups or if they are culture-specific. Given the wide array of inconsistencies, the examples given below of various ways to measure familism will represent the most typical ways of assessing familism in Latino and other populations presented in the literature.

*Behavioral and structural familism.* Across the numerous studies quantitatively assessing familism in Latino populations, behavioral and structural familism measures are often treated as a proxy for attitudinal familism. That is, often times researchers will ask participants, “How many people live within a one-hour drive from you?” in order to measure proximity of family members (i.e., a part of structural familism), but they will then assert that a greater number of kin living in close proximity positively correlates with higher attitudinal familism values. Studies that have done the clearest and most valid measurement of behavioral and structural familism separate these two dimensions from attitudinal familism and from each other.

For example, Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) measured behavioral familism with a single variable: the number of times, per week, that adolescents saw or talked on the telephone with adult relatives who did not live with them (on a six-point frequency scale). They measured structural familism with another single variable, the number of adult relatives living within an hour’s drive of the adolescent’s home (ranging on a six-point scale from none to 20 or more). Additionally, Villarreal, Blozis, and Widaman (2005) measured the structural dimension of familism by asking participants the number of people they considered to be in their families (i.e., size of family) and how often family members are in contact with other members (i.e., intactness of family). Behavioral familism has also been measured by: how many times participants have given financial

resources to kin, the number of times participants have visited relatives in the last week, the number of times participants call family members on the phone, and the number of times that participants seek relatives out for emotional support (Lugo Steidel, 2006).

*Quantitative measures of attitudinal familism.* While behavioral and structural familism are relatively straightforward to measure, assessing levels of attitudinal familism have been much more complex and divergent in the literature, perhaps due to the varied definitions of this construct. Attitudinal familism has been measured with various scales for well over 40 years. Some of the original scales were developed before the construct of familism was even well defined, and in fact, the scales were used in order to better delineate the construct (e.g., Ramirez, 1967, 1969; Sabogal et al., 1987). The scales that are most often used in the literature to assess attitudinal familism are the Sabogal et al. (1987) familism items and the *Attitudinal Familism Scale* (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003). A third measure of familism has recently been developed by Knight et al. (in press), the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS), which includes a familism subscale. This measure has begun to gain popularity among researchers investigating Latino cultural values among youth, because it has been normed with Mexican American adolescents. Therefore, the Sabogal et al (1987) items, the Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) scale, and the MACVS (Knight et al., in press) will be reviewed below as examples of reliable and valid measures of familism; however, it should be said that these measures are not representative of all the familism measures (or items) that are present in the current literature. As briefly noted earlier, however, these other measures of familism often use a few items from previously published studies and spend relatively little time and effort reporting measurement statistics for those scales.

In one of the first measures of what is now considered attitudinal familism, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable (1987) developed a list of items based on the previous measures of Bardis (1959) and Triandis, Marin, Betancourt, Lisansky, & Chang (1982). Respondents ranked each of the 15 items on a five-point, Likert-type scale so that higher scores indicated greater endorsement of familism. Items were available in English or Spanish. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was utilized and yielded three conceptually clear factors with a total of 14 items: familial obligations (six items which accounted for 27.7% of the total variance; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ), perceived support from the family (three items which accounted for 10.9% of the total variance; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .70$ ), and family as referents (five items accounted for 9.8% of the total variance; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .64$ ). The factor structure of this scale offered the original conceptualization of familism as comprising of the three parts listed above. Besides the reliabilities offered above, the validity of the scale was also tested by correlating results with participants' responses on a measure of acculturation. Because familism was negatively correlated to acculturation, the measure was deemed valid due to the typically expected inverse relationship between those two constructs.

This scale has been used by numerous other researchers, in part and full for empirical research purposes. It has also been one of the sources for other investigators in measurement development on which to base their items. As just one example of the many studies that have used Sabogal et al.'s (1987) scale in its entirety, Cortes (1995) in her study of Puerto Rican families administered all 14 items to Latino older and younger adult couples. She found a similar factor structure, and revealed a Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$  for her sample. She reported choosing to utilize this measure because of its focus on the

different dimensions of attitudinal familism, particularly related to familial obligations and support from the family.

The next familism scale to be addressed is the *Attitudinal Familism Scale* (AFS) developed by Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003). It was composed of original items and adaptations of scale items developed by Bardis (1959); Sabogal et al. (1987); Cuellar, Arnold, and Gonzalez (1995); Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999); and others. The scale was scored on a 10-point Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating higher level of agreement with the statement. They used a wide-range Likert-type scale because this scale was to be used with Latinos who have been noted to have an extreme response style (Marin, Gamba, & Marin, 1992). Items were available in Spanish and English.

The AFS (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) scale was developed on a sample of 127 Latino adults. A four-factor structure emerged from a principal components factor analysis with oblimin rotation. The four factors accounted for 51.23% of the variance on the 18 items. The resulting factor structure closely approximated the factors that the researchers had in mind when developing the scale items. The factors were: Familial Support (i.e., the belief that family members have an obligation to offer emotional and financial support to other members), Familial Interconnectedness (i.e., the belief that family members must keep in close emotional and physical contact with other family members), Familial Honor (i.e., the belief that it is an individual's duty to uphold the family name), and Subjugation of Self for Family (i.e., the belief that a person must be submissive and yield to the family. Reliabilities were reported using Cronbach's alpha; for the overall scale  $\alpha = .83$ , for familial support  $\alpha = .72$ , for familial interconnectedness  $\alpha = .69$ , for familial honor  $\alpha = .68$ , and for subjugation of self for family  $\alpha = .56$ . In his

dissertation, in order to improve the reliability of the Subjugation of Self for Family subscale, Lugo Steidel (2006) added two additional items to measure that construct. In his sample of 129 Latinos, results indicated that the addition of the two items effectively increased its reliability (Cronbach's alpha improved from .56 to .68).

In addition to testing reliability of the scale, validity for the AFS (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003) was tested by the original authors by conducting correlations between all familism scores and scores on a measure of acculturation, generational status, and exposure to U.S. variables. As the research presented above indicated, not all studies have found that familism is negatively correlated with assimilation to White culture; however, most researchers continue to accept this theory and use it as a way of validating familism measures. Given this, Lugo Steidel & Contreras (2003) reported construct validity for the AFS as indicated by its significant negative correlation with acculturation to White society (assimilation;  $r = -.26$  for the overall scale). Both Familial Interconnectedness and Familial Honor were also significantly negatively correlated with acculturation. Familial Support and Subjugation of Self for Family did not significantly correlate with linear acculturation scores. Results showed that first-generation participants adhered to overall familism and Familial Honor more strongly than did second-generation participants, which was expected.

Finally, a measure of attitudinal familism has been developed as a part of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS) by Knight et al. (in press). The MACVS was developed based on items generated from focus groups of Mexican American adolescents, mothers, and fathers from four different areas: an urban center, a suburban area, a rural mining town, and a Mexican border town in the southwest. These

were selected to provide a broad representation of Mexican Americans' perceptions of culturally-related values. The MACVS consists of 50 items which are measured on a 5-point, Likert-type scale where responses range from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). There are 16 items that assess the three familism subscales: Familial Support, Familism Obligations, and Familism Referents. These three subscales directly overlap with Sabogal and colleagues' (1987) early conceptualization of familism, and Knight et al. (in press) indicated that focus groups of the mothers, fathers, and adolescents also reflected these three emphases within familism as a broad construct. The subscales were defined: familial support measures the desirability to maintain close relationships and obtain/give emotional support, familial obligations measures the importance of tangible care-giving, and familial referents assesses the reliance on communal interpersonal reflection to define the self (Knight et al., in press). Internal consistency of these subscales was measured using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. For the adolescent, mother, and father reports, coefficient alphas were: for familial support, .67, .58, and .60, respectively; for familism referents, .61, .63, and .53, respectively; and for familism referents, .61, .63, and .53, respectively. Internal consistency for the whole MACVS scale was .89 for adolescents, .87 for mothers, and .75 for fathers.

Further analyses conducted by Knight and his colleagues (in press) revealed that all three of the familism subscales were significantly associated with immigrant status for the youth such that adolescents born in Mexico scored significantly higher on the subscales compared to adolescents born in the United States. Construct validity of this scale of familism was assessed via subscales being generally positively correlated with measures of ethnic socialization, social support, parental acceptance, and parental

monitoring, which was expected. The three familism scales also correlated positively with the Mexican orientation for adolescents,  $r_s = .22-.29$ .

Even though the MACVS (in press) measure is novel to the field, it has already been used in other studies with Latinos. German, Gonzales, and Dumka (2009) reported a Cronbach's alpha for .86 for their sample of Mexican American adolescents. Similarly Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado (2005) reported an internal consistency of  $\alpha = .84$  in a sample of Mexican American youth. Additionally, in a study of 209 Latina young women, Bettendorf and Fischer (2009) reported an alpha level of .88. Further research is needed with this measure with diverse Latino youth to determine its applicability across subgroups of Latinos and its utility with young Latino adolescents. It is clear from this review that there are a number of reliable and valid quantitative measures of attitudinal familism, but less is known about attitudinal familism from a qualitative perspective.

*Qualitative studies of attitudinal familism.* While there are serious limitations to the measurement of familism as a quantitative variable, there are even greater limitations in understanding familism qualitatively. The primary reason for the limitation in qualitative understanding of familism is not due to inconsistencies in measurement, however, rather it largely due to the dearth of literature that has investigated the conceptualization of familism qualitatively. In one of the few qualitative studies investigating adolescents' understanding of and adherence to familism, Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) interviewed 12 adolescents and 14 parents from 10 undocumented Mexican families living in the United States. Grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2000) was utilized by the researchers and they provided a transparent description of their

data collection, analysis, and theory formation processes. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how familism and the maintenance of cultural traditions related to the “costs of getting ahead” (i.e., immigrating to the United States, having both parents employed, residing further away from family members, etc.). Analysis of the interviews revealed that adolescents and parents conceptualized familism as an important cultural value that emphasized mutual obligations between family members and encompassed respeto (i.e., that adolescents were to respect their parents’ decisions). The researchers found that after immigration, familism values took one of two paths: either familism was reinforced as parents and adolescents worried about each other’ new adjustment processes, or familism was harder to maintain because of the loss of extended family networks in Mexico and a lack of family together-time in the United States.

As noted above, Latino adolescents have been found to endorse that aspects of familism are important to them. In another qualitative analysis of Latino adolescents’ perceptions of their families, Edwards and Barber (2008) reported that two of the most salient traits of their families were closeness and unity. Participants were 15 Latino adolescents who self-identified as Latino, Hispanic, or by a specific Latin ethnicity or nationality (e.g., Mexican). Grounded theory methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used to qualitatively analyze the 15 semi-structured interviews. These adolescents endorsed a strong sense of attachment to parents, siblings, and extended family members. They reported that, “Latino families are more ‘together’” and “Latino families are closer, more attached to one another.”

Other qualitative studies that have been described elsewhere in this literature review have investigated the meaning of familism for Latino adolescents (e.g., Ceballo,



2004; Edwards & Lopez, 2006); however, relatively few studies have qualitatively examined the significance of family and how it may relate to other psychological outcomes and risky behaviors such as sexual activity. These are areas of the literature which need considerable research attention in order for psychologists to gain a deeper understanding of the process of familism from the perspective of Latino adolescents.

**Parent-adolescent communication among Latinos.** In addition to the three dimensions of familism (attitudinal, structural and behavioral), parent-adolescent communication is a construct that helps define positive functioning in Latino families. In general, communication is accepted as one of the most crucial facets to all interpersonal relationships. It is no surprise, then, that parent-adolescent communication is considered one of the greatest assets of positive family interactions (Barnes & Olson, 1985). Family communication has generally been described as having three components: openness to communication, problems or barriers to family communication, and the degree to which people are selective in their discussions with other family members (Barnes & Olson, 1985). It is the first two concepts, degree of openness and barriers that have received the most empirical attention.

It has been noted that problems in family communication result from discrepancies between parents' and adolescents' perception of the family (Clark & Shields, 1997). These problems lead to breakdown in the relationship between the two generations. Other research, however, has shown that compared to families who were experiencing problems with their children, "optimal families" were more open and expressive when communicating (Clark & Shields, 1997). To further explicate parent-child communication, Davidson and Cardemil (2009) reported that open communication

consisted of the exchange of factual and emotional information (e.g., expressing needs, discussing problems) between parents and their children. Similar to other research, they reported that open communication can facilitate healthy family relations and adolescent development (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009).

Importantly, positive parent-child communication has been linked to numerous positive outcomes. For example, Davidson and Cardemil (2009) indicated that the presence of open parent-adolescent communication can safeguard against adolescent delinquent behaviors and it can provide adolescents with a context in which they can learn appropriate interpersonal behaviors that will help them build healthy relationships in the future. Additionally, they found that when communication is constrained, conflict can arise in the parent-adolescent relationships, which may lead to the adolescent experiencing higher rates of depression, delinquency, substance and alcohol abuse, and lower school performance (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009).

While there is consensus that parent-child communication leads to positive family functioning and more positive outcomes for youth, research indicates that there is variability in family communication and parent-adolescent communication in particular, over the course of a child's developmental life-span. Aspy and colleagues (2009) reported that family communication was greater for younger adolescents (ages 12-15) across all ethnic groups. Additionally, parents may find it more difficult to communicate with their adolescents than they did with their children when they were younger, again constricting the parent-adolescent relationship (Aspy, 2009). Regardless of age, researchers agree that parent-adolescent communication is important for youth from all backgrounds (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009). Relatively few studies, however, have

examined how communication may affect family processes and adolescent functioning in youth from ethnic minority backgrounds and it has been noted that Latino youth have been particularly underrepresented in this literature (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009).

In the few studies that have examined parent-adolescent communication with Latino adolescents, findings have indicated that it is has been found to be particularly important for Latino families. For example, Benavides, Bonazzo, and Torres (2006) reported that parent-child communication allows parents to transmit their cultural values and morals. This may be a particularly important avenue for parents to teach their children their views regarding sexual activity and sexuality, which will be discussed later in this review. A few studies have noted that Latino parents may refrain from talking to their children about risk behaviors such as sexual activity, but they still communicate about the topic. For example, Latino parents have been found to use indirect communication strategies such as making comments to other people in the child's hearing or telling children to "be careful" without going into details about regarding why and how they want them to be careful (Villaruel, 1998). While research suggests that Latino parents do engage in parent-adolescent communication about topics of risk behaviors, it may be due to their cultural background that this communication appears different from other families.

Parent-adolescent communication may appear differently for Latinos than for other families because of their unique cultural values, especially familism. Pokhrel, Unger, Wagner, Ritt-Olson, and Sussman (2008), for example, assert that valuing family loyalty, attachment, and unity are central to the traditional Latino outlook toward family. It is no surprise, then, that positive family involvement represented perhaps by parent-

adolescent communication may serve as a protective factor related to familism (Pokhrel et al., 2008). Still, though, as has been previously discussed, Latinos in the United States are likely to differ from one another in terms of their values and lifestyle based on their differing levels of acculturation to U.S. culture (i.e., assimilation to U.S. culture; Unger et al., 2000). Therefore, assessing levels of assimilation has been determined necessary to gain a perspective about which values make some Hispanics behave differently (in terms of parent-adolescent communication) as compared to others that live in the United States.

One study that investigated the relationship between parent-adolescent communication and acculturation (i.e., assimilation to mainstream society) was conducted by Pokhrel and colleagues (2008). They suggested that parents are likely to follow different norms of communication depending on the cultural values that they favor. They also found, however, that parent-adolescent communication did not associate with the parents' expectation of the child's level of assimilation (a proxy measure for the child's assimilation level to White culture). Another study has also suggested that the quality of parent-adolescent communication has been found to be better among less assimilated Latinos who speak Spanish at home and exhibit other familism-related values (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). Given these conflicting findings, further studies are necessary to explore the relationship between this family variable and adolescents' assimilation to White, mainstream society.

**Parental monitoring among Latinos.** In addition to parent-child communication and familism, parental monitoring is one of the key components of healthy functioning families (LeDoux, Miller, Choquet, & Plant, 2002; Unger et al., 2002). Parental monitoring has varied in definition across studies, however, it is typically defined as

parent's knowledge of the whereabouts of their teenager and knowing who they are spending time with when they are not with them (Romero & Ruiz, 2007). Dishion and McMahon (1998) add to this definition that monitoring is not only directed at the social network of the adolescent (such as, knowledge of the teen's friends and friends' parents), but also includes disciplinary practices such as strict guidelines of acceptable behaviors and rule follow-through. Essentially, Romero and Ruiz (2007) assert that parental monitoring is aimed at providing children and adolescents with guidelines for acceptable behavior.

Research regarding parental monitoring is particularly important in adolescent samples given that Dishion and McMahon (1998) reported that as children approached adolescence, more of their time was spent in unsupervised activities. These researchers also reported that supervision is one of the key components of parental monitoring given that it has a positive relationship with parents being able to track and know the behaviors of their youth. Often, adolescents can make it difficult for their parents and guardians to monitor their whereabouts, associates, and activities (Stoolmiller, 1994). The construct that describes adolescents' tendency to actively avoid adult supervision by spending time in unsupervised community contexts has been labeled "wandering" (Stoolmiller, 1994). Interestingly, longitudinal data suggests that negative behaviors can be an outcome of progression from relatively trivial behaviors to increasingly dangerous behaviors, and this increase in severity of behaviors may be accounted for by adolescents' "wandering" and becoming involved with deviant peer groups (Patterson, 1993) in addition to poor parental monitoring and limit-setting by parents (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

Parental monitoring has been conceptualized as one of the core pieces of a quality parent-child or adolescent relationship. A positive parent-adolescent relationship has been found to enhance parents' motivation to monitor their child and to use healthy behavior management practices. When the parent-adolescent relationship becomes stressed, however, either due to a child demanding autonomy or a variety of other reasons, there may be deterioration in parenting practices due to the disruptive impact of the negative emotions (Dishion & McMahon, 1998). In contrast, though, monitoring children's activities has been reported to be essential in establishing and maintaining a positive parent-adolescent relationship (Dishion & McMahon). So while it is unclear the direction of the relationship (i.e., if greater parental monitoring leads to positive emotionality and a better parent-adolescent relationship or if a better parent-adolescent relationship is related to positive affect and higher parental monitoring), it is clear that these variables are related such that parental monitoring is one aspect of a positive parent-adolescent relationship.

Parental monitoring has been found to vary by different demographic characteristics. Parental monitoring varies as a function of adolescent's gender; girls are monitored more than boys, which is a finding consistent across several studies (Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown, & Haas, 1999). Parental monitoring has not been found, however, to vary significantly by ethnic status (Dishion et al., 1999) indicating that it is a construct applicable to various ethnic groups, including Latinos. Although parental monitoring is considered to be positively correlated with familism for Latinos (Pokhrel et al., 2008), one interesting distinction has been made. Pokhrel and his colleagues (2008) reported that Latinos who follow traditional cultural practices and live in extended families (referring

to the large kin networks that are often described in structural familism) may be less likely to monitor their children due to the presence of several other adult members in the family. Therefore, Latino parents may not feel the need to monitor their children directly because they believe that other adults are also watching out for their children. Still, however, parental monitoring is found to be an important characteristic of Latino families, but it is possible that this definition should be expanded to include monitoring done by other adult relatives.

Now that the five Latino family variables have been extensively reviewed, two related cultural variables, *marianismo* and *machismo*, will be explicated in order to provide a more detailed description of Latino adolescents cultural context.

### **Gender-Related Latino Cultural Values**

Given that the main outcome variable of interest in the current study is sexual activity, and that gender differences will be specifically explored, identifying and understanding the context of gender roles in the Latino culture is an important aspect of the current investigation. Research has indicated that Latina girls and Latino boys may differ in their understanding of and engagement in sexual behavior based on certain cultural norms (Lo, 2008), therefore it is necessary to understand the cultural gender roles at play for these Latino adolescents. Two of these Latino gender roles, *marianismo* and *machismo*, have been posited to influence the sexual activity and beliefs of Latino youth.

**Marianismo.** *Marianismo* defines the role of women and girls in Latino cultures. *Marianismo* indicates Latina women should be pure in their actions, exemplify divinity, exude a moral and spiritual superiority, and attempt to emulate the Virgin Mary (Gloria, Ruiz, & Castillo, 2004). It also defines the females' role as being mothers and caregivers

for males and children and having strong spiritual strength. Gloria and Segura-Herrera (2004) further postulate that in addition to marianismo, the female gender role also includes *hembrismo* (taken from the word *hembra*, meaning “female”). This connotes a woman who is expected to proficiently fulfill multiple roles both inside and outside of the home. Women are expected to be strong, dependable, trustworthy, and dedicated caretakers of their families (Niemann, 2001). Daughters in Latino families often learn very early that they are expected to attend to family responsibility and perform caretaker roles whenever possible. The eldest daughter often fulfills the role of the surrogate mother when necessary (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004).

Gil and Vazquez (1996) noted that there are ten marianismo “commandments” that are just as relevant to contemporary young Latinas as they were to their mothers and grandmothers. The commandments are: (1) Do not forget a woman’s place, (2) Do not forsake tradition, (3) Do not be single-self-supporting, or independent minded, (4) Do not put your needs first, (5) Do not forget that sex is for making babies, not for pleasure, (6) Do not wish for more in life than being a housewife, (7) Do not be unhappy with your man, no matter what he does to do, (8) Do not ask for help, (9) Do not discuss personal problems outside of the home, and (10) Do not change. While researchers (e.g., Arredondo, 2004) acknowledge that these commandments may not be true for all Mexican American individuals, and that some of the younger Mexican American adults have a desire to break this cycle, these commandments are still very much in place among the Mexican American community.

Because of the expectation that Latinas will emulate the Virgin Mary, they are to remain virgins until marriage, become wives and mothers foremost, and be caring and



compassionate women (Arredondo, 2004). While it is true that living up to the image of *La Virgen* (the Virgin Mary) is idealized within Latino families, this is particularly true among recently arrived Mexican families in the United States. Interestingly, it is because of the strong value of family among Latinos that Latinas may not receive the same encouragement to be educated and to begin careers from their families when it means postponing creating and maintaining families of their own (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004). The young Latina has to balance many different roles and negotiate the diverse cultures and contexts of home and school. Arredondo (2004) asserted that Latinas are expected to serve as wives, daughters, sisters, aunts, and godmothers to all those around her; most importantly, they are expected to serve as mothers and grandmothers. An additional explanation for the role conflict that many young Latinas feel states that a Latina seeking to go beyond the traditional roles may create cultural conflict within her family and her culture (Arredondo, 2004).

Cespedes and Huey (2008) noted that having a discrepancy between how contemporary Latina adolescents view their gender role and how their parents view their gender role is a source of parental conflict for these adolescents, which may be related to depression. The struggle to maintain adherence to marianismo while developing their own ideals, beliefs, etc. appears to be a positively correlated to familism such that the more a Latina believes in adhering to her traditional gender role, likely also, the higher her familistic beliefs (Cespedes & Huey, 2008). The struggle for some Latina adolescents between their desire to be self-sacrificing and nurturing and to carve an individual identity for themselves outside of being a wife and mother has been left relatively

unexplored in the literature. Therefore, future research should seek to understand the interplay between marianismo, familism, acculturation, and psychosocial outcomes.

**Machismo.** *Machismo* defines the role of the male in Latino culture and also how males should relate to others. In some of the earliest understandings of machismo researchers conceptualized it as a psychological problem rather than an interpretation of cultural behavior (Tamez, 1981). There was a call at this time for a better understanding of what machismo means to those males of Latino descent, what it has come to mean to other Latinos, and what it denotes for the psychologists who have studied it. Early definitions of machismo iterate that it was derived from *macho* meaning “male,” which may have underlying connotations of being virile. This was thought to compliment the *hembra*, “female,” which had connotations with being fertile. It was thought that these two concepts originally constituted reciprocal and complimentary roles of males and females of Latin descent (Tamez, 1981).

Machismo, or manliness, has been viewed as both a negative attribute (e.g., sexist, chauvinist, violent, rude, womanizing, prone to alcoholism, and hyper-masculine; Anders, 1993; Imhof, 1979) and a positive attribute (e.g., honorable, courageous, patriarchic, prideful; Felix-Ortiz, Abreu, Briano, & Bowen, 2001; Mirande, 1997) in the literature. To continue, there have been some questions about whether machismo is a negative stereotype or a positive aspect of Latino male behavior, questions that have begun to be explored in the psychological literature. The stereotype of machismo traditionally has represented strength, power, aggressiveness, and sexual virility. To possess these traits has meant that the male is more reliable and intelligent than the female (Tamez, 1981). The construct of machismo as a positive behavioral aspect of

Latino males has been expanded to include traits of honor, dignity, and courage. More recently, machismo has been emphasized responsibility and trustworthiness for Latino males. In addition, machismo has indicated that males should provide for their families, act courageous, show honor and respect for others, and assume the paternal role as protector of the family (Flores, Eyre, & Millstein, 1998).

Researchers (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008) have recently argued that machismo has defied a clear definition and that most psychological research still only focuses on the negative aspects of machismo. These authors argue that machismo should be conceptualized as a bidimensional construct; that is, both the negative stereotypes of Latino males and the more positive attributes of Latino males should be encompassed in the definition of machismo. They noted, however, that positive descriptors of machismo appear to resemble attributes associated with the word *caballerismo*. While *caballerismo* originated as a Spanish word for “horseman,” it also has come to refer to a code of masculine chivalry about Hispanic men. They then postulated that perhaps there are really two separate constructs underlying machismo, one positive and one negative; the negative aspects focus on hypermasculinity and the positive side refers to a connection to family and chivalry.

Arciniega and colleagues (2008) administered *The Machismo Measure*, a newly developed set of items, to 154 men who self-identified as having Mexican heritage. The items were developed to assess the behavioral and cognitive components of the positive (i.e., *caballerismo*) and negative aspects of machismo. Results indicated that the measure yielded a two-factor structure of machismo, which was predicted by the researchers. Additionally, they were able to reduce the scale to 20 items; internal consistencies for the

scale were reported:  $\alpha = .84$  for the Traditional Machismo and  $\alpha = .71$  for the Caballerismo.

A second study of the machismo/caballerismo scale involved the newly reduced measure administered to 403 Mexican American men and 74 Latino, non-Mexican American men in order to validate the scale with other known instruments that are typically related to machismo (Arciniega et al., 2008). Arciniega and colleagues (2008) reported that higher Traditional Machismo was related to more arrests ( $r = .25$ ), more fights ( $r = .31$ ), more alcohol consumption ( $r = .25$ ), less ethnic identity ( $r = -.12$ ), greater alexithymia (not having access to one's feelings;  $r = .52$ ), and less other group (i.e., acculturation to mainstream society) orientation ( $r = -.49$ ). Higher caballerismo was associated with greater problem-solving coping styles ( $r = .29$ ), greater ethnic identity ( $r = .31$ ), and greater other group orientation ( $r = .30$ ). In terms of demographics, Arciniega et al. (2008) reported that Traditional Machismo scores were higher for the Spanish-language preference group than for the English-only or both-languages preferences group. For Caballerismo, the Spanish- and the both- languages preferences groups had higher scores than did the English-only group. Finally, they found that for socioeconomic status, higher scores on the Traditional Machismo scale were associated with lower educational attainment; no significant associations were noted for the Caballerismo scale.

While these studies have greatly contributed to the understanding of machismo and caballerismo, they are lacking in connecting machismo to familism. A few other researchers have attempted to understand the possible connections between familism and machismo. In a literature review of studies concerning these two concepts, Tamez (1981) argued that it is because of their fulfillment of these traditional roles that Latino parents

are in some way qualitatively different from other parents in the dominant culture. She asserted that there is an authoritarian stereotype of the father within Latino families, but that the machismo role also denotes fathers as warm, loving, and appropriate role models. While machismo may help to explain a certain type of parenting style typical to Latino fathers, it has also been viewed as an underlying cause of marital conflict and family problems. Although this assertion had received little empirical attention at the time it was made, other sources of since made similar claims (Tamez, 1981).

In a study outlining the development of a Cultural Constructs scale, Cuellar, Arnold, and Gonzalez (1995) found that machismo ( $r = -.24, p < .001$ ) and familism ( $r = -.23, p < .001$ ) were both significantly, negatively correlated with acculturation. It follows that the more hyper-masculine traits a Mexican American man endorses, the more he will also endorse familistic traits, and the more he will be connected to his culture-of-origin and less assimilated to White culture. Given that some of these findings contradict one another, especially concerning the multiple ways to interpret machismo in the literature, these relationships are still being tested and bear further investigation in future studies to better understand how traditional male roles influence familism.

Taken together, the literature concerning marianismo and machismo provides an important context to interpreting the varying influences of familism on various outcomes and behaviors for Latino boys and girls. It is clear that gender roles critically influence the lives of Latino adolescents, but less is known about the ways the expectations to fulfill these gender roles influences feelings of and beliefs in familism. Even less is known about the interplay of gender, familism, and outcomes. The current literature,

therefore, would benefit from continued studies of these three variables and how they affect the lives of Latino adolescents.

### **Relationships between Latino Family Variables and Outcomes in Adolescents**

Associations between the existence of the belief in primacy of the family (i.e., attitudinal familism) and the reduction of risk behaviors or increase in positive behaviors have been well researched. Numerous aspects of adjustment have been studied, such as adolescent delinquency (Pabon, 1998), teenage academic achievement (Fulgini et al., 1999; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994), child abusive behavior (Coohey, 2001), and other psychological variables (Lawrence, Bennett, & Markides, 1992). Specifically, youth that reported being close to family members demonstrated a lower risk for problem behaviors, such as a lesser risk of substance abuse (Unger et al., 2002), lower juvenile delinquency rates (Pabon, 1998; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006, 2007).

**Academic achievement and Latino family variables.** Latino adolescents have been found to have lowered academic achievement as compared to their peers. For example, in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2005), only 57% of Hispanic American adolescents had attained a high school diploma, compared with 88% of Anglo Americans and 86% of Asian Americans. These statistics alone render necessary an understanding of how cultural values, such as familism, may influence the academic achievement of Latino adolescents. In one of the first studies of Mexican American students' academic achievement related to familism, Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) sought to answer the question: Under what conditions is familism a help or a hindrance to academic achievement? They reported, similar to the Cortes (1995) study presented above, that previous conventional wisdom among psychologists and cultural deficit explanations has

ascribed blame to the Mexican origin family for adolescent underachievement (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In their study of 492 Mexican origin students and 2,666 Anglo students in the United States, they measured educational attainment with self-reported grades and official school records for the students. In one of the only studies of its nature, familism was measured according to its three different dimensions: attitudinal (measured using a four-item scale requiring 14-point, Likert-type responses; items were adapted from the 10 item scale developed by Keefe, 1984), behavior (measured by the number of times adolescents saw or talked on the phone with adult relatives who did not live with them), and structure (measured by the amount of adult relatives living within an hour's drive of the adolescent). Parental education was also measured by the number of years of school the adolescents' parents had completed.

Results from Valenzuela and Dornbusch's (1994) study were as follows. First, they reported that there were no gender differences on the measure of familism between males and females; the only gender difference that occurred was with respect to adolescents' grades and females reported higher grades. Second, Mexican origin adolescents reported significantly lower grades than Anglos. With respect to behavioral familism, Mexican origin adolescents reported significantly greater contact than Anglos. For structural familism variable, Mexican students' had significantly greater numbers of kin than their Anglo counterparts that lived in geographic proximity to them. There were relatively few differences in attitudinal familism between ethnic groups, indicating that both Mexican origin and Anglo adolescents rely on kin networks for support. Analyses revealed, however, that among Mexican origin adolescents, those with the highest grade point averages were also those that scored high on attitudinal familism and whose parents

had the most years of education. Additionally, grades of adolescents who were low in parental education and high in attitudinal familism or who were high in parent education but low in attitudinal familism were lower. This led Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) to conclude that familism research ought to examine potential moderating influences (e.g., parent education) on the relationship between attitudinal familism and various outcomes.

Another study also examined the relationship between the beliefs of family obligation and academic achievement among adolescents of Asian, Latino, and Anglo backgrounds (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). They found that after controlling for ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in each of the ethnic subgroups, the value of family obligation was not related to academic success linearly, but instead there was a curvilinear relationship between the two variables. That is, adolescents with moderate adherence to beliefs in the importance of assisting the family with tasks, familial respect, and an obligation to support the family in the future, received the highest grades. Somewhat surprisingly, yet in concert with the curvilinear trend in their data, Fuligni et al. (1999) stated that youth with the highest beliefs in family obligation tended to received grades as low as, or even lower than, the teens with the lowest adherence to family obligation. Fuligni et al. (1999) concluded, then, that even though education remains important to these highly familistic adolescents, familial needs might demand the students' attention to a detrimental level. On the other hand, however, compromises to the family may interfere with the students' progress over time. Based on their findings, they also urged future researchers to continue to investigate the relationship of familism with important outcome variables.



In 2004, Ceballo qualitatively investigated the role of parents and family characteristics on the academic success of Latino students from impoverished, immigrant families who had succeeded in being the first from their families to receive college degrees. In one of the only qualitative studies addressing academic achievement and familism in the current literature, Ceballo interviewed 10 university students for approximately one hour; all students were from Puerto Rican or Mexican American families where Spanish was spoken in the home. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Data analysis adhered to the principles of grounded theory as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Ceballo (2004) reported that there were four family background characteristics that contributed to the scholastic achievement of the Latino young adults: (a) a strong parental commitment to the importance of education (e.g., American education was viewed as the best and only route for their children to escape poverty; “they believed in education,” p. 176); (b) parental facilitation of their child’s autonomy (e.g., participants reported that their parents could not help them in educational matters because they did not have those experiences, so the young adults were forced to develop an academic autonomy early in their education); (c) an array of nonverbal, parental expressions of support for educational goals and tasks (e.g., parental behaviors of not encouraging their child to gain employment, but to instead focus on school); and, (d) the presence of supportive faculty mentors and role models in the students’ lives (e.g., every participant listed at least one teacher as one of the three most influential people in his/her life). Ceballo (2004) concluded that while these Latino students were very resilient in the face of numerous academic and personal challenges, and that family support appeared to be a

key variable in fostering that resiliency, additional research is needed to understand how family support fostered this academic success.

To compare Ceballo's (2004) with the aforementioned studies of familism, it appears that the families of these 10 college students were able to provide the "optimal" amount of family support, without providing too much or too little, (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). An appropriate next step in the literature would be to continue to quantitatively explore academic outcomes in Latino students. Esparza and Sanchez (2008) answered this need in the literature for a quantitative study investigating the role of attitudinal familism on academic outcomes in urban, Latino high school students.

In their study of 143 high school seniors from primarily Mexican or Puerto Rican descent, Esparza and Sanchez (2008) measured familism using the Attitudinal Familism Scale (Lugo-Steidel & Contreras, 2003;  $\alpha = .83$  for this sample). They also measured acculturation, Spanish language preference, perceived discrimination, parents' educational level, academic motivation, academic effort, and academic achievement and truancy (via cumulative grade point average and total number of classes missed). Esparza and Sanchez (2008) found that, contrary to their hypotheses, familism did not predict total motivation, expectancy for success, nor grade point average. Next, however, a series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to test for whether parental education influenced the relationship between familism and the academic outcomes. One interesting pattern was noted. Higher scores on the familism scale were related to lower grade point average when the participant's mother's educational attainment was a high school degree or above. Higher familism was related to higher grade point averages, however, when the mother's education was lower than a high school degree. There were no significant main

or interaction effects for the father's educational level on the adolescent's academic outcomes.

Esparza and Sanchez (2008) concluded that, contrary to previous research, there were no significant associations between total attitudinal familism and adolescents' GPA, motivation, expectancy for success, and intrinsic value in school; there were, however, significant, positive correlations between truancy, academic effort, and familism score). Finally, Esparza and Sanchez's (2008) finding that familism was positively related to grade point average when the adolescents' mothers' educational attainment was low directly contrasted Valenzuela and Dornbusch's (1994) conclusion that higher levels of parental education strengthen the relationship between familism and educational achievement.

Given that recent statistics estimate that 26% of Latinos drop out of high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) and the somewhat contradictory nature of the results presented by Esparza and Sanchez (2008), Ceballo (2004), Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994), and Fuligni, Tseng, and Lam (1999), additional research examining the influence of familism on academic outcomes is necessary. The "optimal" amount of familism, or family support, may be challenging to quantify, however, understanding how parents can best support their children in order to give them the best opportunities for educational growth and success is necessary for continuing to appropriately support these Latino adolescents.

**Juvenile delinquency and Latino family variables.** National data, such as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), indicate that Latino adolescents who may be experiencing

rapid cultural changes are at particularly high risk for negative behavior such as aggressive incidents, arrests, and suicide (CDC, 2004). Juvenile delinquency, here defined as demonstrating problem behaviors, aggression, or violence, has been related to familism in a number of studies. For example, one study involved 481 Latino adolescents (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006). Eighty percent of the adolescents had been born outside of the United States and there was a mean age of 15 years. The researchers measured familism (with six items originally used by Gil et al., 2000,  $\alpha = .87$ ), parent-adolescent conflict (using the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire-20 by Robin and Foster, 1989;  $\alpha = .88$ ), and aggression (using the Youth Self-Report aggression scale by Achenbach, 1991;  $\alpha = .85$ ).

Results indicated that higher adolescent culture-of-origin involvement and higher familism scores were associated with less adolescent aggression (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006). Familism was also strongly, negatively related to parent-adolescent conflict (which was hypothesized to model appropriate behaviors for adolescents). They also found that familism was an important mediator variable. Two relationships were noted: first, parent culture-of-origin involvement and adolescent aggression were mediated by familism; and, second, parent-adolescent conflict and familism both mediated the effect of acculturation conflicts on adolescent aggression. Finally, familism was found to have significantly, negatively correlated with parent-adolescent conflict and adolescent aggression. Together, these results led the researcher to argue that familism is an important protective factor against risk behaviors such as aggression.

In another study by Smokowski and Bacallao (2007) that focused more on internalizing problems for Latino adolescents, those young adults who were highly

involved in Latino culture and who experienced high parent-adolescent conflict were found particularly at risk for internalizing problems. Biculturalism and familism were found as cultural assets associated with fewer internalizing problems and higher self-esteem. While they did not assess the influence of familism on other risk variables, they called for the continued study of behavioral and health risk factors for Latino adolescents and how familism may protect them/mediate the effects of other factors (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2006, 2007).

An additional study examined the moderating effects of family support on behavioral problems among 342 high school adolescents from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Youngstrom, Weist, & Albus, 2003). Approximately half of the participants were recruited from a school-based mental health program, with a quarter having been recruited from a school drop-out prevention program and another quarter of the participants recruited from an outpatient counseling center. Of note is that all sites were located in an urban, high-crime, high-poverty area. Most participants had been identified as at a high-risk for juvenile delinquent behaviors (e.g., dropping out of school, etc.). Familism was assessed and risk behaviors were measured using the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991).

Youngstrom, Weist, and Albus (2003) reported that higher levels of family support and self-concept decreased the amount of internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. They reported that family support was significantly, negatively correlated with externalizing behaviors ( $r = -.19$ ) and internalizing behaviors ( $r = -.26$ ). Additionally, results indicated that family support was significantly and positively correlated with self-concept ( $r = .28$ ) and attenuated life stress ( $r = -.18$ ). In additional analyses further

exploring these relationships, Youngstrom et al. (2003) reported that family support and self concept moderated the influence of life stress and cumulative risk on problem behaviors. Finally, they concluded that the presence of family support (one of the aspects of attitudinal familism) is a protective factor for Latino adolescents.

**Psychological adjustment and Latino family variables.** The literature has suggested that familism may protect Latinos from emotional stress, may provide a natural support system for Latinos, and may generally promote psychological adjustment (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Lugo Steidel, 2006). In one of the first studies in this area, Jaco (1960) reported a much lower incidence of psychiatric treatment among a Mexican American population in Texas as compared to their Anglo and African American counterparts. The author conjectured that these results may have been due to the intrinsic differences in Mexican Americans' way of life that contribute differentially to the mental health of their members. Essentially, he was stating that cultural factors such as familism may protect Latinos against psychological symptoms. Lugo Steidel (2006) noted that while some literature has addressed the issue of familism and mental health, Jaco's assertions, and many others, have not been empirically based.

Way and Robinson (2003) examined the influence of gender, ethnicity, perceived family support, perceived friend support, and school climate on changes in the psychological adjustment (measured by self-esteem and depressive symptoms) in 100 Black, Latino, and Asian American adolescents from low income families. These variables were measured at two times, approximately two years apart. They found that self-esteem increased over time for those both with high and low levels of family support, but notably, those with high family support started at a significantly higher level of self-

esteem than those with low family support. Way and Robinson reported an interesting finding for the influence of family support on depressive symptoms. They indicated that lower family support at the pre-test was associated with a greater decrease in depressive symptoms over time. However, post-hoc analyses indicated that a decrease in depressive symptoms corresponded with a significant increase in family support over time, but only for those adolescents who reported lower family support at the pre-test. Because of these variant findings, Way and Robinson (2003) recommended that additional research determine when, how, and for whom perceived family support influence the psychological adjustment of ethnic minority adolescents.

Lugo Steidel (2006) examined the interaction between attitudinal familism and structural familism in 129 Latino adults. He found that the interaction between attitudinal and structural familism was not a predictor of psychiatric symptomatology for males. On the other hand, this interaction was highly significant for women. Lugo Steidel reported that in the context of large families (higher structural familism), greater belief in the primacy of the family was related to worse psychological adjustment. In contrast, however, when structural familism was low (i.e., small families), greater belief in attitudinal familism predicted better psychological adjustment. He concluded that although Latinas may report their belief in the importance of the family, the presence of a large family could be a source of stress. He related this to the pressure of assuming the traditional gender role of *marianismo* which requires Latina women to be submissive, obedient caregivers of children, spouses, parents, etc. Lugo Steidel (2006) hypothesized that these high expectations may impact Latinas' own sense of self-adequacy, which may in turn lead to other problems in psychological adjustment (Gil & Vazquez, 1996).

In concert with Lugo Steidel (2006), Cespedes and Huey (2008) reported that Latino adolescents report higher levels of depression compared to other youth, but that little is known about how culture-specific factors may contribute to this psychological symptom. In an analysis of 130 Latino high school students, the following variables were measured: acculturation, gender role beliefs, cultural discrepancy, family functioning, and depression. Results indicated that Latina adolescents reported greater differences in traditional gender role beliefs between themselves and their parents and higher levels of depression. Additionally, this relationship was mediated by increases in family dysfunction, which was correlated with gender role discrepancy. Therefore, gender role discrepancy was associated with higher incidents family dysfunction and depression in these youth. The results of this study indicate that both gender role discrepancy and family functioning influence depression in Latinas, such that having a more congruent idea of gender roles between adolescents and parents, and having fewer parental conflicts (which was related to higher familism), may be related to the lack of development of depressive symptoms in Latino adolescents.

**Substance use and Latino family variables.** Some of the health risk behaviors that have been most often studied in the literature have related alcohol and drug use and abuse to familism. A 2001 Gallup survey reported that of those surveyed, 80% indicated that they considered drug use to be a very serious or extremely serious problem among today's adolescents (Gallup Organization, 2001). Research indicates that cigarette, drug, and alcohol use is a significant problem for Latino adolescents in particular. Although popular preconceptions may assume that substance use by Hispanic American adolescents is substantially greater than that of youth from other backgrounds (Bentler,



1992), more recent data gathered by Johnston, O'Malley, and Bachman's (2001)

Monitoring the Future study indicated that although substance use is higher among Hispanic Americans, the differences among ethnic and racial groups are not as great as some have thought. While this is true, the Monitoring the Future study also reported that 20.9% of Hispanic American secondary school students are current users of at least one illicit drug, versus 19.9% of non-Hispanic Caucasians/European Americans.

Additionally, there appears to be cause to believe that Hispanic American adolescents begin illicit drug use at earlier ages than adolescents from other ethnic backgrounds.

Johnston et al. (2001) reported that in 2000 while only 26% of Anglo American and 28% of African American 8<sup>th</sup> grade adolescents reported lifetime use of at least one illicit drug, over 36% of Hispanic American 8<sup>th</sup> graders indicated use of at least one illicit substance.

Given the early initiation of Latino adolescents to illicit drug use and the higher rates of continued use among this population, investigating the relationship between the cultural value of familism and these risk behaviors has been an area of considerable psychological research.

In one of the preliminary reviews of alcohol use among Hispanic adolescents, Estrada, Rabow, and Watts (1982) reported that earlier studies had asserted that positive parental attitudes toward alcohol and drug use predisposes children to use those substances. They assumed that the inverse would also hold true – that negative attitudes of parents toward alcohol and drug use may inhibit alcohol behaviors in their children. Interestingly, Estrada, Rabow, and Watts (1982) reported that in a different study of alcohol-related beliefs among parents and alcohol use among adolescents, more than 80% of adults surveyed were opposed to children and adolescents using alcohol; however,

more than 80% of the males and 72% of the females whose parents disapproved used alcohol anyway. This study indicated that early in the investigation of the influence of family on drinking behaviors, psychologists were reporting conflicting information. Estrada, Rabow, and Watts' (1982) multiple regression analysis asserted that for both males and females, parental and sibling influences contributed the greatest amount to the explained variation in alcohol consumption. They did not report, however, how they defined or measured parental influence, sibling influence, or amount of alcohol consumption. Limitations in the disclosure of their methodologies render Estrada, Rabow, and Watts' conclusions that family members influence the alcohol use of adolescents somewhat questionable.

Since the 1980s, however, a number of studies have researched the impact of family members and other aspects of familism on other substance use behaviors. For example, Gil, Wagner, and Vega (2000) examined the influence of familism and acculturation on the intensity of alcohol use among immigrant ( $n = 1051$ ) and United States-born ( $n = 968$ ) Latino males. For this sample, the group of adolescents with high scores on acculturation stress scored lower on the familism scale. That finding was important to note because structural equation modeling data analysis techniques were used and the researchers found that acculturation and acculturative stress influenced alcohol use primarily through the deterioration of Latino family values, attitudes, and familistic behaviors. Gil and colleagues noted that the acculturation process and the influence acculturation has on familism and substance use behaviors is idiosyncratic and unique and that individual differences should not be discounted in the study of these variables. In drawing general conclusions, however, they summarized that cultural factors

play important roles in the etiology of drug use among Latinos and that these relationships bear further exploration.

In a more recent study of 11-15 year old adolescents ( $n = 56$ ), Romero and Ruiz (2007) found that both aspects of familism and parental monitoring were related to the decreased use of cigarettes, alcohol, and other substances. Romero and Ruiz defined parental monitoring as a “parent’s knowledge of the whereabouts of their teenager when they are not with them and knowing who they are spending time with” (p. 144). They also indicated that parental monitoring has been suggested to give children and adolescents the guidelines of appropriate behavior that are expected by their parents. In this study, familism was measured using the eight-item *Family Impact Scale* (Colon, 1998; for the whole scale,  $\alpha = .81$ ), which was developed for diverse adolescents, utilized a 5-point Likert-type scale for responses, and had two subscales: Family proximity (i.e., the amount of time spent with family members; for the current study, pre-test  $\alpha = .90$ , post-test  $\alpha = .87$ , test-retest reliability was  $r = .83$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Parent closeness (i.e., the adolescents’ perception of how close they were to their parents; for the current study, pre-test  $\alpha = .90$ , post-test  $\alpha = .91$ , test-retest reliability was  $r = .79$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Parental monitoring was measured by a 7-item scale of statements referring to parental knowledge, parental solicitation of knowledge, and parental disciplinary practices assessed on a 4-point, Likert-type scale, which was adapted from Patterson, Dearyshe, and Ramsey (1989) and Stattin and Kerr (2000). Coping with risky behaviors was assessed using three items on a 4-point Likert-type scale: “Everyone has some difficult situations or problems in their life. When times are hard, how often do you (a) use

alcohol or drugs to take your mind off things, (b) smoke cigarettes to take your mind off things, (c) take it out on someone else by yelling or hitting.”

Results from Romero and Ruiz’s (2007) study suggested that parental closeness was stronger for younger adolescents (11-13) than for middle adolescents (14-15). Additionally, they reported that more coping with risky behaviors (e.g., cigarette smoking, alcohol/drug use, etc.) was associated with less parental monitoring. Notably, more parental closeness and parental monitoring were significantly associated with less coping with risky behaviors. Taken together, these results support that youth that report spending more time with family at the pre-test were more likely to report higher rates of parental monitoring at post-test. Also, both parental closeness and more parental monitoring were associated with less coping with risky behaviors at post-test. Limitations of this study included a relatively small sample size for the level of statistical analyses performed and a lack of direct assessment of risk behaviors (i.e., the researchers coping with risk behaviors items used statements about using risk behaviors to cope with difficult situations, but not about the incidence of the risk behaviors when not related to coping). Additionally, although this study was considered to be longitudinal in nature due to the six week delay between the pre- and post-test, the researchers called for additional longitudinal studies with greater length of time between measures to assess the frequency with which parental monitoring and aspects of familism affect future incidents of engaging in risky behaviors.

An additional study that investigated the relationships between marijuana and inhalant use and several cultural and demographic factors was conducted by Ramirez et al. (2004). Participants were 1094 Anglo and Hispanic American school-age children and

adolescents who represented both urban and rural neighborhoods and both genders. Familism was measured using a seven-item scale ( $\alpha = .70$ ) with a 5-point, Likert-type scale and comprised of items concerned with the importance of family, parents, other relatives, and elders. Parental monitoring was assessed using three items that inquired about parents knowing where they were, who they were with, and what they were doing if they were not at home. Responses were measured on a 5-point, Likert-type scale (internal consistency,  $\alpha = .87$ ).

Consistent with the Ramirez et al.'s (2004) expectations, both familism and parental monitoring were significantly associated with marijuana and inhalant knowledge and use. Higher familism scores were associated with more correct knowledge of marijuana and inhalants and also associated with the reduced likelihood of marijuana or inhalant use. Results for parental monitoring were similar: adolescents who reported greater levels of parental monitoring were more knowledgeable about illicit substances and were less likely to have ever used marijuana or inhalants or to be current users. Additionally, Ramirez et al. (2004) reported that familism was associated with lower drug use only for knowledgeable adolescents because among low-knowledge Hispanic American adolescent, the odds of ever having used marijuana or inhalants were almost completely unaffected by familism level. However, among those Hispanic American adolescents who were high in knowledge about marijuana and inhalants, having high familism scores also made them considerably less likely to have used drugs (only 5% of participants).

There were several limitations to the Ramirez et al. (2004) study. First, asserting causal relationships between these variables could not be established based on these data.

That is, it is unclear if increased familism leads to lower rates of drug use or if lower rates of drug use lead to familism. In the case of parental monitoring, however, while causal links also cannot be stated, it is more difficult to determine by which mechanism adolescent drug use would generate greater parental monitoring, though it is more logically sound that parental monitoring may lead to decreased drug use. Both the familism and parental monitoring results illustrate the importance of knowledge about risk behaviors as it is related to the adolescents' choice to engage in those behaviors. In the case of the current literature review, this study provides implications for how knowledge about risk behaviors, and sexual behaviors in particular, may interact with familism levels and parental monitoring to impact Latino adolescents' decisions whether to engage in risk behaviors. A second limitation of this study was the use of a non-validated measure of familism. While items were comprised of statements that generally concerned values associated with familism, this measure had never been previously used. Therefore, future research should investigate this possible relationship between early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents and their reported levels of familism and parental monitoring with validated measurement instruments of familism.

Aspects of familism besides just believing in the primacy of the family also have been found to be related to Hispanic American adolescent drug use. For example, another study found that Latino adolescents' mothers' attitudes toward illicit drugs and drug use behaviors appear to be especially predictive of drug use for Hispanic American adolescents (Gfroerer & de la Rosa, 1993). Interestingly, the researchers noted that family disruption, which generally increases the likelihood of drug use among adolescents (Ramirez et al., 2004), appears to be less critical for those adolescents from

Latino descent. Additionally, adolescent Hispanic Americans from one-parent households were found to be no more likely than those from two-parent households to use illicit substances (Gfroerer & de la Rosa, 1993). This may speak to the protective nature of the extended family system with less emphasis on only the nuclear family.

Some of the behaviors that have been most often studied in the literature relating familism to health risks are those of alcohol and drug use and abuse. As reported, because Latino adolescents demonstrate higher rates of substance use among their peers, there have been many research endeavors to understand the factors that protect adolescents from these behaviors. On the whole, it can be surmised that familism generally protects Latino adolescents from engaging in the physical health risk behaviors of cigarette, alcohol, and illicit drug use. This is an important finding to the current literature review, because of the current risk behavior of interest: early sexual behavior among Latino adolescents. Obviously, engaging in sexual behaviors and engaging in substance use behaviors are not parallel process; however, one would hypothesize that if familistic behaviors and values are protective for one risk behavior, they may be protective for another risk behavior among the same population of interest.

Taken together, the research about risk behaviors is fairly divergent in terms of providing a direct connection between aspects of familism and their impact on psychological outcomes such as academic achievement, juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and psychological variables. In certain instances, having greater beliefs in the primacy of the family is protective for Latino adolescents; however, “too much” belief in this primacy of the family appears to be related with additional burdens and stress that are related to poorer outcomes in Latino adolescents. What is clear, based on the findings

from the studies presented above, is that continued research is necessary to further explore the impact of familism on important psychological outcomes for Latino adolescents. Most researchers in the field have echoed the need for continued research on the relations of familism to the physical and mental health of youth (e.g., Romero, Robinson, Farish Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004).

### **Sexual Activity among Adolescents**

The next overarching construct in this dissertation is the early sexual behavior of adolescents, and Latino adolescents in particular. Sexual attitudes and behavior are a significant concern for youth today. Early sexual activity has been linked with a number of consequences for young adults such as greater risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which can lead to the development of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States (Prado, 2005). Early sexual activity can also lead to teenage pregnancy for female adolescents, and young motherhood has been associated with poverty, family dysfunction, mental illness, academic underachievement, sexual violence and abuse, and lowered self-esteem (Edwards et al., 2008). In 2006, an estimated 5,259 people aged 13-24 in the 33 states reporting to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, representing about 14% of people diagnosed that year (CDC, 2007b). Additionally, each year, there are approximately 19 million new STD infections, and almost half of them are among youth aged 15-24 years old. Finally, 12% of all pregnancies in the United States, or 757,000, occurred among adolescents aged 15-19 years old (CDC, 2007b). It is clear, then, that young people are engaging in sexual



behaviors at an early age and that this activity may lead to negative consequences that will follow them for the rest of their lives.

Given the rates at which these consequences are occurring for adolescents across the country, one might expect that the early sexual behavior of adolescents has increased over the past 15 years, but in fact, statistics from the CDC indicate that rates of ever having had sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse with four or more persons during their lifetime, and being currently sexually active have actually decreased from 1991-2005 (CDC, 2007a). Statistics from the CDC indicate that in 2007, 48% of high school students across the nation had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once and 15% of high school students had had four or more sexual partners during their life (CDC, 2007a). From 2005 to 2007, however, most variables traced by the YRBSS have not changed significantly. That is, the number of teens ever having had sex (approximately 47%), having sex with four or more persons (about 14.5%), currently having sex (about 34.5%), using a condom during last sexual intercourse (about 62%), and using birth control pills before last sexual intercourse (approximately 16.5%) have remained relatively stable over the past three years (CDC, 2007a).

**Defining sexual activity.** Throughout the remainder of this literature review, a number of different indices of sexual activity will be used. This literature review will report whichever index was used by the investigators of the study being referenced; it is important to note, however, that there are multiple ways to measure sexual behavior. Driscoll, Biggs, Brindis, and Yankah (2001) offered one of the most comprehensive definitions of adolescent reproductive health. They believed that one aspect of reproductive health encompasses sexual behavior and its consequences. Examples of

sexual behavior included: age at first intercourse (sometimes referred to as “coital debut”), number of sexual partners, characteristics of sexual partners, frequency of sexual intercourse, the use of contraception, and co-occurring activities, such as alcohol or drug use, that may be linked to sexual activity. A second aspect of reproductive health delineated by Driscoll et al. (2001) is adolescents’ knowledge about reproductive and sexual topics. Examples of sexual knowledge include: how much teens know about the biological aspects of reproduction and how much they know about the ways to protect themselves from unwanted consequences. A third aspect of reproductive health is the adolescents’ attitudes toward sexual behavior and sexuality. The final aspect of reproductive health included in this definition is called sexual competence. Sexual competence refers to the ability of young adults to weigh multiple factors while making sensible, healthy decisions about their sexual lives. Some of the consequences or outcomes of sexual behavior that are included in the definition of reproductive health are: pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, and STIs, including HIV/AIDS (Driscoll et al., 2001).

### **Sexual Activity and Latino Adolescents**

**Prevalence of sexual activity among Latino youth.** Latino adolescents report high rates of sexual activity, especially compared to their counterparts from other ethnic minority backgrounds and compared to White majority youth. Estimates range from 51% to 75% of Latino high school students that reported ever having had engaged in sexual activity (CDC, 2007b; Driscoll et al., 2001; Eaton et al. 2006), as compared to 43% of Caucasian youth (Eaton et al., 2006). Other research statistics from Barrera, Gonzales, Lopez, and Fernandez (2004) reported that 56% of Latina women ages 15-19 years old had already had sexual intercourse at least once and 45% had had intercourse in the three

months preceding the survey. Numbers reported were somewhat higher for Latino males having ever had sexual intercourse. Similarly, in an additional sample of sexual behavior among high school students in the United States for the years 1990 to 1995, over half of the sample of Latino students had reported having had intercourse at least once (Warren et al., 1998). Unfortunately, those who have sex before the age of 18 have been found to be at a greater risk for some of the negative outcomes mentioned above. Because they initiated sexual activity at a relatively early age, they are potentially exposed to the negative consequences of sexual activity for a longer time than are teens who initiate sex later in life. Additionally, younger teens are less developmentally and emotionally ready to make and act on protective and healthy sexual decisions (Driscoll et al., 2001).

**Gender differences.** In a study of 2,596 Hispanic adults, Sabogal, Perez-Stable, Otero-Sabogal, and Hiatt (1995) found that Hispanic men were more likely to start sexual intercourse at an earlier age and reported lower rates of condom use than non-Hispanic White men. Further, Hispanic women, as compared to non-Hispanic White women, reported having a higher number of children, less use of barrier contraception, fewer lifetime sexual partners, and fewer STDs.

Additional researchers have reported similar gender differences for adolescent research participants. For example, Flores, Eyre, and Millstein (1998) reported that Latino adolescent males initiate sexual intercourse at a younger age (12-14 years) than their female counterparts (15-19 years of age). Additionally, Latino male youth report a greater number of sexual partners than female youth (Padilla & Baird, 1991). In looking specifically at Latinas, a few studies provide a greater understanding of the pace at which young women become sexually experienced. In 1995, about 38% of never-married 15 to

17 year old women had ever had sex. Next, Driscoll et al. (2001) reported that half of 15-19 year old Latinas have ever had sex. Finally, for 18 to 19 year olds, the overall proportion almost doubled from the first estimate, to 70% of Latino adolescents that had ever had sex. While it is generally unsurprising that the proportion of teens that have had sex naturally rises with age, and these patterns generally hold across ethnic backgrounds, the proportion of older sexually experienced Latinas grew by 25% to 62% by some estimates (Driscoll et al., 2001). Interestingly, Driscoll et al. (2001) suggests that there are two distinct groups of Latinas. The first group is the largest group of Latina adolescents and consists of those who engage in sexual behavior at relatively early ages (before the age of 18). The second group is comprised of young adults who remain virgins throughout their teen years. By age 20, 38% of Latinas are still virgins. The amount of Latina teens who engage in the early sexual behaviors (i.e., the first group of young women) is significantly larger than those among similar groups of non-Latino White and African American women. Since 1993, the proportion of Latinas with four or more lifetime partners has remained essentially unchanged at approximately 11%.

Among Latino youth, males are somewhat more likely to have ever engaged in sexual intercourse than females (Blum & Ireland, 2004; Driscoll et al., 2001). In fact, in 1993, 64% of male Latino students reported ever having sex; this number remained relatively unchanged in 1999 (63%), however, some estimates as recent as 2007 have reported that up to 75% of Latino males have had sex by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade (CDC, 2007b). Male Latino students average more partners than do Latina students, although the proportion of those with four or more lifetime sexual partners has declined slightly since the 1990s (CDC, 2007b). In 1993, over one quarter of the Latino male adolescents had

more than three partners and by 1999 about 23% had that many partners. More recently, it has been estimated that about 22% of Latino male adolescents have had four or more partners.

Interestingly, although Latino males are more than twice as likely to have had multiple partners, Latina females are almost just as likely as males to be sexually active. In 1999, 38% of Latino males reported having had sex in the past three months as compared to 34% of adolescent Latinas. Driscoll et al. (2001) suggest that these numbers, when taken together, suggest different sexual behavior patterns for male and female Latino adolescents. In the meta-analytic review conducted by Driscoll et al. (2001), the authors hypothesized that although Latina females were less likely to have ever had sex than Latino males, and they were less likely to have as many partners, those Latina adolescents that do have sex are more likely to continue to be sexually active than are sexually experienced Latino males. An interesting finding to support this theory is that in 1999, 75% of sexually experienced females were sexually active at the time of the survey, but only 61% of sexually experienced males were active at the time of the survey.

**Ethnicity differences in sexual and other risk behaviors.** Frank and Lester (2001), in analysis of data from the National School-Based Youth Risk Survey in 1997 found that Hispanic male youths engaged in more risky behaviors overall than White and Black male youths. Hispanic female young adults, similar to White female young adults, engaged in fewer risky behaviors than Black female youths. Additional data analyses revealed that Hispanic young males engaged more often in driving while drinking, smoking cigarettes, and using alcohol than Black youths, but engaged less often in sexual intercourse and not using seatbelts. For females, Hispanic young women engaged more

often in driving while drinking, attempting suicide, smoking cigarettes, and using alcohol than Black youths, but engaged less often in carrying a weapon, engaging in physical fights, having sexual intercourse, and using seatbelts. Taken together, these findings indicated that large percentages of Hispanic youth engage in risky behaviors. While Frank and Lester (2001) reported less engagement in sexual risk behaviors by Hispanic adolescents than Black adolescents, they reported that 60.1% of Hispanic males and 43.2% of Hispanic females engaged in sexual intercourse. In both instances, this rate was higher than White adolescents but lower than Black adolescents.

Similar to Frank and Lester's (2001) findings, Warren and colleagues (1998) reported that Latino rates of sexual activity tend to be slightly higher than White adolescents' rates and slightly lower than Black adolescents' rates. In 1995, 48.9% of White high school students and 73.4% of Black high school students had already had intercourse, compared to about 57.6% of Latinos (Warren et al., 1998). Additionally, the median age at first intercourse for Black males (13.6 years) was significantly lower than the median age for Latino males (15.9) years, which was only slightly lower than the median age for White males (16.7 years; Barrera et al., 2004).

Other estimates about specific outcomes related to sexual activity among adolescents from Stone (2006) indicated that Latina women ages 15-19 are 2.8 times more likely than their European American counterparts to give birth. Additionally, while contraceptive use increased among European American youth from 1995 to 2002, it declined among Latinos, putting them at an even greater risk for unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (Stone, 2006). Taken together, these studies suggest that Latino youth are at risk for earlier initiation to sexual activity than their counterparts

from other ethnic backgrounds, making them more likely to suffer the consequences of these sexual behaviors.

### **Consequences of Sexual Behaviors among Latino Adolescents**

**STIs/STDs and HIV/AIDS.** From 1988 to 2000 Latina adolescents reported higher rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea than their Caucasian counterparts (Schuster, 2003). Interestingly, however, because many STIs are asymptomatic, young people often unknowingly infect their partners. Therefore, the amount of STIs among Latino adolescents is very likely underreported (Driscoll et al., 2001). With this said, it was noted that chlamydia and gonorrhea rates increased during the late 1990s among adolescents from all racial/ethnic backgrounds. Meanwhile, syphilis rates decreased during the same period (CDC, 2007b). However, the gap between Latinos and non-Latino whites has been consistent.

It appears that females are more susceptible to STIs than males. Specifically, among 15-19 year old Latinos, rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis among women are approximately twice those of young men (Driscoll et al., 2001). These findings were corroborated by Barrera and colleagues (2004) who reported that rates of chlamydia among Latina females ages 10 to 19 years old are 2,500 cases per 100,000 whereas Latino males only reported 500 cases per 100,000.

Also, while Latinas only represent 9% of the United States population, they constitute between 25-30% of the female cases of AIDS in the U.S. (Brown et al., 2003; Newcomb, Locke, & Goodyear, 2003). In looking specifically at adolescents, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy reported in 2003 that Latino youth represented 20% of the AIDS cases in the U.S., while they only account for about 12% of

the total U.S. population. Additionally, Latino adolescents have higher rates of AIDS and HIV than non-Latino White adolescents, although they are significantly lower than non-Latino Black adolescents (Barrera et al., 2004). Driscoll et al. (2001) reported that AIDS rates are higher among Latino and African American youth than among non-Latino White youth (CDC, 2000). It appears that having sex with an HIV-positive man is the primary mode of transmission among Latinos and African Americans, male and female, living with AIDS (CDC, 2000).

HIV and AIDS prove to be an interesting contrast for Latinos as compared to other racial/ethnic minorities. Because rates of diagnosis of AIDS among the Latino population are lower than among other populations (which is hypothesized to be due to lack of knowledge about the disease, lack of health insurance, and lack of access to health care), there are higher rates of Latinos diagnosed with HIV than with AIDS. Unfortunately, a primary outcome of the nature of this situation is that Latinos are less likely to get timely treatment for an HIV infection, which has led to higher death rates among Latinos with AIDS (Driscoll et al., 2001).

**Pregnancy.** Considering that there has been ample research documenting the fact that Mexican American adolescents have the longest interval between their first intercourse and their use of contraceptives (Flores, Eyre, & Millstein, 1998), higher rates of pregnancy have been replicated across numerous studies. The pregnancy rate among Latina adolescents aged 15 to 19 increased dramatically in the early 1990s before declining slightly between 1994 and 1995. In 1990, there were 156 pregnancies per 1,000 Latina adolescents, which increased to 169 per 1,000 in 1992, and did not decline to 163 per 1,000 until 1995. To provide a comparison, Driscoll et al. (2001) reported that only



72 non-Latina white adolescents per 1,000 became pregnant in 1995, whereas it was 184 per 1,000 for African American female adolescents in 1995. More recent statistics report that Latina youth account for the highest teenage birth rate among any major ethnic group in the United States (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2003). Pregnancy rates for black and white non-Hispanic teenagers dropped by about 40 percent each during 1990-2002, whereas the rate for Hispanic teenagers fell about 19 percent (CDC, 2000). Additionally, the CDC reported that among all age subgroups, pregnancy rates fell for all teenagers between 2000 and 2002, except for Hispanic teenagers 18-19 years whose rate was unchanged. Similarly, pregnancy rates for black teenagers were substantially higher than for White or Hispanic teenagers in 1990. By 2002, the rates of pregnancies for Black and Hispanic teenagers were very similar and were each more than two and one-half times the rate for non-Hispanic White teenagers (CDC, 2000).

As a health risk behavior, teen pregnancy has been linked to considerable negative outcomes. Compared to those adolescents who delay having children, adolescent mothers are less likely to finish high school or have consistent employment and are more likely to utilize welfare services and have unstable marriages (Barrera et al., 2004). Additionally, in 1999, mother who were younger than 20 years of age accounted for 16.7% of births to Latinas, 9.2% of births to non-Latina Whites, and 20.6% of births to non-Latina Blacks. Higher rates of pregnancy and lower rates of contraceptive use among Latina adolescents indicate that further research understanding the roles that cultural values may have in sexual behavior is necessary.

In one of the only studies to date that has investigated some of the positive implications associated with engaging in early sexual behavior, Campos, Dunkel

Schetter, Abdou, Hobel, Glynn, and Sandman (2008) studied the positive outcomes for Latina young adults (mean age = 24 years, *SD* = 16 years) who had become pregnant. They compared foreign-born Latina (*n* = 31), U.S.-born Latina (*n* = 68), and European American (*n* = 166) women on measures of familism (a term that is sometimes substituted for familism; measured by the 10-item scale developed by Gaines et al., 1997), perceived social support (Sherbourne & Stewart, 1991), pregnancy anxiety (via a 10-item scale developed specifically for use in pregnancy research; Rini, Dunkel-Schetter, Wadhawa, & Sandman, 1999), perceived stress (Perceived Stress Scale – Short Version; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), and infant birth weight. They reported that, as expected the Latina mothers scored higher on the familism scale than the European American mothers. Additionally, they found that familism was positively correlated with social support and negatively correlated with stress and pregnancy anxiety in the overall sample, but that those associations were stronger for Latinas than European Americans. The authors concluded that familism is protective for those Latina young adults who do get pregnant. Additionally, those Latinas who had higher familism and social support also had healthier babies (as indicated by birth rate). This study was unique in that it presented family as a source of strength for Latinas who do get pregnant. While this finding has been alluded to in other research (e.g., Cohen & Willis, 1985), the main contribution of this study was to note that some positive outcomes have been associated with early pregnancy in Latinas (e.g., healthier babies related to increased family and social support). Future studies, then, should investigate both the positive and negative implications for early pregnancy among Latina adolescents and young adults to better understand how familism may be related to these behaviors.

### **Linking the Latino Family Variables to Sexual Activity**

As noted above, relationships between the presence of the belief in primacy of the family (i.e., attitudinal familism) and the attenuation of risk behaviors or increase in positive behaviors have received some attention in the psychological literature. Some of the most important outcomes that have been studied in relation to familism in adolescents are those directly linked to their physical health. Specifically, there have been a number of articles that have linked familism and a reduction in other harmful behaviors such as cigarette use, alcohol use, and drug use behaviors (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Marin, 1993; Romero & Ruiz, 2007). This section will outline the few empirical studies that have begun to research the influence of the Latino family variables on the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents.

Given that familism has been generally found to be a protective factor for Latino youth in other risk areas affecting their physical health, researchers have begun to investigate if familism will have the same protective effect on the physical health risk behavior of sexual activity. It should be noted at the outset, however, that the amount of literature connecting familism to early sexual behavior among Latino youth is still in its infancy. While some empirical studies have been conducted, very few concrete, replicated findings in this area have reported.

In a review of family risk and protective factors associated with White adolescent sexual behavior, Garnier and Stein (1998) followed 205 European American families for 20 years. Data were collected via in-depth interviews and quantitative questionnaires. Both maternal values and adolescent values were measured using a scale developed by Weisner and Rochford (1980). The values scale measured value orientations that were

characteristic of the counterculture (e.g., alternative achievement of goals such as self-fulfillment and creative expression rather than conventionally valued occupational success). Rationale for measuring values in this way was not reported. Adolescent sexual behavior was reported on two variables: sexually active (yes or no) and the number of pregnancies (girls reported the number of times they had been pregnant; boys reported the number of times they had gotten a girl pregnant). Adolescent sexual behavior was found to significantly, positively correlate with the following variables: maternal egalitarian values ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ), high school drop-out ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ), drug use ( $r = .65, p < .001$ ), and other adolescent delinquency behaviors ( $r = .58, p < .01$ ). Adolescent sexual behavior was significantly, negatively correlated with: mother-child attachment ( $r = -.16, p < .01$ ), maternal traditional values ( $r = -.25, p < .05$ ), mother/adolescent positive relationship ( $r = -.32, p < .01$ ), and adolescent traditional values ( $r = -.27, p < .05$ ).

The correlations reported by Garnier and Stein (1998) are important findings for two main reasons. First, they demonstrate that adolescent sexual behaviors are specifically related to maternal values and the mother/adolescent relationship. This has essential implications for future studies: to examine if the same relationships exist between adolescent and their fathers, to determine if/how values change among adolescents and their parents, and to link how these values impact time of onset of sexual behavior (not just whether the adolescents had had sex by age 18). Secondly, these findings demonstrate that for White, 18 year old adolescents, sexual behaviors are highly positively correlated with other risk behaviors. Seeing as these risk behaviors seem to co-occur, understanding the influence of family on one risk factor (e.g., some of the alcohol and drug use behaviors identified above) may have implications for understanding the

influence of family on other risk behaviors such as sexual activity. It should be noted, however, that sexual activity is a distinct risk factor from other risk behaviors, and that multiple and different processes likely influence the impact of family on sexual activity. Garnier and Stein's (1998) study underscores the importance, though, of continuing to explore how family processes and values affect adolescents' sexual behavior. Further, extending this study by studying the impact of family processes and values on other ethnic minority individuals is necessary.

A few studies have been completed that have related familism to sexual behavior among Latino adolescents. Liebowitz, Calderon Castellano, and Cuellar (1999) studied the family and spirituality factors that predicted sexual behaviors among Mexican American youth. There were 413 Mexican American middle school-aged adolescents in their sample (46% were male). They reported that 84% of males said they would try having sex as a teenager and 16% of the entire sample said that they certainly would or probably would engage in sexual behavior as an unmarried teenager. Of the 14% who indicated that they had already experienced sexual intercourse, 77% were male. This corroborates with past findings that Latino males initiate sex earlier than Latinas.

Liebowitz et al. (1999) reported that six variables predicted sexual activity, two of which were, they hypothesized, related to familism: adolescent's perception of parent-child communication and the adolescent's perception of the congruency of parent-child sexual values. Interestingly, the adolescents' perceptions of the congruency of their sexual values and their parents' sexual values was the variable that accounted for more of the variance than any of the other statistically significant variables in the regression model (which also included: adolescent's religiosity, adolescent's educational goals,

adolescent's educational grades, and adolescent's self esteem). Liebowitz et al. (1999) concluded that one way to delay the early sexual activity among Mexican American youth is to increase the congruity between the adolescents' sexual ideas and values and their parents' sexual ideas and values. Unfortunately, this study did not include any measures of acculturation or gender differences on the parent-adolescent variables mentioned above; therefore, future studies should examine the gender differences that may exist between Latinas and Latinos for how important match on sexual values is in delaying sexual debut. Additionally, future research may want to examine the onset and development of parent-child sexual value conflict to better understand when and how sexual values are created and how they evolve. This is especially necessary given that Liebowitz et al. (1999) reported that by the time Mexican American children are teenagers, many of them already have well developed ideas, beliefs, and values about sexual activity that are discrepant from their parents (which, as presented above, was linked to earlier initiation of sexual behavior).

Additionally, Driscoll, Biggs, Brindis, and Yankah (2001) reviewed a number of studies that reported that teens from single-parent families were at higher risk of having sex (Raine et al., 1999; Upchurch, Aneshensel, Sucoff, & Levy-Storms, 1999).

Additionally, Latinas in two-parent families were less likely to get pregnant (Baumeister, Flores, & Marin, 1995). Families were found to hold different beliefs for their adolescent sons and daughters, believing it more important that their daughters wait to have sex until in a committed relationship or marriage, but for young men, Latino families seem to somewhat approve of sexual activity. Interestingly, this meta-analysis of the literature also reported teens' perceptions of their mothers' values and her behavior was

significantly associated with their behavior. Latino teens who believed that their mothers had premarital sex were more likely to have engaged in more sexual behavior than were those who thought their mothers were virgins until marriage (Hovell et al., 1994). A significant limitation of these studies, however, was that the mechanism by which family mitigates early sexual behavior was not proposed or studied. Further research should investigate this hypothesized process.

As noted above in the Liebowitz et al. (1999) study, a factor related to familism that appears to influence Latino teens' sexual behavior is the communication between them and their parents. There is some evidence to support the hypothesis that Latina adolescents who talk to their parents about sex are less likely to become pregnant (Adolph, Ramos, Linto, & Grimes, 1995). This may be less due to the content of the conversations and more due to the fact that these open lines of communication represent a positive and nurturing family environment. More recent studies have also asserted that parent-adolescent communication is related to attenuated sexual activity outcomes. For instance, Aspy et al. (2009) found that positive family communication significantly predicted sexual abstinence among ethnic minority youth ages 12-17. Similarly, Buzi, Smith, and Weinman (2009) found that parental communication was associated with increased condom use among a sample of 261 Latino youth ranging in age from 13-22 years. These studies taken together emphasize the importance of parent-adolescent communication both in delaying sexual activity and increasing contraceptive use if youths do decide to engage in sexual behaviors.

In a recent related study of family processes and sexual behavior among diverse adolescents, Lo (2008) studied Caucasian and African American adolescents. Although

Latinos were not included in his sample, Lo (2008) found that family transitions, parental supervision, parental attitudes, and family support all had a direct impact on the adolescents' sexual activity. Given the relationship between the presence of family support and the lowered prevalence for early sexual behavior among adolescents of other ethnic backgrounds, and the fact that this area has been relatively unexplored among large samples of Latino youth, this area would benefit from further research exploring the different aspects of familism and how they may influence sexual behavior.

In a qualitative study about Latino adolescents beliefs related to sex, Flores, Eyre, and Millstein (1998) interviewed 19 males and 20 females in order to get a sample of responses on the topics of preferred or disliked partner types and reasons to have or to not have sex. Then, they had a different group of 16 male and 21 female Mexican American students sort through the previous participants' responses in order to elicit participants' similarity assessments of the free-response statements. Reported results indicated that some reasons Latinos listed for not having sex involved "not being married to the person" and because "your parents disapprove." Parental/cultural prohibitions against premarital sex for women were an important reason not to have sex. In addition to listing reasons to have or to not have sex, the adolescents also described preferred or not preferred partner traits. Latino adolescents preferred partners who expressed the three cultural values of respeto, simpatia, and familism. Both genders of participants valued having a partner who is respectful of them and who places value on the mutual respect in their relationship. More so than Latinos, Latinas preferred partners who had familistic orientations consistent with familism and whom they expected would be a good provider. Finally, as the researchers predicted, these findings corresponded to Mexican Americans' traditional



attitudes of sexual behaviors occurring within committed relationships as a result of being in love (Flores et al., 1998; Padilla & Baird, 1991). This research indicated that Latino adolescents base their decisions about when and with whom to engage in sexual behaviors based on their parents behaviors toward them in terms of monitoring their actions, and their own beliefs about their sexual partners influenced their sexual behavior.

Taken together, the above studies provide some evidence for the protective nature of Latino family variables on the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents.

Nevertheless, there are still a number of issues related to the interplay of these two variables that bear investigation. For example, how parents of one generation and children of another communicate and negotiate their goals, attitudes, and beliefs regarding sexual behavior has yet to be studied. Additionally, the role of acculturation on these processes has been implicated in some of the above research, but it has not been specifically addressed with relation to familism and sexual behavior among young Latinos. Finally, as Driscoll et al (2001) asserted, a greater level of understanding about how cultural variables shape Latino families and how Latino families affect their offspring is needed, demanding more research attention by psychologists.

**Gender roles and the sexual behaviors of Latino adolescents.** As indicated previously, Latino girls and boys may ascribe to gender roles that are shaped by cultural values (i.e., familism, machismo, and marianismo) and it is thought that, therefore, gender may differentiate between the sexual activity and family-related beliefs of Latino youth. In a study examining sexual values among Latino youth, Deardorff, Tschann, and Flores (2008) investigated whether adherence to traditional sexual values would protect against or increase the risk of Latino adolescents for sexual behavior. Their goal was to

develop a measure of sexual values for use with Latino youth. To populate a list of items for the quantitative measure, they conducted focus groups and individual interviews in order to establish themes about sexual values, gender roles, sexual communication, and sexual comfort. From analysis of the themes on these topics, a quantitative survey was developed that assessed: sexual talk as disrespectful, satisfaction of sexual needs as important, female virginity as important, comfort with sexual communication, sexual comfort, and sexual self-acceptance. In a sample of 694 sexually active Latino adolescents correlations with conceptually related measures were in the hypothesized directions, supporting the validity of this assessment.

In their analysis of the data, Deardorff, Tschann, and Flores (2008) reported that a number of gender differences existed among the Latino adolescents with regard to sexual values. First, "Female Virginity as Important" emerged as a factor for young men, but not young women, whereas "Sexual Talk as Disrespectful" emerged as a factor for young women, but not young men. Another interesting finding related to gender was that for young women, who were less comfortable with sexual communication, sexual values were endorsed reflecting traditional gender role norms. To expand, these Latinas considered sexual talk to be disrespectful and virginity to be important. These findings suggest that Latina adolescents may be comfortable communicating about sex only when they have relinquished the traditional gender role norms. This same trend does not hold for Latino adolescent males, who are able to retain the gender role norms and simultaneously exhibit comfort with sexual communication, which may result from the traditional male role of initiator in sexual relationships. While this study made important steps in that future researchers will be able to quantitatively assess sexual values in

Latino adolescents, additional work connecting these values to sexual risk behavior outcomes for Latino adolescents still needs to be done.

Qualitative research with Latino adolescents found that the ideas of gender that are perpetuated by marianismo and machismo operate among youth (Marston, 2004). Similarly, Niemann (2004) reported that stereotypes of appropriate female roles within families and the role of men as dominant sexual figures may underlie the sexual behavior experiences of Latino adolescents. While most researchers agree that traditional gender roles affect the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescent (e.g., Liebowitz et al., 1999), little is known about the processes affecting this relationship. Therefore, future studies should investigate traditional/more egalitarian gender roles and values held by Latino adolescents and their parents in order to better understand the processes by which these beliefs and values may influence sexual behavior (Deardorff, Tschann, & Flores, 2008).

**Assimilation and the sexual behavior of Latino adolescents.** In addition to examining cultural values such as familism, marianismo, and machismo, early research has also suggested that assimilation (and related constructs such as language preference, country of nativity, etc.) may be related to sexual activity among Latino adolescents. For example, Ford and Norris (1993) described that low acculturation predicted low sexual activity at young ages and delayed interaction of the first instance of sexual intercourse. Additionally, when both adolescents and their mothers were highly assimilated to Anglo culture, adolescents were more sexually experienced as compared to youth in families where the mother reports low assimilation (Pasch et al., 2006). Similarly, Sabogal, Perez-Stable, Otero-Sabogal, & Hiatt (1995), in a quantitative study of Hispanic adults (n = 2596), noted that highly assimilated Hispanic women reported a higher number of

lifetime sexual partners than did less-assimilated women. Additionally, more-assimilated Hispanic men reported a younger age for their first sexual intercourse and a lower frequency of condom use than did Hispanic men who reported lower assimilation.

Recent research, however, has demonstrated a more complex relationship between assimilation and the early sexual behavior of Latino youth. For example, Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Pena, and Goldberg (2005) found that among new immigrants, adolescents living in English-speaking homes were at less risk for sexual activity than their counterparts in Spanish-speaking homes. The opposite was true, however, for U.S.-born Latino youth, who were at higher risk for early sexual activity if they were living in English-speaking homes. While these findings have yet to be replicated in the literature, the immigrant status and native-language of Latino adolescents bears further exploration on the impact of acculturation and early sexual behavior.

Additionally, the effects of assimilation on early sexual behaviors of Latino adolescents appear to vary depending on the sexual outcome studied. For example, although low assimilation seems to protect against early sexual initiation, once sexual activity has been initiated, low assimilation puts Latinos at risk for reduced condom use. Additionally, Latina immigrants are at a greater risk for unplanned pregnancy than U.S.-born Latinas (Deardorff, Tschann, & Flores, 2008; Ford & Norris, 1993). In their study of 694 sexually active adolescents under the age of 18, Deardorff et al. (2008) found that the values of sexual talk as disrespectful, satisfaction of sexual needs as important, and female virginity as unimportant were associated with more highly assimilated young Latinos. Specifically, female virginity appears to diminish in importance as sexually active youth become more assimilated.

### **Areas Requiring Future Research Based on the Reviewed Literature**

There are a variety of areas in the current literature that warrant further exploration based on this literature review. First, familism, because of its early inception in the family support/sociological literature and its non-linear theoretical and empirical conceptual organization, has been used differently in the literature. Some researchers have referred to familism as only attitudes and beliefs among Latinos, whereas other researchers have included the behavioral, structural, and attitudinal elements of familism in their conceptualization. Additionally, there are divergent beliefs among researchers in the field about whether to conceptualize familism as a process unique to Latino families or as a process that is somewhat descriptive of families from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Future investigations should make it a point to use the most comprehensive definition of familism available to them in order to best capture the nuances of familism that are displayed by Latino populations.

There is significant area for growth in the literature is the way in which familism is measured. Researchers have used varied measures to identify the constructs of familism and have, with a few exceptions, poorly explicated measurement development methods. Future research should seek to use only the most comprehensive, reliable, and valid instruments in order to assess familism in diverse populations. While some of the newer quantitative measures of familism capture the small characteristics involved in this construct, if they are not utilized consistently in future research, assessing these aspects and their potential for impacting other areas of functioning in Latinos will be seriously limited. Additionally, very few studies have qualitatively examined familism; however, even less have explored the qualitative experiences of Latino adolescents in empirical

research endeavors. This research would be important in order to add depth to the current literature base by offering an examination of the specific experiences of Latino youth and how they articulate them.

Third, there are discrepancies in the familism literature as it relates to assimilation in Latinos adolescents. While researchers have believed that familism is negatively correlated with assimilation since some of its first explorations (e.g., Ramirez, 1967, 1969; Sabogal et al., 1987), newer research has hypothesized that assimilation to White society may not necessarily be related to higher familism values and practices. Therefore, additional research assessing acculturation differences between and within members of various Latin cultures-of-origin, between genders, and across generational status will be necessary to further investigate the process by which familism and acculturation change and/or remain stable as Latinos navigate cultural contexts within the United States.

Fourth, familism was found to protect Latino adolescents against juvenile delinquency in the sense that higher familism endorsement was correlated with better academic achievement. The studies presented, above, however, call this assertion into question, as it appears that sometimes high familistic beliefs and practices can be stressful to Latino adolescents, and may in fact hinder performance in some areas. Considering that typically familism has been found to be protective for Latino adolescents against risk behaviors, this area bears further investigation to better understand the nuanced processes that are at play. This discrepancy in the literature is also one of the key reasons for using additional variables related to family functioning among youth: parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring. These variables have also been found to be protective for youth, so investigating how they relate to the various aspects of familism

and how they relate to the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents will be an important contribution of this study.

While the majority of this research has focused on an important subgroup of Latino populations, that is, Mexican Americans, future research could expand these findings by investigating these same variables across Latinos from different cultural backgrounds, of different ages, and different genders. Therefore, the second area for future research concerns studying how acculturation, gender roles, and familism affect important outcome variables such as academic achievement, juvenile delinquency, health risk behaviors, and sexual behavior outcomes (e.g., age of coital debut, number of sexual partners, contraction of STIs, etc.) with more varied populations.

Gender differentiation in studies of familism has only begun to be explored. Many studies still overlook gender distinctions when examining familism in connection to sexual activity. The current study will attempt to ascertain the similarities and differences across gender on these topics of Latino family variables and sexual activity. This research is particularly important in light of Lugo Steidel's (2006) results that yielded very different outcomes for males and females in terms of attitudinal and structural familism. Additionally, the exploration of the two different genders and the expectations from family members for adolescents to adhere certain cultural value-related gender roles may significantly affect familism and sexual activity for Latinos, especially at varying levels of acculturation. Therefore, the continued exploration of gender distinctions, cultural values, and familism is necessary to understand the sociocultural development of Latino adolescents and any impact that development may have on psychological outcomes and risk factors.

A number of different cultural constructs have been explored in relation to the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents. This literature review reveals that Latino adolescents exhibit high rates of sexual activity as compared to their non-Latino, White peers (CDC, 2007b; Driscoll et al., 2001; Eaton et al. 2006). Additionally, because of their decreased use of contraceptives, they are at a higher risk for transmission of STIs, STDs, and HIV/AIDS. Limited contraceptive use also leads to high rates of teenage pregnancies among Latinas. The influence of cultural variables such as familism, gender roles, and acculturation has been found to affect the general health risk behaviors (e.g., cigarette use, alcohol use, and illicit substance use) and sexual behaviors of Latino adolescents in numerous ways. Even though the psychological literature provides an overall framework for examining the connections between these cultural variables and risk behaviors among Latino adolescents, there are still numerous areas of the field that need to be addressed.

While the theoretical links have been proposed between the Latino family variables and the actual sexual behaviors of Latino youth, these relationships deserve further exploration. Research from the risk behavior literature indicates that higher levels of parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication leads to increased knowledge about risky behaviors, which has then been correlated with a decreased involvement in those risky behaviors (Romero & Ruiz, 2007). These questions, and other relationships among similar variables in the psychological literature, require additional research. Future studies also should examine how parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication vary at different levels of acculturation. A better



understanding of this association may lead to additional studies that can explore how that relationship is related to sexual behavior among Latino adolescents.

Finally, although a considerable amount of research presented here has delineated some of the known relationships between the different aspects of familism, parent-child communication, parental monitoring, cultural variables, acculturation, and the health risk behaviors among Latino adolescents, this area would benefit from additional investigation. The studies reviewed here provide conflicting evidence about the relationship between Latino family variables and assimilation (e.g., Ford and Norris, 1993; Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Pena, & Goldberg, 2005) calling into question the ways in which these variables are thought to affect the sexual activity of Latino adolescents. Specifically, investigators using reliable and valid measures of the Latino family variables, acculturation, and assimilation may be able to better discern the interaction between acculturation (including time living in the United States, language preference, and language spoken in the home) and familism, as this has yet to be studied in relation to the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents. Because of the variation in the effects of assimilation on risk behaviors among Latino adolescents, and the continued growth of the Latino adolescent population in the United States (U.S. Census, 2005), this topic warrants further study.

To sum, the intersection of Latino cultural values such as familism and the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents is an area of research that warrants continued investigation by psychologists. As previously noted by Deardorff, Tschann, and Flores (2008) and Flores, Eyre, and Millstein (1998), this literature review concludes with the reinforced assertion that a focused examination of Latino adolescents' cultural values,

family-related behaviors and sexual risk behaviors is critical. The alarming rates at which Latino adolescents engage in sexual behavior as compared to their peers and their considerably lower rates of contraceptive use render Latino adolescents one of the most vulnerable populations for negative consequences of these sexual risk behaviors (Villarruel, Jemmott, Jemmott, & Rinos, 2007). This provides ample rationale for the continued study of the affect of cultural variables on sexual behavior among Latino adolescents. Although numerous studies could be devised to explore the many different relationships between familism, gender roles, family variables, and sexual activity, an important first step in this research area is to explore the connections between the various aspects of familism, parent-adolescent communication, parental monitoring, and sexual behaviors with regard to investigating similarities and differences between the two genders. Therefore, the current study, described next, plans to address this important first research step by using qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore the relationships between these variables among a sample of Latino youth.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

#### **Research Aims of the Study**

The overarching focus of this study was the relationship between Latino family and cultural variables and sexual activity outcomes. As found in the literature review, there is a lack of research in this area (Deardorff, Tschann, & Flores, 2008; Flores, Eyre, & Millstein, 1998; Villarruel, Jemmott, Jemmott, & Rinos, 2007); therefore, investigators have called for a focused examination of how different aspects of familism and Latino family practices impact the sexual activity of Latino adolescents. It was hypothesized that the presence of these values and behaviors would be protective for Latino adolescents. Taken together, the research reviewed in Chapter Two of this dissertation yielded an understanding that Latino adolescents who have these family-related values and participate in these family-related behaviors may engage in less sexual activity (Aspy et al., 2009; Buzi et al., 2009). This was the primary hypothesis on which the current dissertation research aims and questions were based.

As previously stated, this study had four main areas of research inquiry: (1) what family means to Latino adolescents and how these beliefs impact sexual behaviors (2) if, and how, the three different aspects of familism are empirically related to one another and to two other family-functioning variables that are often seen as protective for Latino youth, that is, parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring (Clark & Shields, 1997; Teitelman, Ratcliffe, & Cederbaum, 2008) (3) how the five Latino family functioning variables and sexual behavior are influenced by being a Latina girl or a Latino boy; and (4) the relationships between assimilation, the five Latino family variables, and the early sexual behavior of Latino adolescents.

**Rationale for Mixed-Methods Investigation**

Due to the dearth of research in this area, a mixed-method approach to data collection and analyses was used in the current study. A mixed-methods study was warranted because each of the investigations contributed unique information about how the value and functioning of Latino families were related to the sexual activity and sexual activity beliefs of Latino adolescents. Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, and Creswell (2005) asserted that mixed-methods studies should be transparent about the rationale for using this type of approach. Therefore, the purpose of using two different types of data to inform this dissertation project was twofold. First, the quantitative and qualitative data were combined in order to use results from one method to elaborate results from the other method, also referred to as complementarity (Hanson et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study, the results of qualitative data were used to elaborate and add depth of meaning to the quantitative data. The second purpose of the mixed-methods investigation was to extend the breadth of inquiry by using different methods for different components (also referred to as expansion; Hanson et al., 2005).

Additionally, Hanson et al. (2005) recommended deciding how data collection will be implemented and prioritized prior to beginning a study. In the current project, the data collection procedure had concurrent implementation (i.e., both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously). Both types of data were given high priority, with the quantitative data receiving slightly higher priority because of the goal of this study to provide a broad overview of Latino adolescents' views of their families and how these views affect their sexual activity and sexual activity beliefs. Given that the literature supports a plausible link between family-related beliefs and

behaviors and sexual activity, a broad look at how these two variables may be specifically related was determined to be a necessary next.

While the primary purpose was the same for both the qualitative and quantitative investigations (i.e., to examine the relationship between the Latino family variables and sexual activity outcomes), the research questions and methods of inquiry were different. The quantitative data were obtained by administering measures of family values, familism, acculturation, and sexual activity to a large sample of Latino adolescents. Responses were quantified and statistically analyzed in order to make statements about the relationships between these variables. Qualitative data were obtained by conducting four focus groups (two with girls and two with boys). The participants in these focus groups were Latino adolescents who were asked questions about their values, their beliefs about family, and how their beliefs may play a role in their attitudes about sexual behaviors. Data included transcriptions of what was said during the focus groups as well as leader notes, both of which were analyzed according to Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) methodology.

The qualitative data complemented the quantitative results by adding rich narrative descriptions and allowed for greater depth to be explored in relation to these topics. Additionally, because qualitative methods are exploratory in nature, there was openness to unexpected results by researchers and participants were afforded the opportunity to explain their experiences without being constrained by proving or disproving hypotheses (Hill, 2006). Therefore, the qualitative data have elaborated on and described with more detail what was reported by the Latino adolescents on the

quantitative measures, which again allowed for complementarity comparisons to be made between the qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Quantitative Investigation**

It should be noted that participants in the current study were part of a larger investigation of relationships and well-being among Latino youth. Additional instruments other than those included in this study were administered to the adolescents. Also, the recruitment of participants, data collection, and data management were a collaborative effort between Dr. Lisa Edwards, the chair of the dissertation project, Brittany Barber, the principal investigator in this dissertation, and another advanced doctoral student who was completing her dissertation on a different topic related to sexual activity among Latinas. Three additional graduate students interested in research on Latino adolescents and sexual activity also assisted with data collection.

**Participants.** To determine the appropriate sample size for the study, a power analysis was conducted based on an alpha level of .05 and power of .80. This power level was chosen given that it is similar to the level of power used in other studies of Latino adolescents and sexual activity (e.g., Villarruel et al., 2007). The anticipated effect size was set at  $f^2 = 0.35$ , which was chosen in order to be able to detect large effects within the samples. While it would have been preferable to set the effect size higher to detect medium or even small effects, it was necessary due to anticipated participant recruitment challenges (i.e., not being able to recruit enough sexually active youth as compared to the non-sexually active youth), which proved to be problematic. Every effort (e.g., recruiting participants from the community, schools, etc.) was made to recruit both sexually active and non-sexually active youth for this quantitative part of the study and youth were

expressly told when inquiring about the study that the neither investigators nor anyone else would be able to connect their sexual activity status with their identity. Also, it was not preferable to recruit only sexually active youth at any time in the data collection, as this had the potential to alienate potential participants who may not have wanted to disclose their sexual activity status. Therefore, while numerous efforts were made to collect data from as many sexually active youth as possible, enough were not able to be collected to detect small or medium effect sizes in this study.

The power analyses were based on six predictor variables (the five Latino family variables and assimilation). The power analyses indicated that a sample of approximately 46 sexually active participants per gender (92 sexually active youth total) was necessary in order to conduct regression analyses. Statistics in Milwaukee indicate that approximately 34.5% of adolescents are sexually active (CDC, 2007b). Therefore, a sample of 267 total (or 134 of each gender) youth needed to be recruited in order to ensure that the sample included at least 92 sexually active youth. Given that previous data collection projects by the chair of this dissertation with Mexican American youth (Edwards & Lopez, 2006) have resulted in about 2% of collected surveys being either incomplete or not usable, efforts were made to recruit 273 total participants to account for this potential loss of data.

Participants were 410 English-speaking middle and high school students recruited from various schools and community sites in the greater Milwaukee area. There were 232 (56.6%) girls and 177 (43.2%) boys in the total sample (one participant did not report gender and therefore was not used in gender-specific analyses, but was used in analyses where the whole sample was studied together). Participants ranged in age from 13-18

years old ( $x = 15.02$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ). Participants' grade in school ranged from 6<sup>th</sup> grade to out of high school ( $x = 9^{\text{th}}$  grade,  $SD = 1.94$ ). Of the total sample, 311 participants reported their grade point averages, which yielded a mean grade point average of 3.00, with a standard deviation of .67.

Due to research that indicates familism is applicable across individuals from Latino subgroups (Sabogal et al., 1987; Villareal et al., 2005), adolescents from all countries of origin that identified as Latino or Hispanic were grouped together for analyses. In the current sample, 201 participants identified as Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano/a (68.3%), 13.2% identified as Puerto Rican, 1.7% identified as South American (e.g., Columbian), and 1.5% identified as Central American (e.g., Guatemalan). One participant identified as Dominican and the rest of the participants (13.7%) identified as "other." When asked to qualitatively describe their ethnic identification if they chose "other," most participants ( $n = 14$ ) reported being of mixed ethnic background (i.e., typically Mexican or Puerto Rican and Caucasian, Black or another Latino ethnic heritage). In terms of religious affiliation, the majority of participants (70.2%) identified as Catholic, with 22.0% of the participants identifying their religious affiliation as Protestant/Christian, and 7.8% of participants identifying other religious affiliations or no religious affiliation.

Participants were also asked to provide information on their generational status in the United States. Of the total sample, 62.0% of participants reported their parents immigrated to the U.S., 24.4% of participants reported that their grandparents came to the U.S., 12.2% reported that their great-grandparents immigrated, and six participants did



not respond to this item. Additionally, 75.4% of the sample was born in the United States, while 24.6% participants were born in countries outside of the U.S.

Three demographic questions were aimed at understanding the participants' socioeconomic status, two of which were obtained by asking participants' perception of their family's financial situation. When asked about their family's standard of living, 0.2% described their family as "very poor," 1.5% described their family as "poor," 30.7% described their family as "getting by," 59.3% described their family's standard of living as "living comfortably," and 7.1% described their family as "very well off" financially; five participants did not respond to this item. Participants were also asked to assess their family's financial situation as compared to their peers; 2.0% of participants indicated they were "much worse off" than peers, 11.7% were "somewhat worse off," 63.7% were "about the same as peers," 18.5% believed they were "better off" than peers financially, and 3.2% indicated they were "much better off" financially than peers; 1.0% of participants did not report their perceptions. The third socioeconomic demographic question asked participants to report whether they received free or reduced lunch. This item was chosen based on previous research (Parsai, Kulis, & Marsiglia, 2010) indicating it was a more objective measure than asking participants to report their subjective perception of their family's financial status. In the current sample, 72.7% of the sample reported receiving free or reduced lunch. While only 12.7% of the sample reported they did not receive free/reduced lunch, 14.6% of participants did not respond to this item.

**Procedure.** Data collection occurred from August, 2009 through September, 2010. Prior to collecting the data, approval for the larger study was obtained from the

Marquette University Institutional Review Board in July, 2009. The study was submitted for annual continuing review in July 2010; approval was granted.

Participants were recruited from several settings including schools, community centers, and fairs/festivals in southeastern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Data collection sites included three high schools (one public high school specializing in technology, one charter high school specializing in science and technology, one Catholic high school for girls), one Catholic middle school, and five community centers (two in Milwaukee, one in Racine, and two in Chicago). The schools were chosen because of the large representation of Latinos in the student body. Specifically, racial and ethnic minority students represented between 78% and 97% of the student population at the schools. The community centers were chosen based on their location in predominately Latino neighborhoods and their missions to serve Latinos and other racial and ethnic minority groups. Participants were also recruited from two health fairs, a Mexican cultural festival, and a community information fair for at-risk, ethnic minority youth.

It should be noted that participants were not able to be chosen based on demographic representation of the entire national Latino population. Data collection sites were chosen based on the ability to gather a sample of at least a small group of participants from each site in order to maximize data collection resources. Therefore, it was necessary to find sites which primarily serve Latino individuals even though this may have impacted the generalizability of these data as participants who attend a predominantly Latino school or regularly attend a community center specializing in serving Latinos may have a different perspective on the topics of interest in this study as compared to those not attending these types of institutions.

In order to participate in the study, participants were required to self-identify as Latino/Latina or Hispanic and read, write, and speak English. All participants under the age of 18 were required to obtain parental consent and provide personal assent to participate in the study. Packets containing an information letter explaining the study (available in English and Spanish; see Appendix A for English version), two copies of the parent/guardian consent form (available in English and Spanish; one copy for the parent/guardian to keep and the other for them to sign and return to the school/agency; see Appendix B for English version), and a participant assent form in English (see Appendix C) were distributed to participants. Adolescents who were 18 years of age were permitted to provide personal consent to participate in the study (see Appendix D).

The chair of this dissertation, the principal investigator, and another advanced doctoral student discussed the project with administrators and staff to obtain approval to solicit participants, and they provided all of the materials for the schools, organizations, and fairs/festivals needed for data collection. At schools and community agencies, forms were either sent home with a school informational packet or were given to youth during a school orientation, during school hours, or during a program activity at a community site. The Latino adolescents were asked to return the consent forms as soon as possible. Typically, one or more of these three researchers went to the sites to administer the surveys once parental/guardian consent forms and personal assent forms were obtained. At the community fairs and festivals, a research team consisting of this investigator, the chair of this dissertation, and four other graduate students solicited participants by advertising that Latino adolescents were being asked to fill out surveys for \$5.00 compensation. If youth saw the advertisements and stopped in the booth, they were

informed about the study. Parental consent was required before youth were allowed to complete the packet of questionnaires at the fair/festival.

Once consent was obtained from parents and youth who volunteered to participate in the study provided their personal assent, adolescents were administered a packet of questionnaires for about a 30-minute period. Surveys were typically administered during the school day or during some type of community program either after school or on the weekend. Surveys were also administered at the cultural festival described above. Participants were given a comfortable place to complete the questionnaires (i.e., they were provided with a chair, clip-board, etc.). The packet of surveys was counterbalanced which helped to avoid order effects due to fatigue, social desirability, earlier items “contaminating” later items, etc. Participants were told that this study was examining relationships, cultural values, and well-being among Latino middle and high school students. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw their participation at any time, that their responses would be kept confidential, and that their participation would involve filling out questionnaires. The youth were given \$5.00 as a token of compensation for their participation in the study. Additionally, participants were given a resource flyer that listed area organizations that provided mental health resources (see Appendices E and F).

**Instruments.** Based on the review of the literature, instruments were chosen to quantitatively measure the five Latino family variables (i.e., attitudinal familism, behavioral familism, structural familism, parent-adolescent communication, and parental monitoring), assimilation, and the sexual activity outcomes that have been used with adolescents in previous research. When possible, efforts were made to choose measures

that had been previously used with Latino adolescents as well and that demonstrated adequate reliability and validity with this population. Additionally, Flesch-Kincaid grade reading level equivalency tests were conducted on all of the measures to assess if they written at a grade level easily understood by the 13-18 year old youth participants in the study. All instruments were written at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade or below reading level, indicating that they should be understood by participants in this study.

*Demographic questionnaire.* A sociodemographic questionnaire was included in order to obtain background information about the participants. Items on the questionnaire included the participants' age, year in school, gender, race/ethnicity, country of origin, generational status, perceived level of financial status, free/reduced lunch status, and religious affiliation (see Appendix G).

*Measure of assimilation to White culture.* The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMA-II; Cuellar et al., 1995) contains 30 items assessing cultural domains unique to acculturation, including language use and preference as well as ethnic identity, behaviors, and interactions (see Appendix H). It is a multidimensional scale that includes both a 17-item Mexican Orientation Subscale (MOS; enculturation) and a 13-item Anglo Orientation Subscale (AOS; assimilation). Items were rated on a 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely often or most always*). The AOS was used to measure assimilation to White culture in the current study.

Cronbach's alpha of .89 has been reported for the AOS in a sample of 188 Mexican Americans (Cachelin et al., 2006). Good split-half reliability for the AOS ( $\alpha = .77$ ) and MOS ( $\alpha = .84$ ) scores have been demonstrated as well as very good one-week test-retest reliability coefficients (.94 for AOS and .96 for MOS; Cuellar et al., 1995).

Concurrent validity between the ARSMA and the ARMSA-II was demonstrated at  $r = .89$  among 171 Mexican Americans (Cuellar et al., 1995). Convergent validity was also found given that there was a positive correlation ( $r = .47$ ) between the AOS subscale of the ARMSA-II and the U. S. Orientation Subscale of the Acculturation, Habits, and Interests in Multicultural Scale for Adolescents (Unger et al., 2002) in a sample of 317 Mexican American adolescents. In the current sample, the mean for the whole subscale was 3.85 with a Standard Deviation of 0.61. For girls, the assimilation to White culture mean was 3.93 (SD = 0.57) and for the boys the mean was 3.72 (SD = 0.69), indicating that participants typically “moderately” to “very often” identified with White culture on these items, with girls reporting slightly higher assimilation to White culture than boys. In other words, this sample is thought to be fairly assimilated to White culture.

Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for the AOS scale was = .75.

***Measure of attitudinal familism.*** The three familism subscales of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (MACVS; Knight et al., 2008) were used to assess participants’ level of attitudinal familism (see Appendix I). Attitudinal familism is comprised of the three subscales of Support, Obligations, and Referents, which is consistent with the theoretical conceptualization of attitudinal familism (Sabogal et al., 1987). The six-item Support subscale refers to the extent to which one’s family provides a sense of security, cohesiveness, and connectedness. The Obligation subscale is comprised of five items and refers to the degree to which one helps, cares for, and makes sacrifices for immediate and extended family members. Finally, the five-item Referent subscale refers to the extent to which one seeks advice from family members when making important decisions and whether one represents themselves in such a way that it

will reflect positive on the family. The combined subscales contain a total of 16 items assessing attitudinal familism. Items were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*).

Although the MACVS is relatively new, it has already been well-validated among Mexican American adolescent populations. German, Gonzales, and Dumka (2009) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .86 for the scale and Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, and Delgado (2005) indicated a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Knight et al. (2008) reported construct validity by assessing the correlation between the familism subscales of the MACVS and the ARMSA-II MOS. They reported correlations between the three subscales of familism and the ARMSA-II MOS at  $r = .22-.29$  for a sample of Mexican American youth. For the total sample, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alpha were calculated for the: Familism Support Subscale ( $x = 25.36$ ,  $SD = 4.02$ ;  $\alpha = .79$ ), for the Familism Obligations Subscale ( $x = 20.37$ ,  $SD = 3.17$ ;  $\alpha = .65$ ), for the Familism Referents Subscale ( $x = 19.4$ ,  $SD = 3.75$ ;  $\alpha = .77$ ), and for the Attitudinal Familism Full Scale ( $x = 65.13$ ,  $SD = 9.85$ ;  $\alpha = .89$ ).

***Measure of behavioral familism:*** The Behavioral familism items (see Appendix J) consisted of two questions rated on a 6-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*less than once per month*) to 6 (*more than once per day*). Questions were: *How often do you talk on the phone with relatives who do not live with you?* and *How often do you see relatives who do not live with you?* These items were adapted from Valenzuela and Dornbusch's (1994) study of 492 Mexican origin adolescents that found that behavioral familism, or contact with family members positively contributed to social capital, which was related to higher academic achievement levels. Reliability and validity estimates were not reported for these items, which is a limitation of the current measure. Items are

measuring at the amount of behavioral contact that adolescents have with other members of their family as a means of assessing the amount of time spent engaged in family-related activities. Given the lack of other measures of behavioral familism, however, these items were the ones that had been previously used with Latino youth and were, therefore, the best option for measuring behavioral familism without creating new items. For these two items measuring behavioral familism in the current sample of 410 participants, there was a total scale mean of 5.35 with a standard deviation of 2.47. Cronbach's alpha for the two-item behavioral familism scale was .52.

***Measure of structural familism.*** The structural familism item (see Appendix K) was adapted from various studies that have assessed the structure of Latino families (e.g., Coohy, 2001; Luna et al., 1996; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). The structural familism item was, *How many family members that do not live with you reside within a one (1) hour's drive from your house?* Participants filled in their own number of family members for the first question and they rated on the second question on a scale from *None to 20 or more*. These items are assessing the structure, or demographic, of each adolescent's family. While just one item may not be adequate to assess this construct, and estimates of validity and reliability are not available for this measure, this item is consistent with previous studies of Latino youth and is therefore the current best option for assessing structural familism without creating new items. In the current study, four participants did not respond to this item, so for 406 participants, the mean of this item was 2.07 (closest to the item labeled: "5-8 people") with a Standard Deviation of 1.8

***Measure of parent-adolescent communication.*** The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale, Open Communication Subscale was administered to participants



(Barnes & Olson, 1982; see Appendix L). Participants rated the 10 items on a 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items assessed the positive, “open” communication style between the adolescents and their parents, from the perspective of the youth. Items assessed whether participants felt they could discuss important topics with their parents, whether they believed they could get honest answers from their parents, and if they find it easy to speak with their parents. Participants were not asked to distinguish between communication with their mothers, fathers, or other guardians, though some did write in that they felt they could communicate better with one parents. Reliability of the Open Family Communication subscale was reported for the original sample of 124 adolescents:  $\alpha = .92$  and test-retest reliability at an interval of four to five weeks was reported at  $r = .78$  (Barnes & Olsen, 1982). Although this measure has been used with ethnic minority adolescent samples, reliability and validity levels were not reported. On the Open Communication subscale from the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale in the current sample, the mean score was 35.0 with a Standard Deviation of 9.57; Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .922$  in the current sample of 410 participants.

***Measure of parental monitoring.*** The seven parental monitoring items were obtained from Romero and Ruiz’s (2007) study of 56 Mexican-origin, 11-15 year old adolescents (see Appendix M). As with Romero and Ruiz’s investigation, the measure used in the study is referred to as parental monitoring because it includes questions of parental knowledge, parental solicitation, and parental disciplinary practices. It is comprised of 7 questions rated on a 4-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very much disagree*) to 4 (*very much agree*). Items included the frequency with which parents were aware of adolescent’s whereabouts and social networks from the prospective of the

youth. The items were averaged, with a higher total score indicating greater parental monitoring. Romero and Ruiz (2007) reported internal reliability for their sample. At pretest,  $\alpha = .77$  and at post-test,  $\alpha = .81$ . Test-retest reliability after six weeks was  $r = .69$ ,  $p < .001$ . For the current sample of 410 participants, the mean of the scale was 21.55 with a Standard Deviation of 4.36 and the Cronbach's alpha for the seven-item scale was .81.

***Sexual activity outcome items.*** The sexual activity outcome items consisted of two questions: *Have you ever had sex?* and *How many sexual partners have you had?* (see Appendix N). Participants were asked to circle *yes* or *no* in response to the first item and they were allowed to fill in the appropriate number in response to the second item. These items were chosen as sexual activity outcome measures because they are two of the most important indicators of sexual activity and they are consistent with the most frequently used outcomes in current research (e.g., CDC, 2000; Discroll et al., 2007; Liebowitz, Calderon Castellano, & Cuellar, 1999; Lo, 2008; NCHS, 2007) as well as national data sets addressing teenage sexual activity such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2011).

**Social desirability.** Many of the questions asked on the surveys in this study, particularly the sexual activity items, were sensitive and personal in nature. Research shows that some respondents reply to questions in a manner that might be viewed favorably by others when they know they are being watched. This may generally take the form of over-reporting "good" behavior/attitudes or underreporting "bad" behaviors/attitudes (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). This has been found to be especially true for questions that are personal in nature and have values ascribed to them by society, such

as sexual activity. Given this, social desirability in the current study requires careful consideration.

A recent study of social desirability bias in Latinos as compared to Anglo-Americans (Hopwood, Flato, Ambwani, Garland, & Morey, 2009), found that due to cultural values of machismo, marianismo, simpatia, and familism, Latino young adults consistently respond in a more socially-desirable manner than Anglos. This calls into question the use of current reliable and valid measures of social desirability bias as perhaps not being culturally sensitive for Latinos. While this may suggest that it is even more important to assess for social desirability, it also demonstrates that the current measures of social desirability may not be appropriate for the Latino population with regard to cultural values and topics of a sensitive nature. Additionally, this study illustrated the need for new, culturally-relevant measures of social desirability bias.

In the current study, social desirability bias was not assessed, as it was not thought that the current measures would be able to accurately measure social desirability in this population based on the previously described study. Data collection procedures were designed, however, to minimize participants' desire to respond in a socially desirable way. For example, all participants were told by the researchers and given written information describing how participant anonymity would be assured (e.g., individual space to fill out questionnaires, name did not go anywhere on the survey, all participants were identified by number only). Additionally, participants were told that they were free to skip or not respond to any items that made them uncomfortable. Participants were also given private space to complete their surveys. Finally, all participants were encouraged to

respond truthfully and honesty with the knowledge that the researchers would not be able to connect their name with their data in anyway.

### **Qualitative Investigation**

**Participants.** All participants in the qualitative portion of this investigation were of Latino descent, spoke English, were middle and high school students, and were recruited from various schools and community sites in the greater Milwaukee area. Deliberate efforts were made to solicit participants who were diverse in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status, educational involvement and country of origin in order to hear opinions from a diverse group of adolescents from Latino background.

There were 10 males total in this qualitative study. The first focus group consisted of five males participating in an after school program focused on preventing gang involvement and violence at a community center. Alvin was an 18 year old male who identified as Mexican/Hispanic and was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Joe was an 18 year old male who identified as half Mexican and half White; he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. D was a 16 year old male in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade; he identified as Hispanic. OJ was a 14 year old male in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and he identified as Mexican/Hispanic. The last participant in this group was Bob who was a 13 year old male in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade; he identified as half Mexican and half White. The second focus group also consisted of five males. This focus group was conducted at a predominantly Latino urban, charter high school focused on promoting science and technology. Keon was a 17 year old male in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade who identified as Puerto Rican. Peru was a 15 year old male in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade; he identified as Peruvian. Ninja17 was a 15 year old 9<sup>th</sup> grade student who identified as Mexican. Luigi was a 14

year old male in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade who identified as Mexican. Spanky was a 14 year old male in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade; he identified as Puerto Rican.

This qualitative investigation included eight total female participants. The first female focus group consisted of five females who were students at an urban high school focused on promoting science and technology among Latino youth. All females in this group identified as being of Mexican descent. Elena was an 18 year old female in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Mirna was a 17 year old in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Jasmine was a 16 year old in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, April was a 16 year old in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and Victoria was a 15 year old in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Participants in the fourth focus group were three females who all participated in a program about healthy relationships at an urban community center. Hazel was a 17 year old female in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade from Puerto Rican descent. Snoopy was a 14 year old female in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of Mexican background. Pinky was a 13 year old female in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade from Mexican descent.

**Procedures.** The procedures for data collection, the explanation of the research questions and protocol, and the description of the research team are as follows.

**Data collection.** Participants were recruited via two different urban community centers and one urban high school. The primary researcher, her advisor, and another advanced doctoral student contacted these agencies and school and then went to the sites to describe the study to groups of Latino adolescents and agency/school coordinators. Consent forms in both English and Spanish were sent home with these youth, and those who returned the forms were contacted via their school or through a coordinator at the community agency to participate in a focus group discussion.

Before conducting the research focus groups, the primary investigator and one research assistant conducted a pilot focus group with five males of Latino descent at the urban high school at which two of the focus groups were collected. The purpose of this pilot focus group was to ensure that the questions were clear, that there was no confusion, and that all topics were being covered in a concise way that still allowed for deep exploration of the research aims. Before the pilot focus group began, it was explained to the participants that if anything was unclear, they should ask the primary researcher to clarify. The pilot group lasted 48 minutes and 10 seconds. Feedback from the participants on their experience of the pilot focus group was also solicited upon its completion. On the whole, participants reported a positive experience, felt that the primary researcher genuinely cared about their opinions, and perceived questions are clear and easy to understand. They also felt they were given ample time to respond to questions and felt their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs were valued.

The pilot focus group participants also offered some suggestions for improvement. One participant noted that he appreciated the snacks that were provided to the group and encouraged the investigator to ensure that there were always snacks available. Another participant suggested it could be helpful to define “other health behaviors” in question number 12, as this was somewhat unclear to him. One other recommendation made by the pilot focus group participants was that the researchers define the meaning of “cultural or ethnic background” as stated in the first question. The participants were thanked for their suggestions, and their input was included in revising the protocol. Specifically, the primary investigator made sure to define “other health behaviors” as “health-risk behaviors including smoking, drinking, using illegal drugs,

etc.” In future focus groups, the phrase “cultural or ethnic background” was not more specifically described to participants because the primary investigator desired for this question to be intentionally open-ended to allow participants to interpret this phrase in whatever way was appropriate and normal for them. Participants did not seem to have trouble answering this question in subsequent groups.

After the pilot interview was completed, the primary investigator consulted with her dissertation chair, who has expertise in the field of Latino adolescent psychology and in Grounded Theory methodology, for her feedback. Feedback from the participants in this pilot focus group, from the primary investigator’s research assistant, and from the chair of this dissertation indicated that the questions were clear, easy to understand, and that the participants felt comfortable answering the questions. This feedback yielded in only two changes made to the interview protocol (one question was slightly reworded for clarity, and the order of the questions about participants’ views of sexual activity was slightly changed). These changes did not significantly alter the interview protocol.

Once the interview protocol was finalized, the four focus groups were conducted. Efforts were made to coordinate the groups at a convenient time and location for the adolescents. All youth provided personal assent, in addition to parent/guardian consent, before participating in the study. All focus groups were facilitated by the primary researcher and one graduate student research assistant who took notes, observed, and asked follow-up questions as necessary. Focus groups were gender-specific (i.e., focus groups were all male or all female) in order to allow adolescents to describe any similarities and differences they may identify between their experiences and the experiences of the opposite gender.

Specific efforts were made to ensure that participants were comfortable at the data collection sites throughout the focus group interviews. For example, snacks and drinks were provided to all participants. Additionally, focus groups were held in private class or conference rooms (either of the school or community center) with comfortable chairs. All doors were closed during the focus group to ensure that responses were only heard by the researchers and other participants and to promote the safety of the participants. Two different focused groups were interrupted by others entering the room. When this occurred, the interview was stopped and participants were asked to stop their responses until the interrupting individual left the room. Once the doors were closed again and only the examiners and participants remained in the room, the interview continued at the same place. Both interruptions were very brief in nature (i.e., less than one minute) and did not appear to inhibit participants' responding.

At the start of each focus group, participants chose a code name to use during the group so their responses were not identifiable on the recording. Adolescents were instructed not to disclose any information that they heard within the focus group, however, confidentiality and anonymity of responses could not be assured in this setting and participants were made aware of this. The limits of confidentiality, as outlined in the consent forms, were reviewed with all participants prior to beginning the focus group. After the focus group was completed, participants were given \$5.00 as compensation. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed by the primary investigator.

***Research questions and focus group protocol.*** The main research questions addressed in this qualitative investigation were focused on the five Latino family variables and these Latino adolescents' beliefs about sexual activity. While numerous



other areas of inquiry could have been addressed in the qualitative portion of this investigation (e.g., influence of other cultural variables, educational/career goals of Latino youth, views of consequences of sexual activity, impact of family on other risk behaviors, etc.), the aim to keep it focused on the influence of family variables on sexual activity was consistent with the broader goals of the study. That is, this investigation aimed at understanding how adolescents view their families, what behaviors and/or activities adolescents engage in with their families, and how these values and behaviors impact their sexual activity beliefs. The protocol included questions focused on the five Latino family variables and sexual activity in order to be consistent with the focus of the overall study. For example, youth were asked questions such as: *What does your family mean to you? What is it like to be a Latina/Latino in your family? Are the differences between how families treat girls and boys? Do your parents talk to you about health behaviors generally and sexual activity in particular? What do they say? Do your parents monitor where you are and who you are with? What is sexual activity? How do your family beliefs and behaviors impact your sexual behavior, if at all?* Participants were encouraged to provide open responses to these questions and the primary investigator made every effort to hear from all members of each group on each question. Please see Appendix O for a full list of the focus group interview protocol questions.

**Research team.** The research team consisted of the primary investigator for this study, Brittany Barber, who has been extensively trained in using Grounded Theory Methodology to analyze qualitative data, and four graduate student research assistants who were involved in the project to varying degrees. One graduate student was a master's level doctoral student who was the secondary interviewer for the second focus group,

though she did not participate in any other part of the data collection or analysis. A male master's level counseling graduate student was involved in qualitative data analysis and provided valuable input as a male who was less familiar with the literature on Latino adolescents and sexual activity. The last two research assistants were female doctoral level counseling psychology students with extensive training in Grounded Theory methodology and adequate knowledge of the dissertation area. These three research assistants were extensively involved in the data analysis process and made up the primary research team for this qualitative investigation. All research assistants were given information on the variables that they were unfamiliar with in this study by the primary researcher. Additionally, the chair of this dissertation reviewed the qualitative data multiple times at various stages of analysis and served as an auditor for this study.

Before conducting the focus groups and analyzing the data, the research team discussed prior assumptions and biases they had that may affect their views of the data. During this discussion, a number of biases were articulated by all members of the team. Some of the main biases were that the investigators expected that decisions to engage in sexual activity would be influenced by family functioning. Also, endorsing high familism beliefs was expected to be protective for Latino youth and family was expected to emerge as an important cultural value for these youth. It was also proposed that extended family members would be important in the lives of these youth. Additionally, it was expected that youth would strongly identify with their cultural background, but would also voice their efforts to manage both Latino culture and White culture. Younger youth were expected to report greater parental involvement than older youth.

In terms of biases regarding the sexual activity beliefs of these youth, it was expected by the team that gender differences would emerge, such that boys would engage in sexual activity more frequently than girls and that boys would have sex at a younger age than girls. Additionally, one researcher supposed that girls may have less knowledge of how to obtain and use sexually transmitted infection and contraceptive methods (e.g., condoms, birth control pills). It was suggested that too much or too little parental monitoring may lead to increased sexual activity. Another identified bias was that differences would emerge in Latino boys' and Latina girls' perceptions of sexual activity and in how they talk about sexual activity. Finally, the team expected those youth who indicated that they are close to their families, who spend time with their families, and who report high monitoring and communication with their families would have stricter beliefs about sexual activity for teens.

These biases were revisited throughout the data analysis process and research team members were encouraged to remember their own biases and remind others of their biases. Additionally, themes only emerged that were agreed upon by all research team members in order to assure that the biases of one researcher were not significantly influencing the results.

**Data analysis.** Grounded theory strategies were utilized throughout the data collection and analysis process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is one of the more validated and tested qualitative methods (Ponterotto, 2002) and is being used increasingly by counseling psychology researchers (Pope-Davis et al., 2002; Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg, & Jackson, 2003). The analytic strategy used for this

dissertation is based on Strauss and Corbin's (1990) model and follows a process from open coding to theme generation.

*Open coding.* First, transcripts of the focus groups were organized into individual meaning units by the principal investigator and three graduate research assistants. Open coding, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), is a process of "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (p. 60). McLeod (2001) added that the aim of open coding is to generate as many categories as possible for a single meaning unit within the text. Each unit of meaning was separated and coded with at least one descriptive phrase. Meaning units consisted of as little as a phrase or a word up to as much as a sentence or a few short sentences that were thought to express the same meaning. Examples of meaning units are: "Hispanic boys are expected to protect the family," "Gender differences exist in how Latinas teens and Latino teens are treated by their parents," and "Hispanic families have different beliefs than other families." The transcript of the first focus group was coded by the entire research team together in order to assure that all members of the research team understood the process of open coding. The transcripts of the second and third focus groups were each coded by two research assistants. The transcript of the fourth focus group was coded by the primary researcher. If there were ever any questions about the meaning units, they were discussed by the whole team and agreed upon and research team meetings. The primary researcher then compiled a list of all of the meaning units from all of the transcripts in order to assure that each meaningful unit had been coded and to collapse concepts with equivalent meanings. Meaning units and the words from the transcript for each meaning unit were printed and cut out on individual sheets of paper. Each individual slip of paper also contained the

focus group number and page number of the transcript on which each quotation and corresponding meaning unit could be found for reference as necessary.

*Category generation.* In order to categorize the meaning units, the primary researcher and her research assistants read each meaning unit and decided together on a larger category for it. McLeod (2001) recommended that meaning units be sorted into categories that are dynamic activities or processes in order to better understand a particular group of meaning units. The slips of paper containing each meaning unit label and the words from the original transcript were grouped together thematically such that responses that were similar were categorized together. As categories of multiple meaning units were emerging, they were labeled with descriptive titles that described the meaning units in them so that future meaning units that may fit into the category could be easily categorized (e.g., “Hispanic families different/unique from other families,” “Feelings about time spent with family – enjoyable,” “Hispanic parents more strict with Latina females than Latino males,” “Parents know who participant is with they are not at home/not with them,” “Who participants talk to in family,” etc.). These category labels served as a way to create a precise definition for each category that captured the “essence” of all of the meaning units in that particular group. At this level of coding, miscellaneous meaning units that did not fit with any other meaning units, as well as meaning units that were unclear, were discarded. As the four researchers continued this dual process of categorizing and labeling the categories with clear definitions describing the meaning, they also continuously discussed possible findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and looked for emerging themes.

This process resulted in the generation of a master category list that included all relevant meaning units that had been grouped into categories. The master category list grouped meaning units into general areas of study (e.g., attitudinal familism, parental monitoring, sexual activity beliefs, etc.) for clarity. The constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was utilized so that an initial list of categories was formed and was constantly reviewed for the clarity of groupings of meaning units and category labels. This process assessed the fit of each meaning unit into the initial category, and ensured that all relevant pieces of data had been coded and sorted. A copy of the list of meaning units was reviewed by the dissertation chair in order to ensure completeness, clarity, and accuracy.

Of note is that this process was conducted twice, once with all of the data from the focus groups with males and once with all of the data from the focus groups with females. This was done so that any categories that may be different or the same for each gender would be easier to identify and aid in the process of comparing and contrasting the data from both genders later in the data analysis process. Also, any categories that emerged that were the same for both the male and the female participants were labeled the same, again for ease of identifying similarities and differences between males and females.

*Axial coding.* Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe the purpose of axial coding as to organize the meaning units that were developed during open coding and category generation. McLeod (2001) further suggests that axial coding should be a process involving “the identification of the connections under which categories occur, and the consequences of their occurrence” (p. 73), as this allows for meaningful and active

relationships to be observed between the data points. Therefore, the categories that were developed during category formation were reviewed in terms of their definitions and the number of participants that represented each category. This process led to the emergence of key categories and important sub-categories that fell within those categories. At this point, any categories that had three or fewer participants represented in them were discarded as it was determined that they did not include enough participants to be representative of the data. As recommended by Charmaz (2006), the relationships among categories were reviewed and clarified in this phase of coding. This process yielded an outline which the research team formed together during team meetings. An example of part of this outline can be demonstrated by the category of “Family Communication.” Under this category, one of the subcategories was “Who participants talk to in family and who they do not talk to in family.” This subcategory also had subcategories, consisting of: “specific people participants talk to (e.g., mom, cousins, dad, etc.),” “why participants talk to family (to feel understood),” and “why participants talk to family (to feel comfortable).” This is just one example of how all of the categories were grouped together and how the research team understood the data. Of note is that, after this process was concluded, categories that included 6 or more participants for the males or 5 or more participants for the females were determined to be major themes for the study. This cutoff was used in previous studies of Latino adolescents (e.g., Gomez et al., 2001) to determine which categories were most representative of the data. Additionally, the chair for this dissertation reviewed the category and subcategory list at this point in the data analysis to look for areas of overlap, ask questions, and ensure that researcher biases were not significantly influencing the data. She provided feedback in the form of questions for

further discussion and clarity to the primary researcher which was relayed to the research team and discussed during team meetings.

*Selective coding.* Selective coding is the process of analyzing the connections formed in axial coding and forming them into a grounded theory about the research question (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Upon the recommendation of Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), the first step of completing the theoretical narrative should be to describe the research concerns. Therefore, before the process of selective coding began, the researcher reviewed the main aims of this study with the research assistants, which was to understand the role of family in sexual activity among Latino adolescents. Then, the researchers delineated the research concern into its thematic components and defined those areas of inquiry based on the specific words of the participants and the categories that had been formed. The four researchers completed this task for each of the thematic constructs and discussed how the constructs were related and how they told the participants' story. Therefore, with the newly formed categories in outline form indicating major themes, the primary researcher and research assistants discussed different ways that the data represented how the Latino family variables were related to the sexual activity beliefs of these Latino and Latina adolescents. After discussion at numerous team meetings, the story of these participants was organized in a coherent way to demonstrate how the categories were related to one another. The core theme, or grounded theory, of this investigation was determined to be: The influence of cultural values and gender differences on Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring behaviors impacts Latino adolescents' beliefs about appropriate sexual behavior.



**Trustworthiness.** Once the main theme, or grounded theory, emerged from the qualitative data provided by the Latino adolescents, it was reviewed by the primary researcher with her dissertation advisor. As previously mentioned, the dissertation chair had reviewed the data multiple times previously throughout data analysis for clarity, therefore, she was able to have a good understanding of the data but was not as close to the data as members of the research team. Consequently, she was able to provide a more objective critique of the model, ensuring that it was true to the participants' responses. The primary researcher and dissertation chair met over several meetings and discussed the various findings and assessed the fit of the model to the data in order to ensure that the model was a true representation of the main themes of the data. With her feedback, minor alterations were made to the original model conceptualized by the team. This model was then sent to the team for feedback. Based on feedback from two of the three research assistants, the revised model appears to be representative of the qualitative data. Therefore, the core theme represents the main findings of this qualitative investigation as agreed upon by the primary investigator, her dissertation chair, and the research team members.

## Chapter IV: Results

### Quantitative Results

**Data analysis and screening.** Prior to completing quantitative data analyses, data were screened for outliers and missing data. Data entry errors were located by running the frequencies of all variables and items containing responses that were not part of the item scale (e.g., a response of 3 on a scale that is only 1 or 2) were checked against the original surveys. All errors were corrected according to surveys. Consistent with past research (e.g., Bettendorf & Fischer, 2009), univariate and multivariate outliers (statistically determined; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) were analyzed; none were removed, however, because they did not significantly alter group means. There were five statistical outliers in the Parental Monitoring scale, five in the MACVS – Familism Total, and three in the ARSMA-II-AOS; no other scales had any outliers. Additionally, individual missing data points were substituted by the appropriate means. Missing data points were as follows: Structural Familism – four; Behavioral Familism – none; ARSMA-II-AOS – 23; Parental Monitoring – one; Parent-Adolescent Communication – three; MACVS – Familism – one. In the few cases where a whole scale was missing the participant was not used in analyses of that scale. All statistics were completed using the most recent version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; i.e., PASW 18).

**Sexual activity.** Before describing the quantitative research questions results, it is first necessary to understand the actual sexual behavior of these participants. In the current sample, two participants did not respond to the item “ever had sexual intercourse.” Therefore, for 408 total participants, 286, or 70.1% reported that they had never had sex, while 122 or 29.9% reported that they have had sex. Of the total sample of

122 participants who reported that they have had sex before, 117 reported the number of partners that they have had, while five participants did not report their total number of partners. Of those who reported their number of partners, the modal number of partners was one partner (46 participants or 39.3% of those who had sex and reported their number of partners); the mean number of lifetime partners was 2.48 with a standard deviation of 2.27. The range of number of partners was from one to 15. The next most common numbers of partners were two (38 participants or 32.5%), three (14 participants or 12 %), and four partners (6 participants or 5.1%).

For the 232 girls in the sample, only one did not report whether she had been sexually active. Of the 231 that did report sexual activity status, 166 (71.9%) reported that they had never had sex and 65 (28.1%) reported that they have had sex. Again, the modal number of partners for the girls was one partner (26 or 40.6%); the mean number of lifetime partners was 2.25 with a Standard Deviation of 1.94. The next most common numbers of sexual partners were two (22 girls or 34.4%) and three partners (9 girls or 14.1%). The number of sexual partners for these girls ranged from one to 12.

For the 177 boys in the current sample, again, only one did not report his sexual activity status. Of the 176 boys who did report respond, 120 (68.2%) reported that they had not had sexual intercourse, while 56 (31.8%) reported that they have had sex. Again, the modal number of partners in the sample of boys was one partner (20 boys or 38.5%); next most common number of partners were three (15 boys or 28.8%), three (five boys or 9.6%), and four partners (four boys or 7.7%). The mean number of lifetime sexual partners for the boys was 2.77 with a Standard Deviation of 2.62.

The sexual activity of Latino adolescents was found to increase with age such that the younger adolescents were less likely to have had sex than the older adolescents. Additionally, the number of sexual partners increased as participants aged (see Table 1). Below the age of 17, adolescents who had engaged in sexual activity were in the minority; however, over that age, more adolescents reported they had engaged in sexual activity than did not.

Table 1

*Sexual Activity Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations by Age*

	Ever had sex – no (number of participants)	Ever had sex – yes (number of participants)	Mean number of sexual partners	SD number of sexual partners
13-14 years	116	16	2.06	1.68
15-16 years	66	36	1.94	1.71
17-18 years	50	70	2.85	2.71

**Research question 1.** What are the relationships between the five Latino family variables and assimilation?

*Correlations among the five Latino family variables.* Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were calculated with the full sample to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the five Latino family variables. Please see Table 1 for all of the statistically significant and non-significant values of the relationships between the five Latino family variables and assimilation to White culture (ARSM-II-AOS). Means and standard deviations for each of the Latino family variable scales can also be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

*Latino Family Variable Correlation Matrix.*

	Behavioral Familism	Attitudinal Familism	Parental Monitoring	Parent-Adol. Comm.	ARSMA-II-AOS
Structural Familism	.139**	-.054	-.112*	-.057	.090
Behavioral Familism		.004	.071	.058	.035
Attitudinal Familism			.332**	.341**	.118*
Parental Monitoring				.446**	.105*
Parent-Adol. Comm.					.068

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for the Latino Family Variables.*

	Structural Familism	Behavioral Familism	Attitudinal Familism	Parental Monitoring	Parent-Adol. Comm.	ARSMA-II-AOS
Girls						
Mean	2.16	5.22	3.09	34.31	4.06	3.93
SD	1.82	2.43	0.62	9.87	0.61	0.57
Boys						
Mean	1.95	5.51	3.07	36.00	4.07	3.72
SD	1.82	2.52	0.63	9.07	0.61	0.59

Structural familism had a small, positive correlation with behavioral familism ( $r = .139$ ,  $p < .005$ ), such that as participants reported a greater number of family members who lived within a one-hour drive of them, they also reported interacting more with family members. Also, a small, negative correlation between structural familism and parental monitoring ( $r = -.112$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was observed indicating that participants who reported a greater number of relatives lived close to them also reported decreased

parental monitoring. Behavioral familism did not correlate significantly with any other of the four Latino family variables. Attitudinal familism (MACVS Familism Total) did not significantly correlate with structural familism (i.e., number of relatives that live within a one-hour drive) or behavioral familism. It did moderately and positively correlate, however, with parental monitoring ( $r = .332, p < .001$ ) and parent-adolescent communication ( $r = .341, p < .001$ ). This means that as attitudinal familism increased for the participants, so did parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication. Parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication also had a moderate, positive significant relationship with one another ( $r = .446, p < .001$ ). No other statistically significant relationships existed among the five Latino family variables.

*Correlations between the five Latino family variables and assimilation.* Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were also conducted to determine whether any of the five Latino family variables were statistically related to the assimilation variable, ARSMA-II-AOS. There was a small, positive significant relationship between attitudinal familism and assimilation such that as participants had greater attitudinal familism, assimilation to White culture increased ( $r = .118, p < .017$ ). Second, there was a small, positive relationship between parental monitoring and assimilation to White culture indicated that as parental monitoring increased, assimilation to White culture decreased ( $r = .105, p < .05$ ).

In sum, then, there are some modest positive relationships between the five Latino family variables, with the strongest relationships existing between attitudinal familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication. The only unexpected relationship was the small, negative correlation between structural familism and parental

monitoring, which will be discussed further in the next section. Finally, there were two very small positive relationships between parental monitoring and attitudinal familism and assimilation; again, potential explanations for these relationships will be discussed further in the next section.

**Research question 2.** What are the relationships between the five Latino family variables, assimilation, and the two sexual activity outcomes (i.e., ever had sex and number of sexual partners) within each gender?

*Relationships between the five Latino family variables for the girls.* Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were conducted to analyze the relationships between the five Latino family variables for the girls. See Table 3 for the statistically significant and non-significant correlation values for these analyses. There was a small, positive significant relationship for the girls between behavioral familism and structural familism ( $r = .16, p < .015$ ). Attitudinal familism was found to be moderately and positively related to parental monitoring ( $r = .294, p < .001$ ) and parent-adolescent communication ( $r = .307, p < .001$ ). Additionally, there was a moderately strong, positive relationship between parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ).

Table 4

*Correlations between the Latino Family Variables, Assimilation, and the Sexual Activity Outcomes for the Girls*

	Behav. Fam.	Att. Fam.	Parent Monitor	Parent-Adol. Comm.	ARSMA II-AOS	Ever had sex	Number sex partners
Structural Familism	.160*	-.002	-.079	-.012	.046	-.012	-.034
Behavioral Familism		.006	.070	.069	.006	-.200**	-.197
Attitudinal Familism			.294**	.307**	.100	.010	.016
Parental Monitoring				.410**	.077	-.194**	-.150
Parent-Adol. Comm.					.074	-.050	-.121
ARSMA- II-AOS						-.001	-.090

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

***Relationships between the five Latino family variables, assimilation, and sexual activity for the girls.*** For the girls in the sample, no statistically significant relationships were observed between any of the five Latino family variables and assimilation to White culture (ARSMA-II-AOS). Further, none of the Latino family variables were significantly related to participants' lifetime number of sexual partners. Only two of the Latino family variables were significantly related to whether a participant had ever had sex: behavioral familism ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .005$ ) and parental monitoring ( $r = -.194$ ,  $p < .005$ ). Both of these were small, negative relationships such that as behavioral familism and parental monitoring increased, girls were less likely to have had sex.



*Relationships between the five Latino family variables for the boys.* Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were conducted to analyze the relationships between the five Latino family variables for the boys (see Table 4). There was a small, negative statistically significant relationship for the boys between structural familism and parental monitoring ( $r = -.157, p < .05$ ). This means that as boys reported a greater number of family members that lived within an hour's drive of them, they reported less parental monitoring. Behavioral familism was not significantly related to any of the other Latino family variables for the boys.

Table 5

*Correlations between the Latino Family Variables, Assimilation, and the Sexual Activity Outcomes for the Boys.*

	Behav. Fam.	Att. Fam.	Parent Monitor	Parent-Adol. Comm.	ARSMA II-AOS	Ever had sex	Number sex partners
Structural Familism	.125	-.113	-.157*	-.106	.128	.252**	.219
Behavioral Familism		-.010	.075	.028	.094	.107	.129
Attitudinal Familism			.389**	.375**	.147	-.144	-.028
Parental Monitoring				.507**	.138	-.336**	-.143
Parent-Adol. Comm.					.101	-.144	-.164
ARSMA- II-AOS						.147	-.173

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*.. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, the boys demonstrated similar positive, small-moderate statistically significant relationships between attitudinal familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication. Specifically, there were significant moderate, positive relationships between attitudinal familism and both parental monitoring ( $r = .389$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and parent-adolescent communication ( $r = .375$ ,  $p < .001$ ) for the boys. Also, there was a moderately strong, positive relationship between parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring ( $r = .501$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

*Relationships between the five Latino family variables, assimilation, and sexual activity for the boys.* Similar to the girls, the boys in the sample did not report any statistically significant relationships between any of the five Latino family variables and assimilation to White culture (ARSMA-II-AOS). Also notable is that none of the Latino family variables were significantly related to the second sexual activity outcome (i.e., lifetime number of sexual partners), just as they were unrelated for the girls in the sample as well. Only two of the Latino family variables were significantly related to the first sexual activity outcome for the boys (i.e., ever had sex): structural familism ( $r = .252$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and parental monitoring ( $r = -.336$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Structural familism had a small, positive relationship with whether a boy reported ever having had sex, such that as a participant reported a greater number of family members that lived within an hour's drive of them, they were more likely to have reported having had sex. Parental monitoring was moderately negatively related to ever having had sex, such that as parental monitoring increased, boys were less likely to have ever had sex.

Taken together, these data suggest that none of the Latino family variables or assimilation is related to an adolescent's number of sexual partners. In regard to the

sexual activity outcome of whether an adolescent has had sex, a few relationships were observed. While an increase in behavioral familism was correlated with decreased sexual activity for girls, structural familism was related to an increased likelihood of boys having had sex. Additionally, parental monitoring was the only Latino family variable that was negatively related to ever having had sex for both boys and girls at a moderately strong level.

**Research question 3:** Does attitudinal familism predict the two sexual activity outcomes (i.e., ever had sex and number of sexual partners) above and beyond the other Latino family variables for each gender?

*Logistic regression analysis for the girls.* A logistic regression analysis was conducted using the five Latino family variables as predictor variables and the outcome variable was “ever had sex.” The null hypothesis, which predicted the outcome using a constant, not the predictor variables, was correct in predicting whether one of the girls had ever had sex 71.7% of the time. The predicting variables were entered in a step-wise fashion according to their theoretical and statistical contribution to the model such that structural familism was entered first, parent-adolescent communication second, attitudinal familism third, behavioral familism fourth, and parental monitoring last (because it contributed to the greatest amount of change in the model). It was determined that behavioral familism and parental monitoring statistically contributed most to the variance of the model predicting whether an adolescent girl had sex.

After the predictor variables were entered, it was observed that the new model predicted the ever had sex outcome variable correctly 73.0% of the time, which was slightly improved from the null hypothesis. This indicates that knowing a girls’ level of

behavioral familism and the extent to which she believes her parents monitor her can help predict whether she has engaged in sexual activity above and beyond the null hypothesis.

The Cox & Snell  $R^2$  was .076 and the Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .109$ . As can be observed in the Chi-square analyses below, this logistic regression model was statistically significant.

Please see Tables 5 and 6 below for the logistic regression statistics.

Table 6

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients for Girls*

	Chi-square	df	Significance Level
Step	8.225	1	.004
Block	8.225	1	.004
Model	18.093	5	.003

Table 7

*Variables in the Equation for Girls*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Structural Familism	.007	.087	.006	1	.937	1.007
Parent/Adolescent Communication	.008	.018	.229	1	.632	1.008
Attitudinal Familism	.254	.274	.858	1	.354	1.289
Behavioral Familism	-.193	.072	7.19	1	.007	.824
Parental Monitoring	-.793	.287	7.64	1	.006	.453
Constant	1.098	1.19	.846	1	.358	2.999

*Logistic regression analysis for the boys.* A logistic regression was conducted similar to the one described directly above with the girls, but with the boys. One notable difference between the two analyses was that the predictor variables were entered into the model differently. For the boys, behavioral familism was entered first, parent-adolescent communication next, attitudinal familism third, structural familism fourth, and parental monitoring last. Again, this was based on statistical contributions to the model. The null, or constant hypothesis, accurately predicted whether or not an adolescent boy in this sample had ever had sex 67.6% of the time. The model using the predictor variables correctly predicted whether an adolescent boy had ever had sex 75.1% of the time. Thus, knowing a boy's level of structural familism and parental monitoring can help to predict whether he has had sex. Pseudo  $R^2$  values were also calculated; the Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .221$  and the Cox & Snell  $R^2 = .158$ . As observed in Table 7, this predictive model was significant. Please see Table 8 for logistic regression statistics for the boys.

Table 8

*Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients for Boys*

	Chi-square	df	Significance Level
Step	14.331	1	.000
Block	14.331	1	.000
Model	29.853	5	.000

Table 9

*Variables in the Equation for the Boys*

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Behavioral Familism	.105	.072	2.115	1	.146	1.111
Parent-Adolescent Communication	.010	.023	.192	1	.661	1.010
Attitudinal Familism	-.021	.312	.005	1	.945	.979
Structural Familism	.239	.098	5.942	1	.015	1.270
Parental Monitoring	-1.255	.353	12.613	1	.000	.285
Constant	1.676	1.331	1.585	1	.208	5.342

***Linear regression analysis for the girls.*** The second sexual activity outcome is the number of sexual partners each adolescent has had. Due to the fact that this is a continuous criterion variable, a hierarchical linear regression model was used to determine the best predictor model.

After entering the five Latino family variables in order according to theory and likely best statistical predictors (based on the correlation findings above), the five Latino variables were not found to predict the dependent variable “number of lifetime sexual partners” at a statistically significant level.

***Linear regression analysis for the boys.*** Again, a hierarchical linear regression analysis was used to predict the continuous criterion variable, “number of lifetime sexual partners” for the boys in the sample. As was the case with the girls, no statistical or model of the five Latino variables predicted the criterion variable at a significant level.

Overall, when the data are aggregated to address the third research question, it appears that none of the Latino family variables contribute above and beyond the null hypothesis to predict the number of sexual partners of a Latina girl or Latino boy. In regard to predicting whether an adolescent has ever had sex, for both the girls and the boys, parental monitoring appeared to be the best predictor, with behavioral familism for the girls and structural familism for the boys also contributing to the models that best predicted whether girls or boys would have sex.

**Research question 4:** Do the Latino family variables of attitudinal familism, behavioral familism, structural familism, parent/adolescent communication, and parental monitoring moderate the relationship between assimilation to White majority culture and the sexual activity outcomes for each gender?

Despite a clear theoretical and empirical research link between assimilation to white culture and an increase in risky health and sexual activity behaviors in the literature, including whether an adolescent has ever had sex and the number of lifetime sexual partners an adolescent has, the fact that no statistical links between these variables (i.e., assimilation to White culture and whether an adolescent has ever had sex; assimilation to White culture and number of lifetime sexual partners) were observed in the current sample for both the boys and the girls precluded the testing of the proposed moderation relationship. If assimilation to White culture had been related to the sexual activity outcomes, these would have been evident in the previously discussed correlation coefficient statistics, but they were not. Therefore, moderating relationships could not be tested in the current sample, as it is inappropriate to test for a potential moderating relationship between two variables where there is no previous statistical relationship.

## Qualitative Results

The purpose of the qualitative portion of this study was to investigate the possible relationships between familism, parent/adolescent communication, parental monitoring, beliefs about sexual activity, acculturation, and gender. As described above, the qualitative data analysis yielded a core theme: The influence of cultural values and gender differences on Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring behaviors impacts Latino adolescents' beliefs about appropriate sexual behavior. Importantly, it was also concluded that Latino families' cultural values, consisting of the importance of family and gender role expectations for males and females, directly influences this core theme. See Figure 1 for a visual depiction of this core theme.

In the following sections, the core theme will be described using illustrative quotes of participants' own words and examples. The model will be described just as Figure 1 is presented, starting with a description of the main Latino family cultural values the participants discussed. Then, how these cultural values influence gender differences that were observed in Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring behaviors will be explained. Next, the reporting of qualitative findings will be divided by gender to demonstrate the differences between the messages girls and boys received from their Latino families. How these gender differences in communication and monitoring behaviors will then be connected to the two main outcomes, that is, the sexual activity beliefs that were communicated by the Latina girls and Latino boys in these focus groups.

As these results are explained, certain phrases, which have been used in previous Grounded Theory studies (e.g., Gomez et al., 2001), will denote the number of participants that endorsed each idea. In instances where six or more boys or five or more

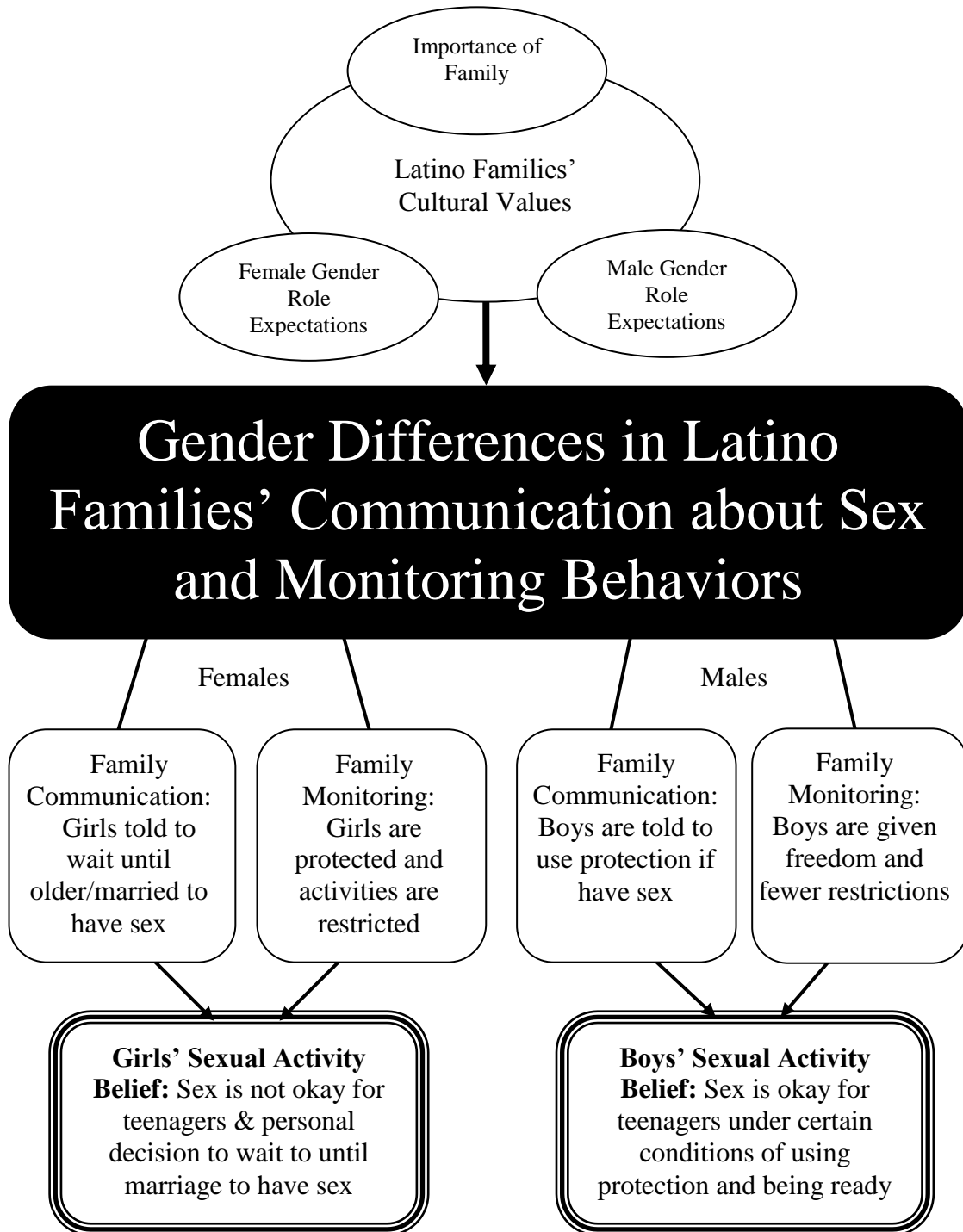


girls endorsed an idea, the phrases *usually*, *generally*, *typically*, *the majority*, *most*, *often*, *the Latino youth*, and *the participants* will be used. When four to five boys or three to four girls were in agreement, the phrases *some*, *several*, and *a number* might be used. Finally, the phrases *a few* or *few* will indicate responses of three or fewer boys or two or fewer girls. Before the core theme can be presented and discussed, it is first necessary to understand the cultural background of the participants.

Figure 1

*The influence of cultural values and gender differences on Latino families’*

*communication about sex and monitoring behaviors impacts Latino adolescents’ beliefs about appropriate sexual behavior.*



**Participants' cultural background and their perception of the uniqueness of Latino families.** Although the majority of the participants in the qualitative portion of this study identified as Mexican or Chicana/o, a few participants identified as Puerto Rican, a few identified as "half Mexican and half White," and one identified as South American. More than half of the boys in this study and a few of the girls enjoyed being from their cultures, followed Hispanic traditions, and had pride in their ethnic background. For example, Ninja17 said, *I am proud of my culture, Mexican. Being Mexican.* Many of the female participants also reported that they were very "traditional" and that certain parts of their culture "feel good" to them, such as the traditional music, the folk dancing, and the food. April noted, *When you go to a Mexican party and you hear mariachi... it just feels good!* Additionally, most of the Latina girls noted that feel comfortable in Latino cultures because they feel better understood and more accepted.

While these youth identified many positive attributes of Latino culture and strongly identified with their ethnic backgrounds, the majority of both girls and boys seemed to prefer living in both Latino cultures and White mainstream culture. This bicultural identification is perhaps best represented by Hazel, who said, *I just feel comfortable with both cultures... They're both cultures I can live around and be around.* Similarly, Luigi felt that it was not that difficult to live in a predominantly White area and said, *It's easy once you get to know the other cultures.*

Even though the participants noted many positive characteristics about being bicultural (e.g., being accepting of all people, getting to know people who are different from them), they also discussed some challenges related to living biculturally. Some of the most common difficulties discussed were related to language barriers and being the

target of stereotyping and discrimination by non-Latino others. For example, Alvin indicated that having to switch between languages was troublesome for him: *Probably the hardest thing to do is the language. Just having trouble and forgetting Spanish or English, or whatever. You go back and forth.* Some of the other boys disliked hearing about Latinos committing crimes in public media forums because they felt it reinforced negative stereotypes about Latinos. For example, Keon stated, *The trouble that the Latinos do get in, everyone thinks, "Oh all these Latinos are bad because one person did this." And everyone is stereotypical.* Another stereotype some of the Latina girls reported was that non-Latinos did not expect them to attend college. Victoria said, *Most of us... we're not really known for going to college and succeeding. And especially women, [they think] we don't really have a lot of strength.* While only some of the participants discussed how they dealt with these challenges, a few boys typically used humor and laughing to help them cope with difficulties related to being Latino.

One additional noteworthy component of their cultural background that emerged from the focus groups was that participants felt their families were unique and different from families from other ethnic backgrounds. The youth pointed to a number of different attributes that they believed made their families unique, some of which were: being welcoming, close, loud, and "in each others' business." When describing how he felt Latino families were different from other families, Luigi said, *Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, they go home and they go to their moms or parents and start talking about how their day was. For the [non-Latino] families, they get home, and they do their homework.* Latino youth talking to their parents more than youth in other families was also pointed out as unique about Latino families by some of the other boy participants. For example,

Keon noted, *I have a lot of friends that aren't Latino and they just go home and go straight to their room or turn on the TV, or go eat and stuff*. Snoopy hypothesized that non-Latinos may not spend as much time with family members *because they think that their parents are embarrassing and stuff*, whereas Pinky guessed that it may be due to non-Latino families being headed by a single parent. Regardless of the reason, some of the boys and girls agreed that they prefer to spend more time with their families than teens of other ethnic and racial backgrounds.

The participants also noted that Latino families know everything about the members of their family. For example, Victoria said, *People know what happened to you, either good or bad*. Elena added, *It's like, there [are] no secrets. There [are] no secrets between family [members]*. The participants seemed to have mixed feelings about whether it was a positive or negative attribute of Latino families that family members know a lot of information about one another, but most of them agreed that increased communication among members was a distinct characteristic of their families that did not exist in families of other ethnic backgrounds.

Similarly, some of the female and male participants indicated that they felt their families were closer than other families and that Latino families spent more time together than members of families of different ethnic backgrounds. Importantly, both boys and girls also felt that their family members enjoyed the time that they spent together more than members of other families. Keon exemplified this well when he said, *I feel like me, as a Latino, and my brothers and sisters and other Latinos, we go home and we cherish the time that we have with our parents and with our siblings*. Many of the boys described their families as close and welcoming and also considered this to be a unique attribute of

Latino families. A few of the female participants felt Latino families were unique because they have a lot of family parties, are very loud, have different food, and engage in cultural celebrations and dances.

A final characteristic many of these youth mentioned was unique to their families was that Latino families were stricter with their children and more protective of females than males. Luigi reported, *I think Latino families are really protective of their kids.* Additionally, most of the girl participants felt that their parents know where they are and who they are with when they are not at home. A few of the boys even went so far as to say that they always have to tell their parents where they are going before they leave. While more will be discussed later in this section about gender differences in parental monitoring, it is important to note here these youth felt their parents were more protective of females than males because these youth saw this as an attribute that was unique to Latino families in contrast to families from other ethnic backgrounds. For instance, most of these participants believed that non-Latino parents are less strict than Latino parents, especially with regard to their daughters. Elena stated that, *Most all Mexican moms are stricter toward the girls.*

In sum, one theme that emerged from qualitative data analysis is that an important part of these adolescents' cultural background is seeing their Latino families as unique and different from families of different ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, these Latino adolescents typically attributed positive characteristics (e.g., closeness, being together, community/sharing information) to their Latino families. Finally, they also described that Latino families are stricter with their children than non-Latino families and that, within this same construct, Latina female teens tend to be more overprotected than males.

**Latino families' cultural values.** Based on the questions posed to the participants in the focus groups, a few main cultural values emerged for most of these adolescents. The most prominent cultural value was the importance of family, followed by female and male gender role expectations. While numerous other Latino cultural values have been named in the literature review and in the broader psychological literature, the cultural values presented here represent only those that emerged from the participants' responses. Latino families' cultural values, as observed in the model, were found to directly influence the communication and parental monitoring in these Latino families, so it is necessary to understand how these values are perceived by these Latino youth.

*Importance of family.* The participants provided vivid descriptions of how they think and feel about their families, with the central message being that they believed family was important to their daily lives. The participants described family members, what they did with their families, and how they thought and felt about their families.

*Structure of the participants' families.* All of the participants included parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins as part of their description of who was in their family. A few participants defined family as those members who lived in the family home with them, but most others named individuals whom they counted as "family" regardless of where they lived. The majority of girls and boys indicated that their families were large in size, which appeared to indicate about 20 or more people. The most common response among girls when they were asked how many people were in their family was, *A lot!* Many of the participants also included family members that lived out of the country in their definition of who was in their family. For example, some of the girls and boys named family members in Mexico, Peru, and Puerto Rico.

*Family behaviors.* All of the participants named interacting with family members as one of the predominant features of their families. Whether gathering for holiday celebrations, reunions, or just engaging in a family dinner, most of the participants described that interacting with family members on a weekly basis was characteristic of their families. For example, most of the boys mentioned the holiday parties and family reunions were typical times that they interacted with family members. Some of the boys also described getting together with their uncles and boy cousins to watch sports games and matches as well as have family meals. OJ stated, *Oh yeah, we do that. Oh yeah, we do cookouts and we get together on holidays.* Spanky also described that, *Usually, my other cousins, we get together when there [are] boxing matches or something like that.* The majority of girls described that the females in their family get together for cook-outs, barbeques, family dinners, and just “hanging out.” For example, April described that, *Right now, my mom, my aunt, me, and my little cousin, since it is all women, there is a lot of gossip... We'll just cook and always be talking together, and it's really nice.*

A few of the participants noted that spending time with family members is a positive activity for them because their family members are role models to them and they obtain advice from them. For example, Snoopy described that family members *show you how to solve problems now and in the future.* Pinky and Hazel also characterized their family members as *role models* who *guide you to the right step.* A few of the boy participants shared that they also use family get-togethers to give advice to their younger family members. Keon reported that, *A lot of [cousins] ask me for advice like how to keep a girl... and I tell them, because usually I bring my girlfriend around family, so they see how we act around them so when they bring a girl home, they know how to act with them.*



While some of the participants indicated that they only see family members on holidays or when they are visiting their country of origin, most of the participants indicated that they see at least some of their family members once per week or more. OJ stated that he sees his family on the weekends, and Alvin said that he sees his aunt and cousins at least once per week. Some participants, such as Spanky, noted that they see relatives who do not live with them but live nearby daily.

Some of the participants noted a difference between how often they see and interact with family that lives in the United States versus family members that live in a different country. Many of the girl and boy participants specifically attributed that distance between where they live and where their out-of-country family members live as the specific reason that they do not see them with the same frequency.

Both girl and boy participants had positive feelings about the amount of time they spent with family and some of the participants even expressed that they wished they spent more time with family members. Jasmine shared, *Yes, when we get together, it's a really good time*. Similarly, April described her family as *fun to hang out with* and Hazel said that she *really [does] enjoy when they're around*. Only three of the boys and one of the girls said that they wished they could spend less time with their families; typically they described that usually they spent so much time with families that sometimes they just get "bored" of them or become *annoyed after a while and just want to leave*. A few of the participants also noted that they wished they did not have to spend so much time with their families so they could make more time to spend with their friends. The majority of the total group of participants described that the amount of time that they spent with their

families was “good” or “just right,” and over half of the girls stated that they wished they saw their family members more often.

*Attitudes about family.* Just as important as describing what they do with their families and the frequency with which they see their families is how these participants describe that they feel and think about their families. The majority of participants described their families as very important to them and meaningful. Most of the girls described that they loved their families. For example, Luigi said, *I think family's really important.* Similarly, Jasmine described, *You have to be with family... it's something really meaningful.* Other girls stated the feelings they have about their families defy description. Snoopy, for example, said, *You can't explain [family], it's that big.* The boys also described their families as important parts of their lives, but in a slightly different way. Boys said that their families will always be there. Joe described this theme as: *I'm saying they're not going to leave. There's no getting rid of them. They'll always be there.* Alvin similarly described that even despite conflict, family sticks together, *Even though you have problems and arguments with them, and get mad at them, and sometimes you just wish they were pretty much gone, no matter what, they are still your family.*

One theme describing the participants' feelings about their families that was endorsed by a majority of both the girls was that family “always come first” and is “dependable.” For instance, Alvin posed, *Because whatever happens, your family comes first, ya know?* Similarly, Snoopy stated that family *always looks out for you* and that she would *do anything for them.* Pinky also shared that, *Every time I need something, they're always there for me.* On the whole, the cultural value of familism, including those

attitudes, behaviors, and structures that comprise it, was described by the majority of these Latino adolescent participants as important to them and their families.

*Gender role expectations.* Another of the cultural values that was described by these participants relates to the gender role expectations for males and females. As is depicted in the model, traditional gender roles are thought to be a value held by most of the participants' families in the current study and also appear to influence the parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring as described by these Latino teens. Some of the girls and boys described that their families value the traditional roles ascribed to males and females by the Latino culture. Only two of the boys and none of the girls stated that they did not see a difference in what Latino parents expected of their teenage sons and daughters, stating instead that expectations are the same for girls and boys in Latino families. A majority of the boys and girls, however, stated that gender differences exist in the expectations of Latino teenage boys and Latina teenage girls.

*Female gender role expectations.* Some of the adolescent girls in the study perceived from their families that, because they are females, they should be more involved in cooking, presenting family meals, doing dishes, and cleaning the house than their male counterparts. A few of the girls noted that this is not what they want for themselves, however, because they believe that men and women can be equal when it comes to housework, cooking, and raising a family. For example, Snoopy said, *I'm not getting a husband, because I don't believe that girls have to stay in the house, cleaning and stuff. They can do work. They are just as strong as guys.* A few of the girls acknowledged, though, that they are more protected in their families than boys and believed it was their role to be protected by males in their families.

*Male gender role expectations.* A few of the boys and some of the girls agreed that there is an expectation of Latino boys to protect females in the family. Pinky stated that Latino teen males are expected to take over the role of protector and provider for the family should something happen to the father in the family: *If something ever happened to your dad, they [teenage brothers] would always be there, like another dad.* A few of the girls in the focus groups also felt that Latino boys were expected to earn money for the family, whereas this expectation did not exist for girls. Snoopy stated, *My dad says that it's the man's job to go to work and stuff and put food on the table.* Male gender role expectations in this study, then, seemed to consist of providing for one's family, protecting the members of the family, and always being there for family.

As is depicted in Figure 1, the Latino family values that were just described influence the messages that Latino families communicate to their children and how they monitor their children's behaviors. Specifically, the gender role expectations, from the perspective of these Latino teenagers, appear to influence how Latino parents communicate about all topics with their teenagers, including sexual activity, as well as how closely Latino parents monitor where their children are and what they are doing when they are not at home. Therefore, the next sections will explicate Latino family parental monitoring and communication broadly as well as describe how Latino families communicate beliefs about sexual activity to teens. As is clearly depicted in the model, attention will be given to distinguishing the experiences and beliefs of girls and boys with regard family communication about sex and parental monitoring.

**Participants' definition of sexual activity.** Before explaining how their family members' communication and monitoring influences their beliefs about sexual activity, it

was important to understand first how they define the term sexual activity. Although this is not an explicit part of the figure, it does impact how the figure can be interpreted with regard to what these adolescents actually mean when they describe their beliefs about sexual activity. When asked to explain what sexual activity is, the participants did not converge on one definition. Rather, a few definitions of sexual activity were identified. For example, five of the girls indicated that sexual activity is intercourse between a man and a woman, but struggled to put this notion into words. The second most common response was that sexual activity can be something just for fun, which four of the girls endorsed. For instance, Snoopy said, *It's (sexual activity) all about the pleasure and stuff*. It appeared, then, that for the current study at least, sexual activity was generally thought of as an act of intercourse between a male and a female and that it could be for fun.

**Latino families' parental monitoring.** Latino families' parental monitoring as described by the Latino teenagers in these focus groups appear to be one of the main conduits by which Latino parents demonstrate their cultural values to their Latino teens, as is depicted in Figure 1. It also seems to be one of the ways that parents communicate appropriate behaviors regarding sexual activity to their teens. Therefore, it is very important to understand parental monitoring as a mechanism by which Latino parents influence their Latino and Latina teenagers' sexual activity beliefs and behaviors, the practice which appears to be influenced by their cultural values as described above.

Almost all of the girls and over half of the boys positively endorsed that their parents always or usually know where they are when they are not at home or with their parents. Luigi said about his parents, that, *before I leave home, they want to know where I am going and with who*. Similarly, a few of the other participants mentioned calling their

parents using cell phones or sending text messages to their parents to let them know where they were.

When asked how their parents monitor them, most of the girls and some of the boys indicated that they initiate telling their parents where they are; further, they indicated knowing that their parents would be upset with them if they do not tell their parents where they are. A few of the boys indicated that they “check-in” with their parents in order to avoid consequences such as having their cell phones taken away. Most participants agreed that their parents call their cell phones to see where they are and then they typically tell them. Although a few of the girls and boys indicated that they are not always truthful about where they are, they did say that they typically answer the phone when their parents call and agree to be home by a certain time. Some of the girls and a few of the boys also mentioned that others (relatives/friends) tell their parents where participants are/who they are with if they see them out. One participant shared an example: *My mom has contacts everywhere... all her friends and stuff and all my aunts, they are everywhere watching me!*

When these Latino teens were asked why their parents know where they are and who they are with when they are not at home, one of the main themes that emerged for the girls was that parents set limits for their protection. Jasmine shared, *My mom is different; she never lets me go out. She always protects me and wants to know where I am going to be at.* Elena noted that her parents have to know her friends before she is allowed to spend time with them. Referring to her mom, she said, *If she doesn't know a person, she's like, "Oh well, I want to meet them first, to see how they are."* A few of the boys simply explained that their parents monitor them because they are strict.

***Gender differences in parental monitoring.*** The majority of both Latino teenage girls and boys in the study noted gender differences with regard to Latino parents' monitoring of their male and female teenage children. Specifically, they believed that Latino parents are more protective of females than males and Latino males have more freedom than females. For example, some of the female participants noted that their parents are more overprotective of them than their male peers. Mirna described that both she and her brother can ask to go to the same party, and her brother is allowed to go, because he is a boy, but she is not allowed to go because she is a female. She said that she asks her mother, "*Why him? Why him? Porque no?*" and then [her mother says], "*Because he's a boy!*" A number of both girls and boys in the study agreed that boys are given freedom and fewer restrictions by parents with regard to their behaviors when they are not at home with the family. Similarly, Pinky described that in her family, *Even if [the girl] is older, they're (the parents) are still like, "You have to be here at this time." With them (boys), it's just like "Okay, don't be home too late."* Ninja17 likewise stated, *I agree with what he said with girls in Latino families tend to be overprotected.* Keon concurred: *[Latino] parents are very hesitant in letting a girl go out.*

Some of the girls hypothesized that the reason their parents are more strict with them than their male counterparts is because they do not trust Latino teen boys (who are not given as many restrictions) and are scared of the possibility of a daughter getting pregnant as a teen. April noted that she believes Latino parents are more protective of girls than boys because they do not want their teenage daughters to get pregnant and *ruin their lives*. No other hypotheses of potential reasons for the discrepancy in parental monitoring of the opposite-gendered teens were mentioned by the participants.

***Participants' feelings about parental monitoring.*** With regard to how the participants felt about their parents monitoring of them, some of the girls reported that it was okay for their parents to know where they are and who they are with, whereas a few of the boys reported that they wished their parents would not monitor them so much. Of the girls who reported that they did not mind their parents' monitoring of them, the girls typically said that they do not mind the monitoring because they know it is "good for them." Exemplifying this point, Pinky said, *At first, you're mad, but then you think about it, and they're actually taking care of you.*

**Latino families' communication.** As is illustrated in Figure 1, Latino families' communication, in addition to parental monitoring, is a primary way that Latino family values are thought to be transmitted to Latino teenagers. Further, Latino families' communication is thought to be the way by which the values are thought to impact the sexual activity beliefs and actions of these Latino youth in the current study. The majority of the girls and boys in this qualitative study indicated that they engaged in meaningful conversations with their family members. Participants varied with regard to whom they preferred to speak, but parents, siblings, cousins, and aunts/uncles were mentioned most often. Most of the female participants reported that they talked to same-gender family members (e.g., mothers, girl cousins, aunts); similarly, boy participants reported mostly talking to other male family members (e.g., uncles, male cousins). Over half of the boy participants and at least two thirds of the girls mentioned that they talk to family members at least once per day, and a few indicated that they would miss this time talking to family if it were not there.



When asked to describe what participants typically discuss with their family members, both a majority of girls and boys go to family members to discuss problems in their lives. For instance, Snoopy mentioned that with family, *We talk about advice, like boyfriend problems or friend problems*. A couple of the other girl participants similarly agreed that they discussed problems with friends/significant others with their family members and are given advice from family members regarding how to handle these situations. Most of the boys stated that they talked with family members about whatever comes up. Although Keon mentioned that he preferred to speak with his mother rather than a male relative, he similarly reported going to family members with both joys and problems: *If there's something bad going on, I talk to my mom. I don't know, when something is good too, I talk to my mom*.

Most of the boys and girls in the study agreed that talking to family does something special and helpful for them. A few of the boys indicated that talking to parents and family members helps them feel closer to family and even encourages them to converse with relatives more often. Spanky stated, *Talking to my parents really gives me more courage to talk to them even more*. Keon added, *It (talking to family members) builds a trusting relationship. If there is nothing else, there's trust*. Some of the girls reported that talking to their family members help them to feel better about their problems. April, for instance, said that talking to kin *makes your conscious feel good*. A few of the girls also reported that family members give them support when they talk to them, which they appreciate and enjoy.

***Latino families' communication about sex.*** Even though most of the girls and boys reported conversing with relatives including parents about problems with peers or

their regular day-to-day activities, when participants were asked who they would go to with questions about sexual activity, both the majority of girls and boys indicated that they would go to non-parent family members. Both girls and boys mentioned that they would talk to same-gender siblings, cousins, or aunts/uncles. Specifically, three of the girls mentioned they would go to an older sister with questions about sex, and a few additional girls reported that they would approach an older female cousin with questions about sexual activity. Similarly, most of the boy participants indicated that they would approach older brothers or uncles with questions about sex.

While the participants reported that they would most likely approach older non-parent, same-gender, family members with questions about sexual activity, they also specifically indicated that they would not go to their parents to seek answers to their questions about sex. By way of example, April said, *I couldn't do that (talk about sex) with my mom*. Similarly, Snoopy reported, *I wouldn't go to my dad because he'll just say some other random stuff*. Additionally, when asked the question, "Would you go to your parents with questions about sex?" almost all of the boys simply said, *No!* Only a small group (i.e., three of the girls and three of the boys) reported that they would definitely go to their parents with questions about engaging in sexual activity. Only three participants in the whole sample indicated that they had already approached their parents with questions about sex, whereas the other three said that they would approach their parents if they felt that needed to do so.

This large group of participants who indicated that they would not go to their parents with questions about sex discussed a variety of reasons for not approach their parents, which included wanting to experience sexual activity for themselves, avoiding

awkward conversations with parents, believing that their parents will think that they are having sexual activity if they ask questions about it, and feeling that sexual activity is something they want to keep “personal” or to themselves. For example, D stated:

*I like to experience things by myself. I don't like other people telling me. It's just like watching a movie – if you go with a friend and they tell you what happened in the movie, then there is no point in watching the movie. You already know what is going to happen. I like to have my own experiences by myself.*

With regard to her decision not to approach her parents with questions about sexual activity, Hazel said, *I don't know, I just don't feel comfortable*. Also, Pinky and Snoopy believed that if they went to their parents with questions about sex, they will assume that you are thinking about it or planning to do it. One participant agreed stating, *Maybe if you ask them, they're going to think that you're trying to do it or you're doing it*.

Another reason a number of the boy participants felt that they would not go to their parents with questions about sexual activity is because they prefer to keep information about their sexual activity private. For example, Alvin noted, *Telling them (his parents) is something I wouldn't do. Just wouldn't do. I would keep it to myself. Myself and my partner. ... It's pretty much my business, my sex life*. In concert with this idea, Luigi shared, *I think you should keep personal stuff away from your family, like when you have sex, because it's weird telling them – like just coming up to your parents and telling them “I had sex.”* Some of the girls also echoed the sentiment of it being weird or awkward to talk to one's parents about sex.

Even though the participants reported that they would not go to their parents with questions about sex, the majority of girls and boys also reported that their parents or

another adult family member has approached to discuss some aspect or consequence of sexual activity. Only three of the boys and three of the girls reported that their parents have not talked to them about sex. Usually, in the cases where a parent has not talked to them about sex, however, another family member has talked to them about engaging in sexual activity. A few of both the girl and boy participants reported that an uncle has spoken to them about sex. Alvin stated, *My uncle, he maybe [talk to him about sex] once or twice, but it wasn't serious. It was just joking and fooling around. And that was pretty much it.* Some of the other participants reported that their parents have already approached them to talk about sexual activity. For example, Peru stated, *I already had the talk about sex with my parents, a long time ago.* Jasmine also shared that her parents have talked to her about sexual activity. *My parents [talked to me about sex]. And then [my mom] started giving me this whole speech about that thing and it was weird.*

Some of the girls also had a specific sense that their parents and adult family members do not approach them to talk about sex “until it happens,” which refers to when a teenage girl that the family knows becomes pregnant. Elena typified this idea when she said, *Latino parents don't talk about sex until it happens. That's when they start talking.* Snoopy shared another example,

*Every time we're (she and her mother) in the car and she sees a young girl who's pregnant, she always gives me “the talk” about not to get pregnant because then you're going to be carrying all that weight on you and you'll always have to work.*

It seemed to a few of the female participants that their mothers avoided talking about sex until a young pregnant girl was around them, on a TV show, in a commercial, or a

teenage girl in their family became pregnant. In concert with this idea, April shared, *Let's just say your mom's friends' daughter got pregnant. And then it's just (her mother to her), "Did you see this one? This is what happens!"* Elena chimed in, *Yeah, and [Latina mothers] are like "this could happen to you!"* While some of the girls were in agreement about their parents only approach them to discuss sexual activity in the presence of an example of a pregnant teen, the boys in this sample did not discuss or agree on any particular examples or events that prompted their parents or adult family members to initiate a conversation about sexual activity, though a small minority of the boys did report that their parents had initiated a discussion about sexual activity with them.

Although the specific messages that Latino girls and boys report being told by parents and other adult relatives will be discussed in the next session, it is important to note here that, just as the boys and this girls in this study agreed that parents monitored girls more closely than boys, both the majority of the girls and boys in this sample believe that Latino teenage girls and boys hear different messages from their parents/adult family members regarding sexual activity. Specifically, one of the main themes that emerged in this study was that both the Latino girls and boys were very much in agreement about what the messages are to girls and boys and that they differed according to gender. That is, almost all of the girls and boys perceived that they heard gender-specific messages from family members regarding sexual activities. They also knew the message that the opposite gender heard, and in this sample, typically the messages were consistent (i.e., both boys and girls reported that boys received one message about sex from adult family members, and vice versa).

***Gender differences in Latino parents' communication about sex.*** In the next few sections, the Latino boys' and girls' perceptions about gender differences in what Latino parents communicate to their teenage sons and daughters will be explicated. As is displayed in the figure, and was described above with regard to gender differences in parental monitoring of Latina teenage girls and Latino teenage boys, Latino families' communication about sex will be described by gender because the messages that Latino teenage girls and boys hear, from their perception, denote specific gender differences.

*Latino families' communication about sex to Latina girls.* All of the girls in this sample reported that their parents or other adult family members have told them to wait and not have sex yet. Implied in this theme is that the girl participants are encouraged to wait to have sex until "something changes." One of the major "changes" for which girls were encouraged to wait before they had sex that emerged from these data was marriage (reported by six of the girls). There were also a few other changes in circumstance and events for which girls were encouraged to wait before they had sex by their adult relatives which included turning 18 years old, having a good job, and finding a trustworthy partner.

Some of the participants noted that their parents told them to wait until they are married to engage in sexual activity, but if they do not want to wait that long, they should at least wait until they have graduated from high school or turned 18. *They say, "Oh, you should wait until you get married, and if not, wait 'til you're 18,* Hazel shared that her parents tell her. Snoop reported hearing a similar message from parents about how long to wait before engaging in sexual activity. Her parents told her *that you should wait until you're married. Or at least wait until you have a good, decent job and stuff. And get a lot*

*of money.* As stated before, Latino parents and adult family members seem to tell Latina teens to “wait to have sex” mostly when confronted with an example of a pregnant teen, which to the teenage girls in this sample implied that their parents only do not want them to have sex so they do not get pregnant. Pinky reported that her uncle told her not to have sex so she does not become pregnant as a teen, like her sister did: *My uncles usually come up to us, and they’re like, “Don’t make the same mistakes your sisters did. Learn from their mistakes.* One participant noted being somewhat confused about whether her parents wanted her to really wait until she was married to have sex because of their values or if they just did not want her to have sex as a teenager to avoid the possibility of pregnancy.

As noted above, the boys in this sample also shared what they believed Latina teens were told about sexual activity by adult kin. The boys described a very similar message communicated about sex to teenage girls that the teenage girls expressed above. Specifically, boys believe that Latina teens have to worry more about teenage pregnancy, so parents and adult family members tell them not to have sex. As Alvin said,

*Boys and girls, like I said, they’re very different. For girls, their moms have different opinions, that they’d rather them not have sex when they’re teens. For guys, they’re not really that worried about them. Not as worried about what guys do. Just girls, ya know? Getting pregnant and stuff, that’s a big deal for them.*

Similarly, Luigi shared,

*When you are having a talk with a girl, [parents] tell [the girl], “If you have sex, you’re going to get pregnant, and your life is going to be ruined. You’re not going to be able to have a career because you’re going to be having a baby.”*

Keon additionally noted, *I think Latino parents tell the girls “don’t do it (have sex)” and they try to motivate them not to (have sex).*

*Latino families’ communication about sex to Latino boys.* The majority of boys in this study reported that when their parents or other adult same-gender family members talk to them about sex, they typically tell them: “If you have sex, be careful” or “If you have sex, use a condom.” Ninja17 had this to say on the topic: *Well, my dad, he wouldn’t say, “Go out there and have sex.” He says, “If that does happen, just wear protection.”* He further elaborated that his parents just keep reminding him that, *If I do anything, to use protection.* This seems to typify the Latino teenage male communication from adults regarding sexual activity, that having sex as a teenager is not necessarily encouraged, but it is acknowledged that these Latino boys may have sex in their teenage years, and if they do, sexual activity is accepted for boys if they use some contraceptive method. Peru agreed, *And, for the boys, the parents will say, “If you’re ready, have sex, but use protection, because you don’t want to get the girl pregnant and regret it the rest of your life.”* A few of the boys in this sample acknowledged that they also received dual messages from adults regarding sexual activity being both encouraged not to have sex, but to use protection if they do have sex. A small number of the boys agreed that this message was confusing, but generally believed that their parents just wanted them to use some method of pregnancy prevention if they decided to engage in sexual activity.

As it was when the boys were able to accurately predict the message that Latina teenagers heard from their parents regarding sexual activity, the girls also reported that boys heard the same message about sex that they boys stated they heard, that is, to use protection if they have sex. Victoria shared,



*My dad, I've heard him talk to my brother – he's younger than me. And he says, if there is no need to do it, then don't do it. But if it comes one day that you want to, be sure that you are doing the right thing in your mind and to use a condom.*

In the same way, Elena stated that she has heard her uncles tell her teenage boy cousins, *Just use a condom or something. You can do it (have sex), just use a condom.* Now that the messages communicated to girls and boys regarding sexual activity by their family members have been discussed, the impact of these messages on these Latino teenagers' personal beliefs about sex for themselves and other teenagers will be elaborated.

**How gender differences in Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring impact Latina girls' sexual activity beliefs.** The teenagers were asked to decide whether the messages they heard from their family members (described above) or their cultural identification influenced their own opinions about whether it was okay for teenagers to have sex and whether they would engage in sexual activity. Some of the girls indicated that their cultural identification and cultural identity did not influence their decision to engage in sexual activity, while most of the other girls were unsure if there was a relationship between their cultural identification and their decision to have sex. Most of the girls however (five participants) did report that what their parents tell them about sexual activity (i.e., to wait to have sex) does influence their decision to engage in sex and does influence their beliefs about whether it is okay for teenagers to engage in sexual activity. For example, Hazel stated, *I do listen more to my mom. I do my decisions thinking about what my mom would think of me.* Victoria also said, *Yeah it (what her parents say about sexual activity) influences me. They told me a lot.* It is important to recall that even though the girls in this study did not report their sexual activity beliefs as

being directly influenced by culture, it likely was indirectly influenced by the Latino cultural values as listed above and depicted in Figure 1. Additionally, only two of the participants reported that their family's beliefs and statements about the acceptability of sex for teenagers did not influence their own beliefs.

All of Latina teenage girls in this qualitative study reported that their own personal opinion regarding sexual activity in adolescence was that teenagers should not engage in sexual activity. Jasmine likened her decision to her parents telling her that she did not need to "rush through" life and experience activities that are meant for adults at this point in her life. Snoopy added: *It's not good to have it (sex) when you're young, to have sex when you're young. Teens should wait until they're older.* The girls were somewhat mixed, however, about whether teenage girls should wait to have sex until they are older (i.e., over 18 years of age) or if they should wait until marriage. Hazel stated that she believed it was okay for any teenager over the age of 18 to engage in sexual activity, whereas some of the other girls stated that it would be preferable if teenagers waited until they were married in have sex.

In addition to not believing that teenagers should engage in sexual activity until they are older or married, most of the girls reported a personal decision not to have sex until they are married. In the current study, girls were not pressed to give reasons for these beliefs, though at least one participant did provide her rationale for why she desired to wait until she got married before engaging in sexual activity. Specifically, Victoria shared, *Yes, until I've made my decision about who that person is going to be and spend the rest of my life with them, (I am not going to have sex). I do want to get married in a dress, to show my kids, and be pure.* Mirna agreed stating that she wants to wait until she

is married to have sex. Five other of the girl participants agreed with Victoria and Mirna that they planned to wait to have sex until they are married.

**How gender differences in Latino families' communication about sex and monitoring impact Latino boys' sexual activity beliefs.** As is depicted in Figure 1, the Latino boys in this study also had specific beliefs regarding sexual activity. Again, however, it is first important to know how they defined sexual activity in order to best understand their beliefs about the acceptability of sex for teenagers. The boys in this study did not consistently agree on one definition of sexual activity. The most common expression used to define sexual activity, however, was "a guy and a girl doing their business." To a few of the boys in this study, this seemed to denote sexual intercourse between a male and a female, but most of the boys found it a challenge to define sexual activity and instead noted that it can be defined in many ways such as "making love," "having sex," "intercourse," "anal sex," and "pleasure." Four of the boy participants distinguished "having sex" from "making love" by indicating that "making love" is having sexual intercourse with someone you have strong feelings for.

Most of the boys in this study reported that their cultural identity and their family's beliefs and communication about sex did not influence their own personal decision to engage in sexual activity. In fact, the majority of boys felt that deciding to engage in sexual activity had nothing to do with their cultural or ethnic background. Only two of the boys stated that they felt their cultural background may influence their decision to have sex with regard to not wanting to reinforce a negative stereotype that there are a lot of pregnant teenagers from Latino backgrounds. Ninja17 said,

*I think that a stereotype of Latinos is that we have a whole bunch of teen pregnant people. And if we go out there and have more teen pregnancies, then this is proving to them that we are... that their stereotypes are correct.*

Similarly, the vast majority Latino boys in this study reported that what their family members and parents said to them about sex did not influence their decision to engage in sexual activity, which was the opposite of the girls in this study who felt that their family's communication about sex did influence their beliefs about sexual activity. For example, D explained: *If [my parents] tell me to do it or not to do it, that's their opinion. So, it's not my opinion. My opinion may be different and it's my decision.* Keon added, *I think that it is ultimately up to you whether or not you have sex or any kind of sexual activity.* Some of the boys in this study even went so far as to say that it is okay for teenagers to care about what their family members say to them about sexual activity, but still not take it into account in their own decision about whether to have sex.

Although the boys did not agree on one definition of sexual activity, and did not agree that their cultural backgrounds or family communication about sex influenced their beliefs, most of the boys agreed it was acceptable for teenagers to have sex if certain conditions were in place. Three conditions were mentioned by a few participants each, including: using protection, being comfortable with/ready to have sex/with the right person, and being responsible. Only one male participant did not believe it was okay for teenagers to engage in sexual activity while four of the participants indicated that they were unsure if it was okay for teenagers to have sex, but, if the conditions described above were met, then it was okay for teenagers to engage in sexual behavior.

The majority of boys noted that the most important condition that had to be met in order to have sex was to use some sort of protection (e.g., condoms). Six of the boys in this study agreed that using protection was the most important condition for having sex for teenagers. The second most reported condition for teenagers engaging in sexual activity was that they felt comfortable with the idea of having sex or were ready to have sex. Spanky said, *I believe that sexual activity is when two partners are ready and they know they're ready. They have answered those questions about what happens when they get a child... and they know what's going to happen.* Similarly, Alvin shared: *Make sure, if you're going to have sex, it's not with somebody just a random person. Make sure it's a person you feel comfortable with and being around.* Therefore, to these Latino boys, it is acceptable for teenagers (including themselves) to engage in sexual activity if they are ready to have sex and are using protection.

**Qualitative study conclusions.** This qualitative study concludes that there are significant gender differences both in how Latino teenage males and Latina teenage females are monitored by their parents and in the messages regarding sexual activity that are communicated to them. Figure 1 clearly illustrates that this monitoring and communication appears to be directly impacted by three Latino cultural values, that is, familism, traditional male gender-role expectations, and traditional female gender-role expectations. Therefore, the monitoring and communication regarding sexual activity beliefs and behaviors by Latino parents appear to be the primary ways that the Latino cultural values regarding sexual activity are transmitted to the Latino teenagers.

The primary values and expectations for sexual activity communicated by Latino parents appear to differ significantly by gender such that Latina teenagers hear the

message that it is not acceptable for them to engage in sexual activity while teens, though in contrast, Latino boys are told that teen engagement in sexual activity is acceptable so long as protection is used. Even though the boys did not verbalize that their family or culture directly impacted their sexual activity beliefs or practices and instead stated that their decision to engage in sexual activity was their own, autonomous decision, they did appear to be influenced by the messages of their Latino parents to use contractive methods if they decided to engage in sexual activity. This is in contrast to the girls in the present study who overtly indicated that their parents' communication about the unacceptability of sexual activity for teenage girls directly influenced their own beliefs about the acceptability of teenage engagement in sexual activity. Again, just as was found with the boys, the girls had converging beliefs with what they had been told by their parents - for the girls, that is, that sexual activity is not acceptable for Latino teenagers. The gender differences in traditional gender-role expectations, as well as in parental monitoring and Latino family communication, appear to strongly impact the diverse opinions held about the acceptability of sexual activity for all teenagers as stated by the Latino youth in this study.

## Chapter V: Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative results from this study taken together yield several interesting findings with regard to the overarching research questions for this study. To briefly review, the main research questions addressed were: (1) How does familism relate to other family variables that are often seen as protective for youth (Clark & Shields, 1997; Teitelman, Ratcliffe, & Cederbaum, 2008), that is, parent-adolescent communication and parental monitoring? (2) What do families mean to Latino adolescents and how do these beliefs influence sexual behaviors? (3) Are there differences in the relationship between the five Latino family variables and sexual activity for Latina girls and Latino boys? (4) What is the influence of adolescents' level of assimilation (i.e., how much they identify with predominately White, mainstream society) on Latino adolescents' cultural values and their sexual activity? This discussion will address all four of these research questions integrating the qualitative results, quantitative results, and pertinent literature.

The first section of this discussion will focus on how the Latino adolescents both qualitatively and quantitatively described their cultural values (i.e., the various aspects of familism, gender roles) as being important to them. Following this will be a brief discussion about how more traditional familial relationship markers (i.e., parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication) were found to be both qualitatively and quantitatively related to Latino cultural values. Important gender differences between the Latino male adolescents and Latina female adolescents that were observed with regard to their level of cultural beliefs and the relationships between their cultural values will also be explained and related to the current literature in this discussion. The next

section of this discussion will compare and contrast gender differences in qualitative sexual activity beliefs and quantitative sexual activity outcomes that were detected in the current study as well as differences in how the Latino family variables affected these outcomes. In the last section, the lack of observed relationship, both qualitatively and quantitatively, between assimilation to White culture and sexual activity beliefs and outcomes in the current study will be discussed. This discussion section will conclude by commenting on the limitations of the qualitative and quantitative studies in order to better direct future empirical endeavors in this expanding research area of understanding how Latino family variables may relate to Latino adolescents' sexual activity beliefs and outcomes. Important implications of this study for sexual activity prevention and intervention programming with Latino youth as well as future directions for empirical research in this area will be explicated. This dissertation will close with summative conclusions and final comments regarding the contributions of this study.

### **Integration of Results with the Current Literature**

**The meaning of family to Latino adolescents and the relationships between the five Latino family variables and assimilation.**

*Relationships between attitudinal, behavioral, and structural familism.* On the whole, these Latino youth reported that their families were very important to them, which is well-represented in the empirical research (Fuligni et al., 1999; Ramirez et al., 2004). Additionally, these adolescents qualitatively and quantitatively reported often engaging in family-centered behaviors and having many family members living near to them. This relationship has been supported in the current literature (Mindel, 1980) so this research



provides additional support to the empirical and theoretical links between the behavioral and structural aspects of familism.

By way of contrast, attitudinal familism was not found to be statistically related to behavioral or structural familism in the quantitative study, meaning that, in the current study, attitudinal familism did not correlate with behavioral and structural familism as has been found in prior research (Coohey, 2001). This is potentially due to measurement issues, given that none of the three measures of the three different aspects of familism have been used together in one study before. Therefore, one hypothesis is that the theoretical link between the three types of familism may be present in adolescents, but measurement of these variables does not yet reliably and validly capture the true meaning of each type of familism (Coohey, 2001). Future studies should develop and use valid and reliable instruments of attitudinal, behavioral, and structural familism in order to more consistently measure and compare these constructs. One additional explanation for the lack of finding a quantitative link between these variables could illustrate that the attitudes, behaviors, and structures of Latino families represent quantitatively different concepts, and the way people feel about their family, their family-oriented behaviors, and the structure of their families may not be directly related.

Interestingly, attitudinal familism was found to be very high among both boys and girls in the qualitative study and was described by participants as being related to behavioral and structural familism (Coohey, 2001) consistent with previous research finding that adolescents often report a strong sense of attitudinal familism. Further, it appeared that those who endorsed greater familism values also endorsed attending more family-centered activities and having more family members living near them.

In the present study, then, the qualitative and quantitative findings were divergent. This difference between the qualitative links and lack of quantitative relationship between the various types of familism may perhaps reflect the variability in the literature (Coohey, 2001), as well as the variability in how these constructs are defined and measured (Luna et al., 1996).

*Relationships between the three types of familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication.* Interesting relationships were observed both qualitatively and quantitatively among these Latino adolescents regarding the five Latino family variables. There is some support for analyzing data from the boys and girls together, as in at least one previous study, no gender differences were found on a measure of familism among Latino adolescents (i.e., Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Taking the qualitative data from boys and girls together, those adolescents who reported high attitudinal, behavioral, and structural familism also tended to report greater parent-adolescent communication as well as parental monitoring, which was broadly concurrent with the current literature (Dishion & McMahon, 1998).

Quantitatively, however, not all of these variables were positively correlated for the overall sample of both girls and boys. Moderate, positive correlations were only found between attitudinal familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication, which were consistent with separate analyses of the boys' and girls' data. This is consistent with a few studies (e.g., Pokhrel et al., 2008; Romero & Ruiz, 1998) which have reported significant, positive relationships between parental monitoring and attitudinal familism. While many studies have investigated parent-adolescent communication in samples of Latino adolescents, it has rarely been studied in relation to

familism. Additionally, the relationship between parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication in the current study is well accounted for in the extant literature with Latino youth (e.g., Pokrel et al, 2008). Therefore this study both confirms previous research but also adds to the research by demonstrating a relationship between parent-adolescent communication and familism. Future studies should investigate these relationships between attitudinal familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication further, as these two hallmarks of positive family functioning (i.e., parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication) may be protective for Latino youth with regard to risk behaviors.

A final interesting finding in the total sample was the small, negative correlation between structural familism and parental monitoring, indicating that participants who reported a greater number of relatives lived within an hour's drive of them also reported decreased parental monitoring. One potential explanation in the current literature for this finding is that with adolescents who reported a more extended kin-network, there can often be a division of responsibility among adults regarding who is in the position to establish and follow-through with rules, which may result in confusion and an ultimate lack of monitoring (Pokhrel et al., 2008). When the total sample was split by gender, this finding was statistically significant in the boys but not the girls. One possible explanation for why boys reported decreased parental monitoring in the instances of having larger extended kin networks may be related to the qualitative findings from both girls and boys suggesting parents are thought to monitor Latino teenage boys less than Latina teenage girls generally, regardless of the size of the extended kin-network. Although gender differences in parental monitoring have been reported in prior research (Romero & Ruiz,

2007; Stattin & Kerr, 2000), this gender difference in monitoring depending on size of family has not and requires additional investigation to determine the way that Latino teens are monitored is related to the size of their families.

*Relationships between the five Latino family variables and assimilation.* For the total sample in the quantitative study, a small, positive relationship was observed between two of the Latino family variables and assimilation to White culture. Importantly, though, these relationships did not exist in either of the two genders when analyzed independently. This lack of finding the relationship in either gender is perhaps due to statistical power being greater in the whole sample than in either gender independently, which calls into question the validity and reliability of this finding. Further, no relationship was observed between Latino family variables and Latino youths' reports of assimilation to White culture in the total qualitative sample. Notably, in the qualitative study, Latino youth appeared to struggle with the definition of acculturation and assimilation. Even when a definition of assimilation was provided to them, they did not believe that how they felt about their families or what they did with their families was related to their level of engagement in White society. While most of the adolescents reported that they felt comfortable living in White society, there was also an overlapping group of adolescents who reported feeling more comfortable around other people from their own ethnic background. This fits within the context of literature proposing that strong feelings of familism (which were reported by qualitative participants) are not necessarily related to decreased level of assimilation to White culture (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008).

It is unclear then how most of the youth in the qualitative study would identify their cultural status, though when all of the data are taken together, they appear to generally identify as bicultural, which is consistent with other Latino teenagers who have been studied qualitatively (Romero et al., 2004). Again, however, neither the Latina girls nor the Latino boys in the quantitative study demonstrated any relationship between assimilation and their familism beliefs, behaviors, and structure. This is similar to previous studies where familism has not been found to be related to acculturation status (Negy, 1993; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008), but in contrast to others, which have found a relationship between familism and acculturation status (Herrera, Lee, Palos, & Torres-Vigil, 2008).

Very small statistically significant positive relationships were found between attitudinal familism and assimilation to White culture as well as parental monitoring and assimilation for the total sample. Only a few studies have found positive relationships between attitudinal familism and proxies of assimilation to White culture (e.g., Cortes, 1995). In one such study (Romero et al., 2004), researchers found a positive relationship between familism values and higher education level as well as preference for speaking English and English as well as Spanish versus preference for speaking Spanish alone. Romero and colleagues (2004) explained that this relationship could be due to the fact that these adolescents are perhaps best viewed as bicultural in that they have assimilated well to mainstream, U.S. society, but they also maintain a strong sense of family solidarity and loyalty within the family home. Therefore, Romero and colleagues' study offers an explanation for the current data which suggest that those youth who report being more assimilated to White culture may also preserve their family values and have family

members who monitor their behavior. It could be that while these youth are highly assimilated to White culture, they are actually best characterized as bicultural, and are still maintaining a strong sense of family values that is characteristic of the Latino cultures. This study supports the assertion that future researchers should examine the protective influences of cultural maintenance and biculturalism in longitudinal studies in relation to the physical and mental health of youth.

Interestingly, as noted above, when each gender was analyzed individually, these small relationships between attitudinal familism and parental monitoring and assimilation disappeared. Again, this is likely due to the change in power that occurs with the larger sample size when both genders are analyzed together. Still, however, this suggests that these findings should be interpreted with caution, especially in light of the fact that significant gender differences were found on other related variables in this study.

**Gender differences in the relationships between the Latino family variables and sexual activity beliefs and outcomes.** The most interesting findings combining the results from the qualitative and quantitative studies were the various gender differences observed with regard to the Latino family variables influence on the adolescents' beliefs regarding sexual activity as well as their stated sexual activity. While the qualitative and quantitative results did not always converge, they did provide interesting contrast, highlighting the importance of future research using mixed-methodology to better understand these variables. Gender differences observed in familism, parental monitoring, and parent-adolescent communication will be explained with regard to how they were observed to influence the participants' sexual activity beliefs or outcomes.

*The influence of gender differences in familism on sexual activity.* Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative results of the present study do not suggest that attitudinal familism directly influences sexual activity beliefs or engagement, in contrast to previous research (Lo, 2008). In the present qualitative study, it appeared that the familism beliefs, as well as traditional gender role cultural values were transmitted through parental monitoring and parent-adolescent communication, rather than directly affecting sexual activity beliefs. This same relationship was not tested quantitatively in the current study, but should be considered for future research to test the current qualitative finding. That is, additional studies are needed to better understand the process by which cultural values such as familism and traditional gender roles impact the sexual activity beliefs of Latino teens. Relationships that were tested in the quantitative study, though, also did not yield any significant connection between attitudinal familism and the two sexual activity outcomes, lending additional support to the assertion that if familism does impact sexual activity beliefs and outcomes (as has been suggested in prior empirical studies; Liebowitz et al., 1999), perhaps it does so indirectly. Again, these relationships warrant continued testing.

With regard to behavioral and structural familism, no significant impact by these variables was observed on the sexual activity beliefs of the Latino adolescents in the qualitative study. In the quantitative study, however, behavioral familism was found to negatively and weakly correlate with whether a Latina adolescent had ever had sex. This means that as Latina teens reported participating more in conversations with family and activities with kin members, they were less likely to have engaged in sexual activity (Buzi, Smith, & Weinman, 2009). This finding draws a parallel with the current literature

purporting the protective nature of family-centered behaviors for Latino youth (Buzi et al., 2009). By way of contrast, for the boys in the quantitative study, structural familism was found to weakly and positively correlate with whether an adolescent Latino male had ever had sex, suggesting that boys who reported a greater number of relatives living close to them were also more likely to have had sex than those who reported fewer nearby relatives. This could result in fewer or no adults maintaining knowledge of the whereabouts and behaviors of these Latino teenage boys, allowing them the freedom to engage in sexual activity without having an adult monitor them.

This phenomenon could potentially be explained the hypothesis posed by Pokhrel and colleagues (2008) which suggested that Latino parents may not feel the need to monitor their children directly because they believe that other adults are also watching out for their children. Potentially, this same relationship was not found for the Latinas in the current study because of one of the strong findings from the qualitative study, that is that parents were thought to be much more protective of daughters than sons, which is a widely supported notion in the research (e.g., Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Additional differences in parental monitoring between the two genders were also observed.

*The influence of gender differences in parental monitoring on sexual activity.*

In the quantitative study, no significant differences between the Latina adolescent girls and the Latino adolescent boys on the quantitative measure of parental monitoring were observed. Contrastingly, in the qualitative study, differences were reported by the boys and girls with regard to parental monitoring, as noted above. That is, both the girls and boys reported that their parents monitored Latina adolescent girls and Latino adolescent boys differently, such that both genders believed that Latina adolescents were monitored



by their parents to a much greater extent than boys. This phenomenon has been observed in the literature that Latina girls are protected by parents and often their activities are much more restricted (Dishion, Li, Spracklen, Brown, & Haas, 1999; Fernandez-Esquer, Diamond, & Atkinson, 2010), whereas the boys are given much greater freedom with regard to their independence in behavior outside of the home (e.g., spending time with friends, not having to report to parents where they are, less checking-in with parents).

It is an interesting point of contrast, though, that the boys and girls reported that their parents monitored them similarly in the quantitative study. One finding from the qualitative study that perhaps supports this quantitative finding is that Latino youth in the qualitative studies reported that, while they did see a difference in monitoring by gender, they also saw a difference in monitoring due to culture. Specifically, they felt that Latino youth are more strictly monitored than non-Latino youth. Another hypothesis that potentially explains this divergence between boys and girls similarly endorsing parental monitoring in the quantitative study but describing monitoring as differing by gender in the qualitative study is that when boys and girls are not asked to compare how they are monitored to their opposite-gendered peers, they all reported a relatively high degree of monitoring. When they are prompted to compare themselves to their opposite-gendered peers, though, as occurred during the qualitative discussions on this topic, both genders observed the differences in monitoring. This is perhaps accounted for by the social comparison bias hypothesis from the field of social psychology which allows for individuals to make different judgments about themselves and others based on varied reference points (Wood, 1989). Taking these results together, it appears that Latino adolescents understand parental monitoring as a construct influenced by gender norms

and biases as well as cultural expectations. Additionally, it appears that while gender does influence these youths' external perception of how other Latino teens are monitored; most of these Latino youth report feeling personally that they are monitored to a high degree, especially as compared to their non-Latino peers.

This study points to the influence of Latino gender roles such as *marianismo* and *machismo* on the sexual activity beliefs of Latino and Latina adolescents. Specifically, the traditional gender roles in Latino culture prescribe for girls to be pure, virginal, moral, and spiritual beings (Gloria, Ruiz, & Castillo, 2004) and for boys to possess strength, power, aggressiveness, and sexual virility (Tamez, 1981). It is well-documented that these gender roles are valued and communicated to Latino teens by their parents, who also hold these cultural values (Delgado, Updegraff, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2011; Tamez, 1981; Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). It follows that if Latino parents hold cultural orientations and values consistent with traditional gender roles, they may use these as schema to help them decide how to parent and monitor their children differently based on gender, though this assertion is hypothetical and requires investigation through future research. Just as gender differences in parental monitoring may relate to cultural values, gender roles, and participants' own biases in perception, parent-adolescent communication was another key variable in the current study to discriminate between the two genders. While gender roles were not directly assessed in this study, their influence was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study.

When the two genders were analyzed together, parental monitoring was found to be negatively related to whether an adolescent had ever engaged in sexual activity, such that as monitoring increased, likelihood to have had sex decreased. Interestingly, parental

monitoring was also the only one of the Latino family variables that was found to be significantly correlated with the sexual activity outcome ever had sex for both genders when analyzed separately. That is, none of the other Latino family variables which correlated with a sexual activity outcome overlapped both genders except for parental monitoring. This is largely consistent with previous studies with ethnic minority youth that have well documented that parental monitoring protects youth from engaging in risky behaviors such as sexual activity (e.g., Lo, 2008).

*The influence of gender differences in parent-adolescent communication on sexual activity.* Similar to the mixed results with regard to how gender differences in parental monitoring influence sexual activity for these Latino teens, contrasting results were also observed between the qualitative and quantitative studies with regard to gender differences in parent-adolescent communication. It should first be noted, though, that parent-adolescent communication was not queried in the same way in the quantitative and qualitative studies, as the qualitative study focused more on parent-adolescent communication regarding sexual activity (e.g., “Have your parents talked to you about sex?” “Would you go to your parents with questions about sex?”) whereas the quantitative study solely queried open-communication style between parents and adolescents (e.g., “My parent is a good listener,” “My parent tries to understand my point of view,” “It is easy for me to express all my true feelings to my parent”).

In the qualitative study, parent-adolescent communication was one of the primary conduits by which Latino cultural values were transmitted to youth and were observed to impact Latino boys’ and Latina girls’ beliefs regarding sexual activity. In the quantitative study, a small difference between the mean scores of the Latina adolescent girls and the

Latino adolescent boys on the quantitative measure of parent-adolescent communication was observed such that the boys reported somewhat higher open communication with their parents than the girls, and although this difference was only approaching statistical significance, it is opposite of what would be hypothesized based on the literature (i.e., that girls would have more open parent-adolescent communication; Pokrel, 2008). Additionally, there was a lack of statistical relationship between parent-adolescent communication and the sexual activity outcomes, which has been observed in recent research on Latina adult women (Rojas-Guyler & King, 2009). Future research should continue to explore both the influences of general communication style as well as communication from parents regarding sexual activity on Latino adolescents sexual risk behavior as well as any differences in these variables between the two genders as current research (e.g., Aspy et al., 2009; Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009) contradictory to the present study has found links between parental communication about sex and decreased sexual activity engagement.

One of the most interesting points of discussion with regard to parent-adolescent communication about sexual activity with adolescents resulted from the qualitative study, again with regard to gender differentiation. Specifically, there were qualitative differences in the messages that Latino boys and Latina girls received regarding sexual activity from their parents. In particular, girls were told to wait to have sex until they are older, and preferably, married. This contrasts with boys who are told by their parents that if they are going to have sex, that they should use protection. Interestingly, the girls stated that the boys heard the same message from parents that the boys said they heard and vice

versa, indicating that both the boys and the girls recognize the message that their opposite-gendered peers are hearing.

Two interesting observations can be made regarding the different messages that girls and boys hear from their Latino parents regarding sexual activity. First, with regard to the content of communication about sexual activity, girls very clearly reported hearing the message that they should not have sex, as opposed to the boys, who do not report really hearing a message about whether they should or should not have sex as teenagers. Therefore, there appears to be a double-standard regarding the acceptability of sexual activity for Latino adolescents revolving around the gender of the adolescent in question; that is, for girls it is definitely not acceptable to have sex as a teenager, but for boys, it is unclear if it is acceptable to have sex as a teenager according to their parents. Future research needs to explore if and how this double-standard for girls and boys regarding the acceptability of sex impacts Latino teenagers' beliefs and engagement in sexual activity as well as discern the beliefs and values of Latino parents who communicate these expectations to their teens. Finally, this double-standard could be used as a point of discussion for intervention programming which may help Latino parents and adolescents discern exactly what their beliefs are regarding the acceptability of sexual activity for teens and the underlying values that influence those beliefs.

Second, with regard to the content of communication about contraceptive use, the girls are given no message about using protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections, whereas the boys reported hearing a message from parents that they definitely should use some form of contraception. One potential problem with these messages is that they are divergent and represent different expectations regarding sexual

activity for girls and boys based on gender (Guilamo-Ramos, et al., 2009b). This could leave Latino boys and Latina girls with different expectations regarding when it is okay to have sex and if contraceptive use is necessary, leading to potential lack of use of contraception. Latina teens, in particular, may be at risk for decreased contraceptive use, given the lack of education about it or encouragement to use it by their family members. This has significant implications for Latina teens that are already reported to have decreased rates of contraceptive use and increased rates of teenage pregnancy as compared to non-Latina peers (NCPTUP, 2011).

There is extremely little research on the messages that Latino boys and girls hear regarding sexual activity, but the few studies that have explored parent-adolescent communication regarding sexual activity have acknowledged the variability and minimally informative nature of the messages Latino adolescents hear from parents (Villaruel, 1998). Future studies should use qualitative methods to more deeply explore these messages and ascertain how they impact Latino teens' sexual activity behaviors, as the current qualitative study only explored how these messages impact Latino teens' sexual activity beliefs. Examining the influence of communication regarding sexual activity on actual sexual behavior is important as several studies (e.g., Benavides, Bonazzo, & Torres, 2006; Velez-Pastrana, Gonzales-Rodriguez, & Borges-Hernandez, 2005) have indicated that parent-child communication is one of the primary avenues for parents to teach their children about sexual activity.

*Gender differences in the impact of family variables on sexual activity*

*outcomes.* As just noted above, the participants in the qualitative study were not asked to report whether they had engaged in sexual activity, their number of sexual partners, or

any other actual behaviors related to types of sexual activity or contraceptive use for reasons of protecting their confidentiality in a group of peers whom they may have known and/or may come into contact with in the future. Therefore, no summative statements can be made regarding sexual activity outcomes between the qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative participants were asked to report two sexual activity outcomes, that is, whether they had engaged in sexual activity and their number of sexual partners if they had been sexually active as their confidentiality was more protected. In the current sample of quantitative participants, several observations can be made regarding the impact of the Latino family variables on the sexual activity of Latino youth.

First, in the current total sample, approximately 30% of the adolescents have had sex; 28.1% of the girls reported having already had sex and almost 32% of the boys had engaged in sexual activity. Although this difference was not statistically significant, it is consistent with previous research indicating that Latino adolescent boys engage in sexual activity at a higher rate than Latina adolescent girls (Blum & Ireland, 2004; Driscoll et al., 2001; Sabogal, Perez-Stable, Otero-Sabogal, & Hiatt, 1995). It should be noted though, that these percentages are significantly higher than those reported data for middle adolescents (12-15 year olds), but are lower than those reported in recent data from The NCPTUP (2011), which suggested stated that 49% of Latino high school students reported having had sexual intercourse. When analyzed according to age, percentages of youth having engaged in sexual activity are more consistent with national trends such that younger teenagers engage in sexual activity to a less frequently than their older peers. Specifically, in the current study, over half (58.3%) of 17-18 year olds reported that they have had sex, while national data (NCPTUP, 2011) suggests that a slightly lower, but

similar, percentage (51%) of Latino high school seniors have had sex. Nationally, 24% (NCPTUP, 2011) of Latino 9<sup>th</sup> graders have reported having sex and in the current study 29% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders reported being sexually active.

Although the frequency of sexual activity is not exactly the same in the current sample of Latino youth compared to a recent sample of nationwide Latino data, the frequencies do trend in the same direction (i.e., sexual activity increases with age). When the current sample is compared to state-wide data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2009), the current sample was found to have rates that were higher than teens from all ethnic backgrounds (i.e., between 41%-47% of high school students reported ever having had sex). Also, in Wisconsin (the state of the majority of the data collection), the rates of sexual activity are lower than the national average for teens of all ethnic backgrounds. Although a direct comparison between the present study and Latino teens in the Midwest is not possible (no specific data on Latino teenagers in Wisconsin were returned in a recent literature search), it is likely that the frequency of Latino teens engagement in sexual activity is somewhat higher than the state reports for teens of all ethnic backgrounds, as Latino teens have frequently been found to engage in sexual activity at a higher rate than non-Latino peers (NCPTUP, 2011). Given that the current estimates of rates of sexual activity for all of these Latino teens measure similarly, though somewhat higher, than the averages for all teenagers in Wisconsin, the current statistics may very well be representative of a Midwestern population of Latino teens aged 13-18.

With regard to whether the Latino family variables were found to predict sexual activity outcomes, in the present study, the linear regression models were significant for the first outcome (i.e., ever had sex), but not for the second sexual activity outcome (i.e.,



number of sexual partners). Gender differences were noted between the significant linear regressions for the outcome “ever had sex.” For the Latina girls in the quantitative study, knowing a girls’ behavioral familism practices and the extent to which she believes her parents monitor her can help predict whether she has engaged in sexual activity above and beyond knowing about the structure of her family, attitudes she has about her family, and the extent to which she communicates with her family. That is to say, behavioral familism and parental monitoring predict whether a Latina teen has had sex above and beyond structural familism, attitudinal familism, and parent-adolescent communication. While parental monitoring has found to be protective for Latina youth (Velez-Pastrana, Gonzaléz-Rodríguez, & Borges-Hernández, 2005), there is no empirical link in the literature between how behavioral familism may be connected to whether an adolescent has ever engaged in sexual activity. Potentially, Latina adolescents who are monitored more by their parents also then spend more time with their parents and other family members, and are therefore less likely to have engaged in sexual activity either due to lack of time away from family or a stronger tie to the beliefs of the family which may emphasize refraining from engaging in sexual activity.

Similar findings were observed in the quantitative study measuring the contribution of the five Latino family variables to predicting whether an adolescent Latino male has had sex, with the exception of the fact that structural familism and parental monitoring were found to contribute to the model above and beyond the other potential predictor variables (i.e., behavioral familism, attitudinal familism, parent-adolescent communication). In both the girls and the boys, parental monitoring was the predictor variable which accounted for the most variance in the model, perhaps indicating

that regardless of gender, parental monitoring is a good predictor of whether a Latino teen has had sex, which has been supported by previous research (Velez-Pastrana, Gonzalez-Rodriguez, & Borges-Hernandez, 2005).

For the total quantitative sample and for both the girls and boys individually, the modal number of partners was one person. For the Latina adolescents, the mean number of lifetime partners was 2.25 and for the Latino adolescents, the mean number of partners was 2.77; this difference was not statistically significant. This is contradictory to recent research, however, which suggests that gender influences number of partners such that males are more likely to have a greater number of sexual partners than females (Edwards, Fehring, Jarrett, & Haglund, 2008; Fernandez-Esquer, Diamond, & Atkinson, 2010).

Interestingly, no relationships were found among Latina girls or Latino boys regarding the influence of the five Latino family variables on the sexual activity outcome measure regarding the number of sexual partners, despite the fact that this relationship does exist in the extant literature (Fernandez-Esquer et al., 2010). One potential explanation for this is that there were not enough participants who reported their number of sexual partners to yield significant power to detect these relationships. Another hypothesis is that the Latino family variables may not be related to this outcome, or may be related to it via a mediating or moderating variable. An adolescent's number of sexual partners has rarely been studied with regard to family variables, suggesting that future research should investigate if other cultural or other sociodemographic factors influence a Latino teen's number of sexual partners such as religiosity (Edwards, Fehring, Jarrett, & Haglund (2008) or adherence to traditional gender roles (Marston, 2004; Niemann,

2004) that were not investigated in the current study but have been found to be related to other sexual activity outcomes.

*Gender differences in the impact of family variables on sexual activity beliefs.*

Similar to how the qualitative sample was not interviewed about their specific sexual activity experiences, the quantitative sample was not queried on their sexual activity beliefs, so the current findings are based solely on the qualitative study. As is observed in the model for the results of the qualitative study (see Figure 1), the Latina adolescent girls in the study indicated that their personal beliefs regarding the propriety of sexual activity for teenagers was that sexual activity is not appropriate for teenagers and the majority of these girls had decided to wait until they were married before the engaged in sexual activity. Previous research examining the sexual activity patterns of Latinas has reported that there are two main times that Latinas engage in sexual activity, those who do it at relatively early ages (i.e., before age 18) and those who choose to wait to have sex until after they are young adults (i.e., over the age of 20; Driscoll et al., 2001). It is possible then, that the adolescents interviewed in this study were in the latter group of Latina females who choose to wait until young adulthood before having sex.

The girls' sexual activity belief as described in the current qualitative study is different from that of their male counterparts. The Latino adolescent males in the present study described that they believed that, in general, sex is acceptable for teenagers as long as certain conditions of using protection and being ready are met. This specific finding has not been observed in the existing literature, though this finding may be related to some studies that have suggested that Latino adolescent males have better condom negotiation strategies than females and that sexist attitudes are predictors of condom use

among Latinos in the United States (Albarracin & Plambeck, 2010). Beliefs regarding sexual activity are rarely studied using qualitative methodology, and even fewer studies include assessing the influence of gender role expectations, as discussed above, on sexual activity beliefs. Additionally, the stark contrast in Latino boys' and Latina girls' beliefs about sexual activity specifically raise more questions than answers about the influence of cultural values, families, and gender role expectations on the beliefs of Latino adolescents' with regard to sexual activity and warrant additional study. Specific questions warranting additional investigation include: How do teenagers decide when/when not to accept their parents' message regarding sexual activity as their own? What other sociocultural influences play a role in shaping sexual activity beliefs? And, how do sexual activity beliefs about appropriateness of sexual activity for teens correlate with individual teen's actual sexual behavior?

**Acculturation and sexual activity among Latino adolescents.** Neither qualitative nor quantitative links were observed between acculturation status and sexual activity beliefs or outcomes in the current study, which is similar to some prior, recent studies on the topic (e.g., Guilamo-Ramos et al, 2009a; Ragsdale, Gore-Felton, Koopman, & Seal, 2009), lending support to the notion that these results are reliable and early research demonstrating that assimilation to White culture is related to increased sexual activity may not be supported. There may, however, be clear methodological limitations that may have specifically affected the quantitative results in this area that are necessary to discuss. Potential reasons for the lack of statistical relationships between these variables include limitations in power, measurement error, and instrument validity and reliability. With regard to limitations in power, the number of sexually active youth

and number of sexually active youth who reported their number of sexual partners only allowed for analyses to test for large effect sizes as was described in the methods, despite every effort to recruit as many sexually active participants as possible. Therefore, it is possible that with a larger sample of girls and boys who were sexually active, it may have been possible to detect medium or small effect sizes. Additionally, only two indices of sexual activity were included in the present quantitative study, and it is possible that acculturation status may be related to other sexual activity variables and outcomes (e.g., condom use; Tschann, Flores, de Groat, Deardorff, & Wibbelsman, 2010).

While sampling limitations may have accounted for the lack of statistical relationships between assimilation to White cultural and sexual activity in the current sample, Guilamo-Ramos et al. (2009a) recently synthesized the current literature regarding acculturation influences on adolescent sexual activity as inconsistent and variable and did not find any meaningful association between Latino adolescents' global acculturation level and sexual risk behavior. It is possible then, that the current study is simply reflective of the distal-quality of the influence of acculturation status on sexual risk-taking behaviors that Guilamo-Ramos and colleagues (2009a) have suggested and that there are perhaps different constructs that assimilation operates with or through which impact sexual activity. This finding was consistent when analyses were conducted separately by gender, lending support to the findings in the current study.

This complex relationship between acculturation status and sexual activity is perhaps better understood via Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Pena, and Goldberg (2005) who found that among new immigrants, adolescents living in English-speaking homes were at less risk for sexual activity than their counterparts in Spanish-speaking homes. The

opposite was true, however, for U.S.-born Latino youth, who were at higher risk for early sexual activity if they were living in English-speaking homes. This can both explain why youth with greater and lowered assimilation to White culture may be related to risk for sexual activity and highlights the need for additional research investigating how the role of immigration status may impact both acculturation to White culture and risk for sexual activity among Latino adolescents. As has been illuminated by numerous other researchers in the field, relationships between assimilation to White culture or other acculturation status and sexual activity are inconsistent between studies and researchers need to become more focused in their measurement of these constructs in order to best explicate this relationship.

### **Limitations of the Current Study**

As with any study, the current research should be interpreted within the methodological constraints under which the study was conducted. First, self-report data may not be the best representation of actual adolescent behaviors, especially with topics that are sensitive, such as sexual activity (Trejos-Castillo & Vazsonyi, 2009). Self-report data are subject to problems with social desirability bias which can result in under- or over-reporting, response refusal, and poor memory recall (Ragsdale, Gore-Felton, Koopman, & Seal, 2009). This is the primary method of data collection used by national data sets such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System and the National Study of Family Growth (CDC 2007a; NCPTUP, 2011), however, and the appropriate precautions were taken to assure confidentiality. Unfortunately, however, there are few alternatives to evaluating sexual behaviors unless physiological measures are used (e.g., urine pregnancy testing, blood testing for presence of sexually transmitted infections).

Additionally, even though multiple steps were taken to ensure participants felt they could report confidentially, there is still the potential that adolescents may underreported sexual activity due to social desirability bias or the lack of understanding or feeling that the surveys were confidential.

Another important limitation existed due to the way in which behavioral and structural familism were measured. Only two items for behavioral familism and one item for structural familism were used to assess these constructs due to the lack of valid instruments evaluating these variables in the current literature. It is possible then, that the current study is limited by measurement of these variables that may not validly and reliably represent the theoretical definition of these variables. This could potentially account for the discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative data on whether these variables were related to attitudinal familism.

The quantitative analyses were also often correlational in nature, so strict causal inferences are not possible. Also, statistical power may have been too low to examine in detail and discover nuanced differences in how the various Latino family variables and assimilation to White culture may have impacted the sexual activity outcomes. Future studies, therefore, should obtain larger samples of middle and high school-aged youth who are sexually active in order to more fully explore the range of sexual behaviors that occur among youth as well as detect differences in these outcomes.

In addition, even though the inclusion of participants from various Latin countries is a strength of the current research, the overwhelming majority of youth in the quantitative and qualitative samples identified as Mexican, Hispanic, or Chicano/a, which all represent Mexican-heritage, with a small subset of participants identifying as Puerto

Rican. There was significantly smaller representation of youth from Central and South American origin in the sample. It is important to acknowledge, then, that while some literature has documented that studies of familism among Latino youth can be generalized to teens from various Latin-country origins (Villareal et al., 2005), other studies have found important differences among Latin ethnic groups (e.g., Cuellar et al., 1997; Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2001), and therefore, the current results may not be generalizable to all Latin sub-groups.

Important sampling limitations also exist in the current study. The first sampling limitation relates to the participants being entirely from mid-size to larger metropolitan cities in the Midwestern United States, so the results may not generalize to Latino youth from different areas of the country. Further, selection bias was a possibility on several levels, such that potential participants self-selected to be a part of the study based on minimal advertising by researchers stationed at a table or booth in various community settings. It is possible that youth that may have been interested in participating in a study about Latino adolescents' values and sexual behaviors are somehow qualitatively different from youth who did not self-select to participate, and therefore, our results may be limited in generalizability in that way. A final sampling limitation relates to the fact that all of the Latino participants in this study were required to read and write fluently in English in order to participate, and while no adolescent requested to take the survey in Spanish, some adolescents may have self-selected out of the study due to this measurement constraint. This limits the generalizability of the study to only those Latino adolescents who can read in English. Despite these methodological constraints, this study



is still thought to be an important contribution to the literature and offers several important implications for future programming and research.

### **Implications for Future Prevention and Intervention Programming**

One of this study's most important contributions to the current literature is that it highlights the importance of culturally-relevant and gender-specific prevention and intervention efforts aimed at reducing Latino teens' engagement in early and risky sexual behavior. The findings from this study also clearly demonstrated that increased parental monitoring is related to decreased sexual activity among Latino teens. Therefore, the present study adds to the extant literature, which is currently calling for culturally sensitive and gender-appropriate prevention efforts among Latino youth (Ragsdale, Gore-Felton, Koopman, & Seal, 2009).

The current study identified important differences in how Latino boys and Latina girls hear messages regarding sexual activity as well as how they internalize those messages. Specifically, Latinas in the qualitative study shared that their sexual knowledge was primarily gained from conversations with their parents (typically mothers) in the presence of an example of a pregnant Latina teen. This suggests that there are diverse opportunities to discuss sexual activity with Latina teens beyond just in a classroom at school or at home with a parent. Discussions regarding sexual activity that are brief and to the point may in fact be better received by Latino youth, as in the current qualitative study, Latino teens indicated that they sometimes did not approach their parents with questions regarding sexual activity because they "did not want a lecture." Further, Latino boys and Latina girls both suggested that they typically hear messages regarding sexual activity from same-gendered parents, which may suggest that

intervention and prevention efforts should focus on including same-gendered parents in programming and encouraging opposite-gendered parents to discuss this topic more with their teenagers (Delgado, Updegraff, Roosa & Umaña-Taylor, 2011).

A recent literature search regarding sexual activity prevention and intervention strategies with Latino youth returned very little evidence on culturally- and gender-based programming, however, quite a few advocate groups, such as *Advocates for Youth* (2010) have begun to call for culturally- and gender-based programs. Unfortunately, where well-designed programs did exist, little program evaluation research had been conducted (Harper, Bangi, Sanchez, Doll, & Pedraza, 2009; Mueller et al., 2009). For example, Mueller and colleagues (2009) implemented a program called *¡Cuidate!*, which is an efficacious HIV sexual risk reduction program for Latino youth aged 13-18 that had been previously used in a community settings (Villarruel, Jemmott, & Jemmott, 2006). *¡Cuidate!* was modified to be provided in a school setting and while this program was thought to have had a positive impact on building teens' knowledge of basic human development, reproductive anatomy, puberty, sexual intercourse, and pregnancy, no pre- or post-implementation of the program measures were given. Therefore, it is unknown if the program produced any significant reduction in sexual risk behaviors. Mueller and colleagues suggested that many similar programs are perhaps being implemented all over the country, but are not being evaluated properly, so it is unclear from an empirical perspective if they instigating any change in the targeted outcome areas (Mueller et al., 2009). A few prevention programs for AIDS risk behavior have been designed for African American females and males, however, and evaluation of these programs found positive outcomes (Vera & Reese, 2000). These prevention efforts were gender- and

ethnic background-specific and taught knowledge- and social/cognitive-based techniques which were found to be associated with increased perceived self-efficacy for condom use, decreased intentions to engage in sexual behavior, and less favorable attitudes toward risky sexual behaviors as compared to control group peers. Studies such as these lend support to the call for continued design, use, and evaluation of gender- and culture-specific prevention programming.

In addition to supporting the call for culturally-based programming for Latino youth, the current study also supports the need for gender-specific intervention and prevention efforts regarding Latino boys' and Latina girls' sexual activity (Vera & Reese, 2000). Additionally, in the current study, specific gender differences were found in the beliefs regarding sexual activity among teenagers. Similarly, Pearson (2006) reported that gender plays a significant role in determining safe-sex practices, personal control, and self-efficacy on sexual negotiation, which suggests that gender-specific programming is necessary to address specific beliefs regarding sexual activity that are unique to each gender. Further, Harper, Bangi, Sanchez, Doll and Pedraza (2009) suggested that gender-specific programming (such as the "SHERO's" program they conducted) may help to improve perceptions regarding a woman's control of her sexuality as well as HIV/AIDS knowledge, beliefs related to sexual coercion, perceived peer norms supporting sexual health, and positive condom attitudes. The current study supports the call for gender-specific programming that it is necessarily to address not only Latino teens' sexual activity practices, but also their beliefs and from where those beliefs come, as these can be powerful determinants of their sexual behavior (as evidenced in the qualitative study).

Unfortunately, very little programming directly aimed at improving sexual activity outcomes for Latino teenage boys exists in the current literature. Some studies have been conducted with Latino adolescent males regarding contraceptive negotiation, however (Tschann, Flores, de Groat, Deardorff, & Wibbelsman, 2010), and have had conflicting results regarding whether males are effective (Tschann et al., 2010) or ineffective (Gilliam, 2007) at negotiating condom usage. The sum of the current study taken together with current research in this area seems to suggest then that additional intervention and prevention programming needs to be developed and evaluated for separate use with Latino boys and girls (Rojas-Guyler & King, 2009) that addresses their unique beliefs and practices regarding sexual activity as well as promotes contraceptive awareness, knowledge, availability, and use.

Conclusions from the study can help the field understand how gender-specific programming for Latino teenagers regarding sexual activity can occur, what it should include, who it is for, and how it can be implemented. First, the present study indicates that programming should not only focus on the sexual activity beliefs and behaviors of Latino teens, but also on the etiology of those beliefs and practices, as they may be closely linked to cultural values transmitted to them by their parents. Intervention efforts should use the apparent double-standard communicated by Latino parents regarding of the acceptability for Latino teenage boys and girls to have sex as a starting point to initiate discussions about other things Latino teens hear from their parents about sexual activity and their own personal decisions to have sex including identifying the values, messages, and beliefs that impact their decision.

Second, the present study highlights the need for parents to be involved in sexual activity prevention programming for youth (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2009b), as in the qualitative study, both the boys and girls reported having sexual activity beliefs that were the same as what they reported being told by their parents (even though the boys did not believe that they were influenced by their families' communication regarding sex). It may be useful for Latino teens to be made aware of the fact that their parents' involvement and communication can be beneficial for them with regard to long-term sexual activity outcomes. That is, even though Latino teenagers may report that they do not want to talk to their parents about sexual activity, it may be useful for them to know that the Latino youth with parents who monitor and communicate more are less likely to experience the negative consequences of sexual activity, such as STIs and unplanned pregnancy (Miller, Forehand, & Kotchick, 1999).

Third, the quantitative results of the present study indicate that parental monitoring is perhaps the most protective factor for youth with regard to engagement in sexual activity, indicating that prevention programming should also include sessions for parents, not just teens. These sessions should emphasize the importance of monitoring their children's activities, whereabouts, and peers to parents as well as provide them with information about how to communicate their cultural values to their children, as these were also found to be related to Latino and Latina teenagers' personal beliefs about the acceptability of teen sex.

Fourth, the present study highlights the need for programming to focus on contraceptive education, especially for the Latina teenagers, as they reported receiving very little education regarding contraceptive use or purpose and are at a high risk for

experiencing the negative consequences of unprotected sex. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationship between a teenager's sexual activity beliefs and actual sexual behavior (Guilamo-Ramos et al, 2009b). It is worth exploring with these teens if and why their beliefs and actions are concordant, as this may help them develop their own mechanisms by which to make conscious decisions regarding whether they should have sex.

### **Directions for Future Research**

While this study answers important questions about the impact of Latino family variables and acculturation status on the sexual activity beliefs and outcomes among a group of Latino adolescents, it also raises additional questions about the various variables that impact sexual activity among Latino youth and offers important directions for future empirical research. First, this study highlights the importance of additional research and theory development on the concept of familism. As noted in the review of literature, familism is a concept wrought with inconsistencies in definition and measurement and there are divergent beliefs among researchers about whether familism is a process unique to Latino families or is descriptive of families from all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Future investigations should make it a point to use the most comprehensive definition of familism available to them in order to best capture the nuances of familism that are displayed by Latino populations. Future research should also integrate the various definitions of familism including concepts such as subjugation of the self to the family and using family as referents that have more recently been considered to be part of the definition (Knight et al., 2008). A final area future research should explore are the relationships between family composition/structure and participation in family-centered

activities/behaviors and adolescents' engagement in sexual behavior and sexual risk-taking (Guilamo-Ramos et al. 2009a) as the currently study demonstrates that both structural and behavioral familism may be related to sexual activity for Latino youth.

Another important area for future investigation has to do with the relationship between familism and acculturation status and how that relationship may impact positive and negative functioning outcomes for Latino youth. This study did not find any relationship between assimilation to White culture, familism, and the sexual activity outcomes used in this study in the qualitative or quantitative studies, which perhaps reflects the divided nature of the literature on this topic. The current literature is inconclusive about the relationship between Latino family variables and assimilation (e.g., Ford and Norris, 1993; Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Pena, & Goldberg, 2005) calling into question the ways in which these variables are thought to affect the sexual activity of Latino adolescents. Therefore, future investigations should use comprehensive, reliable, and valid measures of the Latino family variables, acculturation, and assimilation in order to better discern the interaction between acculturation (including time living in the United States, language preference, and language spoken in the home) and familism. Additionally, given the variation in the effects of assimilation on risk behaviors among Latino adolescents, and the continued growth of the Latino adolescent population in the United States (U.S. Census, 2005), this topic warrants further study.

Further, the present study also clearly exemplifies the need for gender-specific studies with regard to familism. The current literature reflects that many studies still neglect to include gender distinctions when examining familism in connection to sexual activity (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2009a; Ragsdale, Gore-Gelton, Koopman, Seal, 2009)

and demonstrates a need for these types of investigations. First, the influences of family variables which may manifest differently for girls and boys, as was found in the current study and has been found in recent research as well (Delgado, Updegraff, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2011). The present study highlights that Latino adolescent males and Latina adolescent females have very different expectations from family, adhere to different cultural values, ascribe to different gender-roles, and hold different beliefs about sexual activity, all of which may significantly and differently affect sexual activity for Latinos, especially at varying levels of acculturation.

In addition to family factors and acculturation, other variables currently being investigated in the literature such as relationship power (Ragsdale et al., 2009), varied behaviors with main partners versus other partners, and gender beliefs (Fernandez-Esquer, Diamond, & Atkinson, 2010) also may differentially influence sexual activity behaviors and risk-taking among Latino adolescent boys and Latina adolescent girls and warrant continued investigation. Additionally, it is unclear from the current study the extent to which other cultural variables not included in this study impact the messages teenagers hear from parents regarding sexual activity as well as actual sexual behavior. Adherence to cultural values such as religiosity (Edwards, Fehring, Jarrett, & Haglund, 2008) and traditional gender roles (Schuster, 2003), have been found to be protective of youth for other risk behaviors as well as sexual activity, but require further research to better understand how these may impact the messages Latino and Latina teens hear regarding sexual activity and if/how they impact teenagers' sexual activity beliefs and behaviors. Therefore, the continued study of how Latina and Latino teens differ with



regard to their internalization of cultural values and gender role expectations as well as how these variables impact sexual activity beliefs and outcomes is necessary.

### **Conclusions of the Current Study**

Perhaps the most important contribution of this study is that it emphasizes the importance of gender to research that considers how family variables may impact sexual activity beliefs and outcomes for Latino youth in particular, but likely also for all ethnic minority and majority youth. While statistical outcomes did not consistently point to certain variables that discriminated between the two genders with respect to sexual activity, parental monitoring was found to be highly protective, both qualitatively and quantitatively, for participants in this study. Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data suggests the gender plays an important role in how familism values are communicated, how and how often Latino adolescent teens are monitored by their parents, how adolescents communicate with their parents, and how Latino teens determine their own beliefs regarding sexual activity. Given the increasing rates at which Latino youth are engaging in sexual activity and experiencing the adverse consequences of unprotected sexual intercourse (e.g., Finer, 2010), the present findings support the necessity of culture- and gender-relevant prevention and intervention programming as well as the need for future research studies with the goal of educating these youth and protecting them from the negative consequences of early sexual activity.

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## Appendix A

*Information Letter in English*

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to invite your child to participate in a project being conducted through the Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology at Marquette University. The researcher, Dr. Lisa Edwards, is interested in learning more about the about the different factors that influence relationships and well-being among Latino/a boys and girls, including family, cultural beliefs, sexual attitudes/behaviors, and life satisfaction. This is an important topic as there is very little research about Latino/a adolescent's attitudes and behaviors.

We are inviting your child to complete a 30-40 minute survey. All of your child's responses will be anonymous. Your child will receive a \$5.00 gift card for completing the survey. Your child may also have the opportunity to be a part of a focus group with other Latino youth where they will discuss their opinions about family and cultural influences on sexual attitudes. The focus group will last for about 2 hours and the information from the group will be kept confidential. Your child will receive an additional \$5.00 gift card for participating in the focus group.

If you think you might be interested in having your child participate in this important research, please sign the two consent forms on the attached pages. Keep one copy for yourself and ask your child to bring the other one back to school in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Dr. Edwards at any time.

## Appendix B

*Parental Consent Form in English***MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
PARENT PERMISSION FORM****Latino/a Adolescents' Relationships and Well-Being Study**

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to allow your child to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to give permission for your child to participate.

**PURPOSE:** We want to find out about the different factors that influence relationships and well-being among Latino/a boys and girls. We are asking your son/daughter to be part of this study because he/she is a teenage Latino/a. We are interested in what he/she thinks about their ethnic background, family, cultural beliefs, sexual attitudes/behaviors, and overall well-being. Your child will be one of approximately 300 participants in this research study.

**PROCEDURES:** Your child will be asked to complete some surveys about him/herself and may be asked to participate in a focus group. The surveys will be completed individually and will take 30-40 minutes. The focus groups will include 6-8 Latino/a youth and one or two adult leaders. Each focus group discussion will last 1-2 hours and will be tape recorded. The recordings will be transcribed. The focus groups will pose discussion questions about family and cultural influences on the sexual attitudes of Latino/a youth.

**RISKS:** There are minimal risks involved with this study, but since the study is about cultural beliefs, family, relationships and sexual behavior, your child may feel uncomfortable talking about this topic with others. Your child does not have to answer questions or share information that he/she would rather keep private. During the focus groups, your child is free to respond in his/her own way.

**BENEFITS:** This study may not directly benefit your child; however, being a part of research about relationships and well-being among Latino/a youth in this study may be beneficial for your child. What we learn from the research may also be used to help other teenagers some day. Everybody in this study will receive a list of community mental health resources.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time. We will discard his/her questionnaire. If your child participates in a focus group and wants to stop once the group has started, we will stop

the tape and allow him/her to leave. We will not erase the tape, anything that your child said in the group prior to when he/she quit will remain on the tape recording.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Marquette University is committed to the protection and privacy of individuals who choose to participate in research. That is why we are sharing this information with you and requesting your permission. Your child's participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw their information at any time.

The information your child reveals in this study will be kept confidential. We will not share with you what your child says in the focus group with a few exceptions. We will notify you if your child shares thoughts about hurting him/herself or someone else in some way. We also are required by law to report child abuse to the Child Protection Services (CPS). If your child reports that he/she has been physically or sexually abused we will have to report to CPS. You would be notified in advance if we make a report to CPS.

Data from this study will not be associated with your child's name. Names will not be included on the surveys. We will not use names during the focus groups, so your child's name will not be tape recorded. We will enter his/her information from the surveys into a computer database. Your child will not be identifiable in the database or the typed transcripts, so we will not destroy them. We may use the database and transcripts in other research studies or to teach college students. The paper questionnaires and tape recordings of the groups will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Paper consents and questionnaires will be stored in a locked file cabinet file until they are destroyed. The tape recordings of the groups will be stored on password protected computers of the researchers until they are deleted. The database and transcripts, which will have all identification removed, will also be stored on password protected computers of the researchers.

Your child's identity will be protected on the surveys and the tape recordings of the focus groups. However, we cannot protect his/her identity within the group. The other group members will hear your child's comments and we cannot guarantee everyone's confidentiality. All focus group participants are instructed to keep discussions confidential. We will remind everyone at the beginning of the focus group to please not share things that they would not like others to hear. Your child's research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**COMPENSATION:** As a token of compensation, your child will receive \$5.00 for completing the surveys and \$5.00 if they participate in a focus group.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Dr. Lisa Edwards at 414-288- 1433. If you have questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

**If you are willing to have your child participate in this project (both completing the surveys and possibly taking part in a focus group) please sign both copies of the consent form and send one copy back in the envelope provided. Keep the other copy of the consent form for your records as it has my name and phone number.**

**Permission Granted for Child's Participation in this Project**

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Statement, and I grant permission to have my child participate in this project. While there is no significant stress expected, I understand that I am free to withdraw my child from the study at any time. *With my signature, I also confirm that I have received a copy of this consent statement.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name (Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

*Participant Personal Assent Form***Marquette University Agreement of Assent for Research Participants**

I am being asked to take part in a survey being conducted by Dr. Lisa Edwards, who is a professor at Marquette University. The reason for the survey is to learn more about the cultural influences on the sexual behavior of Latino/a adolescents.

I may participate in a one to two-hour long, tape recorded focus group interview, during which I will answer questions about myself and my opinions. Every person is different, and there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

My answers will be kept private and my name will not be recorded on the tape. Approximately 300 adolescents will take part in this research study. My responses will not be shared with my parents or anyone else except under the following circumstances: If I tell the researchers that I think I need help, if I am planning to hurt myself or someone else, or if I say something that may indicate that I am experiencing abuse of any kind. In those cases the researchers will need to speak with my parents and/or notify other persons that can help me.

My parents have agreed to let me take part in the study, but it is my decision whether or not to do the surveys and interview. If I do not want to complete the survey, I can stop at any time. If I do not want to take part in the interview, I just need to tell the interviewer and we will stop. Answering the questions will not be upsetting, but if something bothered me I could decide not to continue. If I have any questions, one of the researchers will answer them.

**I agree to participate in this survey and interview.**

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date



## Appendix D

*Adult Participant Consent Form***MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM****Latino/a Adolescents' Relationships and Well-Being Study**

**Investigator:** Lisa Edwards PhD, Department of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to give permission to participate.

**PURPOSE:** We want to find out about the different factors that influence relationships and well-being among Latino/a boys and girls. We are asking you to be part of this study because you are a teenage Latino/a. We are interested in what you think about your ethnic background, family, cultural beliefs, sexual attitudes/behaviors, and overall well-being. You will be one of approximately 300 participants in this research study.

**PROCEDURES:** You will be asked to complete some surveys about yourself and may be asked to participate in a focus group. The surveys will be completed individually and will take 30-40 minutes. The focus groups will include 6-8 Latino/a youth and one or two adult leaders. Each focus group discussion will last 1-2 hours and will be tape recorded. The recordings will be transcribed. The focus groups will pose discussion questions about family and cultural influences on the sexual attitudes of Latino/a youth.

**RISKS:** There are minimal risks involved with this study, but since the study is about cultural beliefs, family, relationships and sexual behavior, you may feel uncomfortable talking about this topic with others. You do not have to answer questions or share information that you would rather keep private. During the focus groups, you are free to respond in your own way.

**BENEFITS:** This study may not directly benefit you; however, being a part of research about relationships and well-being among Latino/a youth in this study may be indirectly beneficial for you. What we learn from the research may also be used to help other teenagers some day. Everybody in this study will receive a list of community mental health resources.

**VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time. We will destroy your questionnaire. If you participate in a focus group and want to stop once the group has started, we will stop the tape and allow you to leave. We will

not erase the tape, anything that you said in the group prior to when you quit will remain on the tape recording.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Marquette University is committed to the protection and privacy of individuals who choose to participate in research. That is why we are sharing this information with you and requesting your permission. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your information at any time.

The information you reveal in this study will be kept confidential. We will not share what you say in the focus group with a few exceptions. We will notify the police if you talk about hurting yourself or someone else in some way. We also are required by law to report child abuse to the Child Protection Services (CPS). If you report that you were physically or sexually abused as a child, we will have to report to CPS. You would be notified in advance if we make a report.

Data from this study will not be associated with your name. Names will not be included on the surveys. We will not use names during the focus groups, so your name will not be tape recorded. We will enter your information from the surveys into a computer database. You will not be identifiable in the database or the typed transcripts, so we will not destroy them. We may use the database and transcripts in other research studies or to teach college students. The paper questionnaires and tape recordings of the groups will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Paper consents and questionnaires will be stored in a locked file cabinet file until they are destroyed. The tape recordings of the groups will be stored on password protected computers of the researchers until they are deleted. The database and transcripts, which will have all identification removed, will also be stored on password protected computers of the researchers.

Your identity will be protected on the surveys and the tape recordings of the focus groups. However, we cannot protect your identity within the group. The other group members will hear your comments and we cannot guarantee everyone's confidentiality. All focus group participants are instructed to keep discussions confidential. We will remind everyone at the beginning of the focus group to please not share things that they would not like others to hear.

Your research records may be inspected by the Marquette University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowable by law) state and federal agencies.

**COMPENSATION:** As a token of compensation, you will receive \$5.00 for completing the surveys and \$5.00 if you participate in a focus group.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Dr. Lisa Edwards at 414-288-1433. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

**If you are willing to participate in this project (both completing the surveys and possibly taking part in a focus group) please sign both copies of the consent form and send one copy back in the envelope provided. Keep the other copy of the consent form for your records as it has my name and phone number.**

### **Permission Granted for Participation in this Project**

I have read and understand the Informed Consent Statement, and I grant my permission to participate in this project. While there is no significant stress expected, I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. *With my signature, I also confirm that I have received a copy of this consent statement.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E

*Mental Health Resources Flyer – Milwaukee***Mental Health Support Resources****Mental Health Association Crisis Line in Milwaukee:** [www.mhamilw.org](http://www.mhamilw.org)

Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division

(414) 257-7222

TDD: (414) 257-6300

Emergency telephone counseling, information and referral for personal, family, and social crises. Assistance with obtaining appropriate follow-up care. No fee. 24-hour service.

**Mobile Urgent Treatment Team (MUTT)**

9201 Watertown Plank Road, Milwaukee, WI 53226

(414) 257-7621; After hours: (414) 257-7222; M – F: 9 a.m. – 10 p.m. Sat., Sun.,

Holidays: 1:30 – 10 p.m.

A crisis team for children, adolescents and their families. Mental Health Treatment for children, adolescents and their families. Services include mobile crisis, outpatient/day treatment, in-home treatment, case management/Wraparound Milwaukee, and inpatient treatment. Wraparound Milwaukee is the specialty managed care program that targets youth for diversion from residential treatment and hospitalization placements.

**Sixteenth Street Community Health Center**

1032 South Cesar E. Chavez Drive, Milwaukee 53204

(414) 672-1353; FAX: (414) 383-5597

Counseling and psychiatric services for children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families. Bilingual therapists and psychiatrist speak Spanish/English. Sliding fee scale, Title 19, all other insurances. M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Pathfinders**

2038 North Bartlett Avenue, Milwaukee 53202

(414) 271-4610; FAX: (414) 271-0102

Solution-focused counseling for individuals, couples, and families; support groups; therapy groups; facilitator training; HIV prevention programs. Shelter, counseling, and case management for homeless teens, 11-17 years of age. Child and adolescent sexual abuse treatment program. Call for appointment and hours. Sliding fee scale.

**Lutheran Social Services**

647 West Virginia Street, Suite 300, Milwaukee 53204

(414) 281-4400

Comprehensive mental health and AODA counseling services for all ages and types of problem situations. Individual, family, group treatment modalities used. Education/prevention programs. Sliding fee scale; insurance; Title 19. M-F, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Call for information, including office locations that may be convenient for you.

## Appendix F

*Mental Health Resources Flyer – Chicago*

**Mental Health Support Resources**  
**Mental Health America of Illinois: <http://www.mhai.org/>**

**USA National Suicide Hotlines**

Toll-Free/24 Hours/7 Days a week

1-800-784-2433

1-800-273-8255

**Thrive Counseling Center: 24 Hour Crisis Hotline**

120 South Marion Street, Oak Park, IL 60302-2809

(708) 383-7500

Thrive Counseling Center is a not-for-profit, social service and mental health agency that offers behavioral healthcare services, crisis and emergency services, comprehensive youth services, psychiatric rehabilitation services, specialized support, prevention, and risk reduction services.

**Advocate Illinois Masonic Community Mental Health Center**

836 W. Wellington, Chicago, IL 60657

(773) 296-3220

Monday - Thursday: 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Friday: 9:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

Services provided in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Provides behavioral health services to children, adolescents, and adults. Services include crisis intervention, alcohol and substance abuse, and outpatient psychiatric services.

**Children's Memorial Hospital**

Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

2300 Children's Plaza, #10, Chicago, Illinois 60614-3363

(800) 543-7362

Provides services to children of all ages from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Treatments for adjustment disorders, emotional problems related to pediatric disorders, psychoses, mood disorders, anxiety, developmental delays, behavior disorders, ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, and learning disabilities are available.

**Community Mental Health Council**

Headquarters and Outpatient Site

8704 South Constance Avenue, Chicago, IL 60617

(773) 734-4033 Telephone (773) 734-6447 Fax (773) 734-2440 TDD

Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Offers clinical treatment to youth ages 4-17 and their families. Services include assessment, therapy, counseling, case management, residential and supportive services.

## Appendix G

*Sociodemographic Questionnaire*

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ Grade in School: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your current GPA? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male
4. What is your religious affiliation?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Catholic \_\_\_\_\_ Protestant \_\_\_\_\_ Atheist  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jewish \_\_\_\_\_ Agnostic \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. From what ethnic background is your family (e.g. Mexican, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were you born in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
7. Which generation of your family came to the United States?  
\_\_\_\_\_ parents \_\_\_\_\_ grandparents \_\_\_\_\_ great-grandparents
8. What best describes your family's standard of living? (please circle one)  
1= very poor 2= poor 3= getting by 4= living comfortably 5= very well off
9. Compared to other students at your school, would you say your family is financially better off or worse off than other families?  
1= much worse off 2=somewhat worse off 3=about the same 4=better off 5=much better off

## Appendix H

*The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans – II – Anglo Orientation Subscale*  
(Cuellar et al., 1995)

Instructions: Circle the number next to each item that best applies to you.

	Not at Often	Not very Often	Moderately	Very Often	Extremely Often
1. I speak Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
2. I speak English	1	2	3	4	5
3. I enjoy speaking Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
4. I associate with Anglos/Whites	1	2	3	4	5
5. I associate with Latinos and/or Latin Americans	1	2	3	4	5
6. I enjoy listening to Spanish language music	1	2	3	4	5
7. I enjoy listening to English language music	1	2	3	4	5
8. I enjoy Spanish language TV	1	2	3	4	5
9. I enjoy English language TV	1	2	3	4	5
10. I enjoy English language movies	1	2	3	4	5
11. I enjoy Spanish language movies	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoy reading books in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy reading books in English	1	2	3	4	5
14. I write letters in Spanish	1	2	3	4	5
15. I write letters in English	1	2	3	4	5
16. My thinking is done in the English language	1	2	3	4	5
17. My thinking is done in the Spanish language	1	2	3	4	5
18. My contact with Latin American countries has been...	1	2	3	4	5
19. My contact with the USA has been...	1	2	3	4	5
20. My father identifies or identified himself as "Latino"	1	2	3	4	5
21. My mother identifies or identified herself as "Latina"	1	2	3	4	5
22. While I was growing up my friends were Latino	1	2	3	4	5
23. While I was growing up my friends were Anglo	1	2	3	4	5
24. My family cooks Latino foods	1	2	3	4	5
25. My friends now are of Anglo/White origin	1	2	3	4	5
26. My friends now are of Latino origin	1	2	3	4	5
27. I like to identify myself as an Anglo American	1	2	3	4	5
28. I like to identify myself as a Latin American	1	2	3	4	5
29. I like to identify myself as a Latino/a	1	2	3	4	5
30. I like to identify myself as American	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix I

*Mexican American Cultural Values Scale – Attitudinal Familism Scale (Knight et al., 2008)*

The next statements are about what people may think or believe. There are no right or wrong answers.

Response Alternatives:

1 = Not at all.      2 = A little.      3 = Somewhat.      4 = Very much.      5 = Completely.

*Tell me how much you believe that...*

- \_\_\_ 1. Parents should teach their children that the family always comes first.
- \_\_\_ 2. Children should be taught that it is their duty to care for their parents when their parents get old.
- \_\_\_ 3. Children should always do things to make their parents happy.
- \_\_\_ 4. Family provides a sense of security because they will always be there for you.
- \_\_\_ 5. If a relative is having a hard time financially, one should help them out if possible.
- \_\_\_ 6. When it comes to important decisions, the family should ask for advice from close relatives.
- \_\_\_ 7. It is always important to be united as a family.
- \_\_\_ 8. A person should share their home with relatives if they need a place to stay.
- \_\_\_ 9. It is important to have close relationships with aunts/uncles, grandparents and cousins.
- \_\_\_ 10. Older kids should take care of and be role models for their younger brothers and sisters.
- \_\_\_ 11. Children should be taught to always be good because they represent the family.
- \_\_\_ 12. Holidays and celebrations are important because the whole family comes together.
- \_\_\_ 13. Parents should be willing to make great sacrifices to make sure their children have a better life.
- \_\_\_ 14. A person should always think about their family when making important decisions.
- \_\_\_ 15. It is important for family members to show their love and affection to one another.
- \_\_\_ 16. It is important to work hard and do ones best because this work reflects on the family.



## Appendix J

*Behavioral Familism Items (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994)*

Circle one below each question that best describes how often you do the following.

1. How often do you talk on the phone with relatives who do not live with you?

less than once per month	2-3 times per month	once per week	3-6 times per week	once per day	more than once a day
1	2	3	4	5	6

2. How often do you see relatives who do not live with you?

less than once per month	2-3 times per month	once per week	3-6 times per week	once per day	more than once a day
1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix K

*Structural Familism Items (Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994)*

Please fill in the following blanks as they apply to you.

1. How many family members that do not live with you reside within a one (1) hour's drive of you? (Circle one below.)

None      1-4      5-8      9-12      13-16      17-19      20 or more

## Appendix L

*Parent/Adolescent Communication Scale – Open Communication Subscale (Barnes & Olson, 1982)*

Please use the scale below to indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

\_\_\_ 1. I can discuss my beliefs with my mother and/or father without feeling restrained or embarrassed.

\_\_\_ 2. My mother and/or father is always a good listener.

\_\_\_ 3. My mother and/or father can tell how I'm feeling without asking.

\_\_\_ 4. I am very satisfied with how my mother and/or father and I talk together.

\_\_\_ 5. If I were in trouble, I could tell my mother and/or father.

\_\_\_ 6. I openly show affection to my mother and/or father.

\_\_\_ 7. When I ask questions, I get honest answers from my mother and/or father.

\_\_\_ 8. My mother and/or father tries to understand my point of view.

\_\_\_ 9. I find it easy to discuss problems with my mother and/or father.

\_\_\_ 10. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my mother and/or father.

## Appendix M

*Parental Monitoring Scale (Romero & Ruiz, 2007)*

Please use this scale to indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

Very much disagree	Disagree	Agree	Very much agree
1	2	3	4

- \_\_\_ 1. My parents know exactly where I am when I am not in school.
- \_\_\_ 2. My parents talk to me about the activities I do with my friends.
- \_\_\_ 3. My parents try to get to know my friends and their families.
- \_\_\_ 4. My parents always stick to the rules they have for me.
- \_\_\_ 5. My parents check to see if I do my homework.
- \_\_\_ 6. My parents tell me what I am allowed and not allowed to do.
- \_\_\_ 7. My parents tell me what the right thing to do is.

## Appendix N

*Sexual Activity Outcomes*

Please check the appropriate response or fill in the blank.

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no
2. How many sexual partners have you had in your lifetime? \_\_\_\_\_ (number of sexual partners.)

## Appendix O

*Qualitative Focus Groups Research Protocol*

1. How do you describe your cultural or ethnic background?
2. Some people from Latino or Hispanic cultures say that their families are important to them. What do you think about your family?
  - a. What does your family mean to you?
  - b. What does your family provide for you?
3. Describe how many people are in your family and how often you see them.
4. What are some things you do with your family?
  - a. How does this compare to what you think that other kids your age do with their families?
5. Do you think Latino families are different from other families, specifically White families?
  - a. How do you think they are different?
  - b. What is it about Latino families that make them unique/special?
6. Do your parents know where you are and who you are with when you are not at home and with them? How do they know?
7. Do you/how often do you talk with your family members?
  - a. Do you feel more comfortable talking with certain family members?
  - b. Describe what you talk about with your family members?
  - c. What does being able to talk to family members do for you?
8. What is it like to be a Latina girl (or Latino boy) in your family?
  - a. Are the differences in how Latino parents treat their sons versus their daughters?
  - b. What are the expectations for boys/girls in Latino families?
  - c. What are the similarities and differences?
9. What is sex?
10. Describe your attitudes toward sex.
11. What are your family members' (e.g., parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles) views of sex?
12. Do your parents talk to you about health behaviors generally and sexual activity in particular? Any other family members you talk to about sex?
  - a. What do they say?
  - b. What do you think they tell the opposite gender about sex?
13. How do your family beliefs and behaviors impact your decision to engage in sexual behavior, if at all?
14. How does Latino culture view sexual activity for teenagers?
15. Are the rules different for boys and girls when it comes to sex? If so, how?
16. How do you think White, mainstream families and culture perceive sex?
  - a. What do you think White parents tell their teens about sex?
17. What are the similarities/differences between your family and White families about sex?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add about the topics we have discussed today?