

Familism, Mother-Daughter Mutuality, and Suicide Attempts of Adolescent Latinas

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National surveys in the U.S. reveal that Latina adolescents have higher rates of suicide attempts than females of other ethnic and racial groups. Past reports indicate that the suicide attempts among Latinas are lodged within family contexts in which sociocultural and individual experiences influence parental and adolescent behaviors. To better understand the parent-adolescent relations that explain the Latina suicidal phenomenon, we examined how the high value on family unity and support, as reflected by *familism*, and its effects on mother-daughter mutuality (i.e., reciprocal empathy and engagement) were evident in a group of adolescent Latinas with suicide attempts and a group of adolescent Latinas without suicide attempts. Drawing from data on 169 mother-daughter dyads recruited from Latino communities in a Northeastern metropolis and who self-identified as being of Latino origin or heritage, we considered how differences in familism between mothers and daughters influenced their sense of mutuality, the adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and suicide attempts. Results show that gaps in familism (mothers scoring higher than their daughters on the scale) predicted less mother-daughter mutuality and more externalizing behaviors in the adolescents. Also, mother-daughter mutuality was negatively related to internalizing and externalizing behaviors which, in turn, predicted suicide attempts. Findings point to further research on family interactions that raise the risk for suicidality in Latino youth, particularly to including fathers and siblings in study designs. Clinical implications point to enhancing family and dyadic communication skills focusing mutuality while observing the cultural value of familism.

Keywords: familism, mutuality, Latina adolescents, suicide attempts

Latino adolescents comprise 18% of all 16–25 year olds living in the U.S. and report that they are satisfied with their lives and optimistic about their futures, and that they place a high value on education, hard work, and career success (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). However, such optimism is contrary to data showing that Latino adolescents are more likely than other adolescents to attempt suicide. Indeed, about 15% of adolescent Latinas report attempting suicide, a rate that not only surpassed the attempts of Black and White adolescents in 2007, but in every year since 1991 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, 2008).

The question now is what are the variables that could predict such high suicide attempt by Latinas teenagers? We

know that a suicide attempt is related to previous physical and sexual abuse, and to drug abuse in Latina girls who are delinquents and sentenced to probation (Cuellar & Curry, 2007). We do not know, however, how Latina girls who are not delinquents relate with their parents, and what the possible familial trigger factors for suicide attempts in these girls. Some conceptual models and empirical studies have emerged that shed light on factors influencing the phenomenon of suicide attempts among Latino youth, especially females (e.g., Bridge, Goldstein, & Brent, 2006; Peña, Wyman, Brown, Matthieu, Olivares, Hartel, & Zayas, 2008; Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, & Fortuna, 2005; see Duarté-Vélez & Bernal, 2007, for a review of the literature). This study focuses on two factors often highlighted by the conceptual models. Specifically, the study aims to investigate how a value that refers to high family unit and familial support (familism) could be a trigger for the quality of interactions of these Latina adolescents with their parents (daughters-parents mutuality), and how these two factors might interact with the girls' internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and with suicide attempt.

Familism is the emphasis on family cohesiveness, interdependence, loyalty and responsibility to care for one another; and of placing the family before one's personal needs (Cauce & Domenech Rodriguez, 2002; Sarkisian, Genera, & Gerstel, 2006, 2007). There are several definitions and

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aspects of familism. For this study, we will focus on the attitudinal familism (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003), which has four components: (a) belief that family comes before the individual; (b) family interconnectedness; (c) belief in family reciprocity; and (d) belief in familial honor.

Familism is theorized to have positive effects on adolescents' behaviors, and empirical evidence supports its protective function against several social problems of adolescence (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Gonzalez, 1995; Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Barbara, 1978; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis, 2009), while it enhances self-esteem (Smokowski & Bacallao, 2007). The direct relationship between familism and suicide attempt is not clear, however. One example of a study that evaluated the relationship between these outcomes is Kuhlberg, Peña, and Zayas' study (Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas 2010), where they showed that familism does not directly predict suicide attempt, but it has an indirect relationship with suicide attempt through the adolescent's internalizing behavior.

Mutuality has been defined as patterns of feelings, thoughts, and activities in relationships that are characterized by empathy, engagement, authenticity, and empowerment (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). The lack of mutuality, or the perceived reciprocity the adolescents have with their parents is important in fostering life satisfaction and sense of well-being, and in decreasing negative behaviors (Edwards & Lopez, 2006; Morgan, Vera, Gonzales, Conner, Vacek, & Coyle, 2009). Mutuality is also related to adolescents' identity formation and protects against maladaptive behavioral problems, such as aggressive behaviors (Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan, & Szapocznik, 2005).

One problem with several studies on familism is that they evaluate only the adolescent's perspective. Less is known about what differences or similarities exist in reported levels of familism amongst members of the same family, and how the dynamics expressed by the varied levels of familism may be related to adolescent outcomes. The few studies that include multiple informant reports for familism show that adolescent responses are not correlated with the reports of either their mother or father (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009; Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008). It is important to understand how different family members conceptualize familism because differences in values between parents and their adolescent children may precipitate stress in Latino families. Similarly, it is important to understand how different members of a family perceive their mutuality amongst each other. It may be, for example, that daughters perceive their relationship with their parents in a different manner than their parents perceive their relationship with their daughters. Accordingly, Zayas, Bright, Alvarez-Sanchez, and Cabassa (2009) showed that while girls who attempted suicide did not differ on familism compared to girls that had not attempted suicide and their respective mothers did not differ in their familism values, both groups of daughters reported significantly less familism than their mothers. Moreover, the Latina adolescents reported having more conflict with their mothers compared to what their mothers reported, and this

gap between daughters and mothers' report was higher for the adolescents that had attempted suicide compared to those who had not attempted suicide.

The present study expands on Zayas et al. (2009) by examining whether these differences amongst mothers and daughters on their report of familism and mutuality predict internalizing, externalizing and suicide attempts to further disentangle the multilayered factors surrounding Latina adolescent suicide attempts. In the present report, we focus on Latina girls that have attempted suicide, Latina girls who have not attempted suicide, and the girls' mothers. Only a few fathers of the adolescents in the sample participated in the interviews, and data on the daughters-fathers dyads will be evaluated in a different study. In Figure 1, we depict a model of the relationships among the variables of interest in which we posit that the gap in familistic attitudes between adolescent Latinas and their mothers have a direct effect on the mutuality that daughters and mothers report. We hypothesize that the discrepancies in familism and mutuality influence the internalizing and externalizing problems of the girls which in turn result in suicidal behaviors when the differences between girls and parents are greatest.

With This Model in Mind, We Hypothesized That

1. The larger the difference between daughters and mothers' reports in familism, the lower the level of mother-daughter mutuality, and the more adolescents outcomes (internalizing and externalizing) behaviors.
2. The lower the level of adolescents' mutuality with mothers, the more adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and the greater the likelihood that adolescents will attempt suicide.
3. The more externalizing and internalizing behaviors adolescents show, the more likely they are to attempt suicide.

Method

Data for this report were drawn from a larger project on the suicide attempts of adolescent Latinas that included a

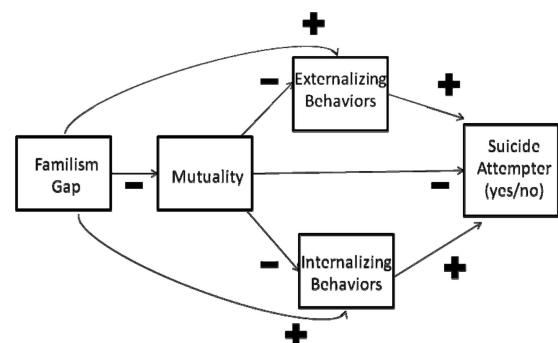


Figure 1. Hypothesized path model.

comparison group of Latinas who had never attempted suicide. Suicide attempters were recruited in the New York City area from social service agencies and general and psychiatric hospitals that serve largely Hispanic populations; the comparison group from local community agencies (e.g., after-school, prevention, and youth development programs) and primary care clinics (see Kuhlberg et al., 2010, for further details on methodology used). In this study, we utilize the data from a sample limited to those girls whose mothers also participated. Interviews were all conducted by doctorate and master's level clinicians, who were bilingual and bicultural Hispanic women. The IRB at the University approved all procedures.

Participants

Of the 232 adolescent Latinas ($n = 122$ attempters and $n = 110$ nonattempters), we selected only those adolescents whose mothers participated in the study ($n = 169$). Specifically, we used quantitative data provided by 86 mother-daughter pairs of Latinas with suicide attempts and 83 mother-daughter pairs of Latinas without a history of attempts. Although 73% ($n = 123$) of our sample were born in the U.S., most girls identified themselves as being of a specific Hispanic subgroup. Their identities in most cases matched their mother's self-reported cultural identity: 53 Puerto Rican, 47 Dominican, 25 Mexican, 19 Colombian, 9 Ecuadoran, 1 Salvadoran, 1 Honduran, 1 Peruvian, and 1 Venezuelan. Four girls identified with the cultures of their mother and father, five identified with their father's culture more than their mother's, and two identified themselves as being "American."

Variables

Familism. We used the Lugo Steidel and Contreras (2003) scale measuring behavioral familism that includes items measuring support, honor, subjugation of self before family, and interconnectedness. The obtained alphas for the global familism scale in our sample were .87 and .83 for the adolescents and mothers, respectively. For the adolescents, subscale alphas were .68 for interconnectedness, .70 for support, .58 for honor, and .64 for subjugation, and for mothers: .72 for interconnectedness, .69 for support, .53 for honor, and .53 for subjugation.

Mutuality. Mutuality, or how attuned were adolescents with their mothers (and vice versa), was measured with the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero et al., 1992). The MPDQ has 22 items that combine one's perception of self and others on six dimensions: empathy (flow of feelings and attunement with the other's experience), engagement (focusing on one another), authenticity (knowing the other's experience), diversity (expressing different perspectives), empowerment (reciprocal impact), and zest (energy-releasing relationship). Our sample's alphas were .88 for adolescents' ratings of relationships with mothers, and .88 for mother's ratings of relationships with their daughters.

Internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Girls and their mothers completed the Youth Self-Report (Achenbach, 1991). The internalizing behaviors scale includes items that measure withdrawn depressive symptoms, anxious depressive behaviors, and somatic problems (Achenbach, 1991). The externalizing behavior items measure rule breaking and aggressive behaviors. The Cronbach's α for both subscales of the YSR in this study was .91 for the adolescents' reports. The alphas for mothers' reports on their daughters' externalizing behaviors were .93 and .90 for internalizing behaviors.

Bidirectional Acculturation Scale. The Bidirectional Acculturation Scale (BAS; Marin & Gamba, 1996) measures both Hispanic and U.S. cultural involvement in two subscales. The alpha for the daughters' reports of Hispanic cultural involvement was .91, and U.S. cultural involvement .84. For mothers' reports, alphas were .87 for Hispanic cultural involvement and .96 for U.S. cultural involvement.

Suicide attempter status. The girls' identification as a suicide attempter or nonattempter in our study was the outcome variable for the path. This is binary variable, coded as "1" for those girls who have attempted suicide and "0" for those who have never attempted suicide.

Covariates

We included covariates for the age of the adolescent at the time of the interview, parent education level (i.e., highest level of formal schooling completed by the mother), immigrant generation status (i.e., first generation was the reference in all analyses), and Hispanic cultural group (i.e., Puerto Rican was the reference group in all analyses). The scores on the BAS from both mothers and daughters were also included as covariates.

Data Analysis Strategy

We used Mplus Version 5.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2006) to run a path analysis to explore the direct and indirect relationships hypothesized in our model. Covariates for path analysis included parental education level, adolescent age, immigrant generation status, and Hispanic cultural group, and were included as direct effects on all of the variables in the model. A weighted least squares estimator was used for the path analysis model, which calculates statistical differences in a model for both direct and indirect effects, and also provides the CFI/TLI, and RMSEA fit indices. Coefficients using this estimator are comparable to regression betas with continuous outcomes and probit coefficients when there is a binary outcome. We used the Bonferroni-Holm or Holm adjustment (Aickin & Gensler, 1996) to adjust for any experimental-wise error from multiple group comparisons between Hispanic cultural groups or immigrant generations (Collins, Shafer, & Kam, 2001).

Results

Sample Characteristics and Bivariate Results

The demographics of the adolescent girls and their mothers in our sample are detailed in Table 1. Girls were between

Table 1
Characteristics and Scores on Subscales of Mother-Daughter Dyads (n = 169)

	All dyads (n = 169) M (SD)/N (%)	Attempters (n = 86) M (SD)/N (%)	Nonattempters (n = 83) M (SD)/N (%)
Covariates			
Age of adolescent	15.19 (1.87)	15.02 (1.48)	15.38 (2.20)
Parent education level	10.60 (3.71)	10.21 (3.81)	11.01 (3.58)
Daughters' generation status			
First generation	46 (27.22)	26 (30.23)	20 (24.10)
Second generation	103 (60.95)	49 (65.06)	54 (56.98)
Third generation	20 (11.83)	11 (12.79)	9 (10.84)
Acculturation			
Daughters' Hispanic involvement	2.87 (.64)	2.85 (.70)	2.89 (.57)
Mothers' Hispanic involvement	3.58 (.42)	3.56 (.46)	3.61 (.37)
Daughters' U.S. involvement	3.37 (.54)	3.34 (.60)	3.40 (.47)
Mothers' U.S. Involvement	2.42 (.93)	2.37 (1.01)	2.46 (.85)
Daughters' Hispanic cultural group			
Puerto Rican	53 (31.36)	26 (30.23)	27 (32.53)
Dominican	47 (27.81)	28 (32.56)	19 (22.89)
Mexican	25 (14.79)	16 (18.60)	9 (10.84)
Colombian**	19 (11.24)	4 (4.65)	15 (18.07)
Other	25 (14.79)	12 (13.95)	13 (15.66)
Variables			
Familism (daughter report)	7.39 (1.16)	7.30 (1.28)	7.50 (1.01)
Familism (mother report)	7.99 (1.03)	7.93 (1.01)	8.05 (1.04)
Mutuality (daughter report)***	4.17 (.87)	3.92 (.89)	4.42 (.79)
Mutuality (mother report)***	4.57 (.75)	4.31 (.76)	4.82 (.65)
Internalizing behaviors*** (daughter report)	20.51 (11.18)	26.03 (10.86)	15.19 (8.64)
Internalizing behaviors*** (mother report)	15.59 (10.53)	20.12 (11.16)	11.74 (8.27)
Externalizing behaviors*** (daughter report)	15.99 (10.02)	20.58 (10.58)	11.57 (7.09)
Externalizing behaviors*** (mother report)	13.32 (10.37)	18.03 (11.24)	9.11 (7.36)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

11 and 19 years old, and their mothers had an average of 10 years of formal education. The majority of the girls in our sample were second generation immigrants, with first generation girls making up the second largest group and third or later generation girls having the smallest representation. There was no significant difference in the demographic variables with the exception of the Hispanic group, in which there were significantly more Colombian girls in the non-attempter group compared to the attempter group.

Table 1 also shows the means for the whole sample on the study variables. Results show no significant differences in reported acculturation, nor on familism between the girls that attempted suicide attempt and their control group, and their mothers. On the other hand, mutuality, internalizing

and externalizing behaviors as reported by both daughters and mothers were all significantly different between attempter and nonattempter dyads. On mutuality, attempter daughters and their mothers were significantly lower than nonattempters daughters and their mothers. Attempter daughters reported higher scores than nonattempter daughters on internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors. Similarly, mothers of attempters reported that their daughters had significantly higher internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors than mothers of nonattempters.

The correlations of the familism subscales, mutuality, internalizing and externalizing behaviors scores, and suicide attempter status for all sample are shown in Table 2. The correlations between variables reported by all adolescent

Table 2
Correlations of Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Interconnectedness	—	.62***	.54***	.65***	.40***	-.13	-.40***	-.14
2. Support	.55***	—	.65***	.70***	.33***	-.10	-.32***	-.02
3. Honor	.42***	.59***	—	.76***	.27***	-.06	-.34***	-.05
4. Subjugation	.51***	.72***	.70***	—	.35***	-.09	-.41***	-.09
5. Mutuality	.17*	.17*	.10	.11	—	-.45***	-.61***	-.29***
6. Internalizing	.05	.02	.04	.06	-.47***	—	.64***	.49***
7. Externalizing	-.01	-.12	-.13	.01	-.62***	.66***	—	.45***
8. Attempter status	-.06	-.03	-.04	-.01	-.34***	.40***	.43***	—

Note. Correlations amongst the daughters' subscales are in the top and the correlations amongst mothers' subscales are in the bottom. Interconnectedness, support, honor, and subjugation are familism subscales.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

girls are on the top, and the correlations by their mothers are on the bottom. Kline (2005) suggests addressing issues of multicollinearity when variables have correlation coefficients greater than .85. In our sample no coefficient surpassed .64, so there was no problems of multicollinearity.

Each familism subscale of the daughters' reports was positively correlated to mutuality and negatively related to externalizing behaviors. However, none of the familism subscales from the daughters' report was related to either internalizing behaviors or to suicide attempts. The daughters' perspectives of mutuality with their mothers were related to internalizing and externalizing behaviors and suicide attempter status. Internalizing and externalizing behaviors were correlated with each other, and both were related to suicide attempt status. Only two of the familism subscales as reported by mothers were slightly related to mutuality (interconnectedness and support). No other variables reported by the mothers were related to the individual familism subscales. Mothers' perceived mutuality with their daughters was negatively related with their daughters' internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and with suicide attempts. Similar to their daughters' reports, mothers report of externalizing and internalizing behaviors were positively correlated with suicide attempt.

Daughters' reports on mutuality, internalizing and externalizing behaviors were significantly correlated with their mothers' reports ($r = .46, p < .001$ for mutuality, $r = .44, p < .001$ for internalizing, and $r = .54, p < .001$ for externalizing). Because the scores on these scales from daughters and mothers are significantly correlated, we chose to use the daughters' scores on the model to predict how familism, mutuality, and girls' outcomes are related to each other.

None of the daughters' scores on the familism subscales, or the familism total scale, however, were significantly correlated with their mothers' reports on these scales. That is, all mothers scored significantly higher in this scale than their daughters ($t = 5.204, p < .001$). To understand how the difference in familism scores between daughters and mothers could be related to the other variables, we computed a familism gap, or the difference in familism perspec-

tive between daughters and their mothers. The gap between the attitudinal familism between mother and daughter was created by subtracting the daughter's familism score from her mother's score. Higher scores on this variable indicate larger gaps between the mother and daughter. Positive scores on familism gap indicate that mothers expressed higher familism than their daughters, whereas negative values on this variable indicate dyads where daughters report higher scores than their mothers on the familism scale. The mean gap for all dyads was .61 ($SD = 1.51$), the mean for the gaps between attempters and their mothers was .66 ($SD = 1.58$), and for the nonattempters and their mothers was .55 ($SD = 1.44$). The familism gap was not significantly different between those daughters that attempted suicide and the daughters that did not attempt suicide ($t = -0.44, p = .67$).

Path Analysis Results

The results of our multivariate model are reported in Figure 2, and will be described by hypothesis. We first ran the model with all hypothesized paths and covariates. Following "model trimming" suggestions (Byrne, 2001), we ran the analysis a second time, eliminating nonsignificant paths, which included many of the covariates and two of the hypothesized paths. Because there was no significant improvement in model fit with the trimmed model, and the fit statistics for the full model were still good (CFI = 1.00, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .02), we report the findings of the full model. There were significant relations amongst the covariate, but these results are described in the text and shown in Table 3.

Hypothesis 1: The larger the difference between daughters and mothers' reports in familism, the lower the level of mother-daughter mutuality, and the more adolescents outcomes (internalizing and externalizing) behaviors.

Our results partially supported this hypothesis. Larger positive gaps in familism (i.e., the mother's reported score

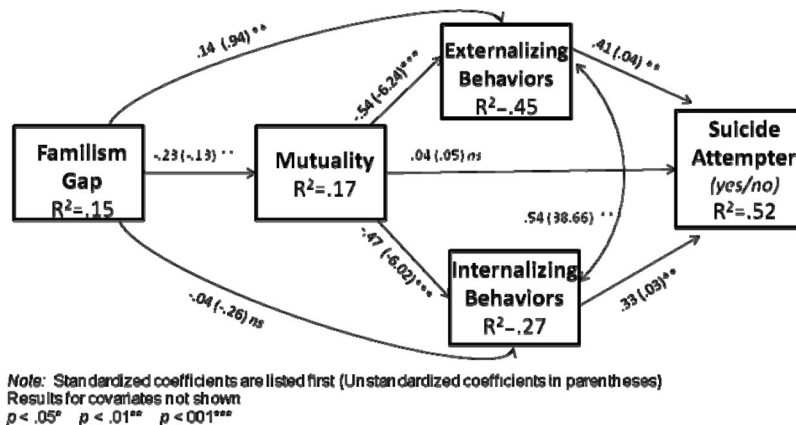


Figure 2. Path model results.

Table 3
Mediation Effects Results

	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Test for indirect effect
Familism difference → mutuality → externalizing behaviors	.96 (55%)	.80 (45%)	1.76 (100%)	2.67**
Mutuality → internalizing behaviors → suicide attempter status	—	-.19 (43%)	-.44 (100%)	2.91**
Mutuality → externalizing behaviors → suicide attempter status	—	-.25 (57%)	-.44 (100%)	2.59*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

is larger than her daughters) were related to lower levels of mutuality with the mother. Positive gaps were also significantly related to higher levels of externalizing behaviors. However, as shown in the bivariate analysis and confirmed in the path analysis, positive gaps between mother and daughters were not related to higher levels internalizing behaviors, nor suicide attempter status.

Hypothesis 2: The lower the level of adolescents' mutuality with mothers, the more adolescents' internalizing and externalizing behaviors adolescents and the greater the likelihood that adolescents will attempt suicide.

Path analysis results supported our second hypothesis, as there were significant negative relationships between both mutuality and externalizing behaviors, and mutuality and internalizing behaviors. The effects of mutuality on suicide attempter status were fully mediated by internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and those indirect effects were significant.

Hypothesis 3: The more externalizing and internalizing behaviors adolescents show, the more likely they are to attempt suicide.

This hypothesis was fully supported, as higher externalizing behaviors significantly predicted suicide attempts. Earlier analyses showed that higher internalizing behaviors significantly predicted suicide attempts (Kuhlberg et al., 2010), and this same relationship was evident in our analyses.

Mediation effects. In addition to the direct effects, we found a number of indirect paths to be significant (Table 3). The relationship of the familism gap to internalizing and externalizing behaviors was mediated by mutuality. Moreover, 45% of the total effect that familism gap had on externalizing behaviors was mediated by mutuality (55% was from its direct effect). Although mutuality had a bivariate relationship to suicide attempts, its direct path to suicide attempts was not significant in the path model. However, the indirect effects of mutuality on suicide attempts mediated by internalizing and externalizing behaviors were significant, where 43% of those indirect effects were mediated by internalizing behaviors and 57% by externalizing behaviors.

Covariate effects. Final path model results indicated that covariates had significant relationships to several variables. As we mentioned before, Colombian adolescents were more

likely to be nonattempters than suicide attempters in our sample (std: $b = -.23$, $SE = -.78$; unstd: $b = -.78$, $SE = .37$, $p < .05$). In regards to the variables in the model, there was a positive relationship between the age of the adolescent at the time of the interview and the size of the gap in familism in the dyad (std: $b = .17$, $SE = .13$; unstd: $b = .14$, $SE = .06$, $p < .05$). Even after adjusting for multiple pairwise comparisons, Dominican dyads reported larger familism gaps and less mutuality than Puerto Rican dyads (std: $b = .29$, $SE = .97$; unstd: $b = .97$, $SE = .30$, $p < .01$).

Involvement in Hispanic culture was related to higher reports of mutuality. Where girls who reported more Hispanic cultural involvement also reported more mutuality with their mothers (std: $b = .20$, $SE = .04$; unstd: $b = .27$, $SE = .13$, $p < .05$). Generation status also mattered: girls who were third generation immigrants reported significantly higher internalizing (std: $b = .19$, $SE = 6.39$; unstd: $b = 6.39$, $SE = 3.16$, $p < .05$) and externalizing behaviors (std: $b = .18$, $SE = 5.61$; unstd: $b = 5.61$, $SE = 2.58$, $p < .05$) than first generation immigrant adolescents, but the second generation immigrant adolescents were more likely to be suicide attempters than first generation adolescents (std: $b = -.27$, $SE = -.60$; unstd: $b = -.60$, $SE = .25$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

Using multi-informant data on familism and mutuality in daughter-mother relationships among a group of Latina adolescents with and without a history of suicidal behavior, we found that gaps in familism, where mothers reported having higher familism value than their daughters, predicted less mother-daughter mutuality and more externalizing behaviors in the adolescent girls. Further, low levels of mother-daughter mutuality predicted higher internalizing and externalizing behaviors which, in turn, predicted suicide attempts.

Research shows that familism has a protective factor for adolescents' outcomes (e.g., Betterndorf & Fischer, 2009; Coohy, 2001; Gil et al., 2000; Marsiglia et al., 2009; Sommers, Fagan, & Baskin, 1993). Our findings, however, indicate that care should be taken with such assumption. That is, while familism, from the perspective of the girls, was positively related to mutuality and negatively related to externalizing behaviors, familism from the perspective of their mothers was only slightly related to mutuality. In other words, familism could serve as a protective factor from the girls' perspective, but the same was not true from the mothers' perspective. Our data show that mothers differ

significantly than their daughters in familism values, and the gap in familism values between mothers and daughters was related to lower mother-daughter conflict. These data highlight the importance of carefully attending to the different perspectives in family members when evaluating the protective factor of familism.

Our results also suggest that familism values may not necessarily reflect only positive aspects of family dynamics. It may be that familism has a protective role only under certain circumstances, and that high familism can also be a strain in family dynamics instead of a protective factor (Rodriguez et al., 2007). Accordingly, Smokowski and Bacallao (2007) showed that high familism was related to adolescents' greater internalizing problems and involvement with Latino culture (i.e., less acculturated). Also reporting a negative effect of familism value, Delgado, Updegraff, Roosa, and Umaña-Taylor (2009) showed that girls with mothers with high familism values had greater perceived discrimination and more deviant peer affiliations than girls compared to whose mothers had lower degree of familism.

Why mothers differ in intensity on their familism values compared to their daughters? It may be that there is an acculturation gap, or differences between adolescent and parents' level of involvement in the culture of origin compared to involvement in the host culture. This acculturation gap would increase the gap in familism values between the adolescents and their mothers (Smokowski et al., 2008). Supporting this hypothesis, the daughters in our study were more acculturated than their mothers ($t = 10.54, p < .001$ on the Hispanic Culture Subscale, and $t = 16.47, p < .001$ on the U.S. Culture). We could postulate, then, that the adolescents in our sample who are more acculturated than their mothers may not value the family unity and obligation that is encompassed by familism and by the manner of its measurement. In fact, Hispanic involvement was related to mutuality between mothers and daughters. Caution should be taken, however, on interpreting the association between familism and acculturation because the relationship between these variables is not clear in the literature: while some studies show that familism diminishes with acculturation, others show both positive and negative associations, and other studies show no direct association between acculturation and familism (Gil et al., 2000; Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myer, 2007; Smokowski et al., 2008; Smokowski, Bacallao, & Buchanan, 2009). Further investigation is needed, therefore, to disentangle what are the variables that are predicting such differences in values between mothers and daughters.

In our study, the generation status of the girls mattered. Third generation girls reported higher internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and second generation girls were more likely to be suicide attempters than first generation adolescents. These data replicate previous findings with national data (Peña et al., 2008; SAMHSA, 2003). There are several conceptual models that aim to explain why first generation Latinos have better outcomes compared to U.S.-born generations, including the idea that aspects of Latino values, such as familism, serve as protector factors, or that those who are first immigrants tend to be individuals with

high resilience and good mental health compared to those who are U.S.-born who have less resiliency (see Peña et al., for a brief summary of the conceptual models). The variability of the sample size of the adolescents across different generations in the present study, however, limits further interpretations on how generation status affects the dynamics of the families of these adolescents.

It is also important to notice that we cannot ascertain the directionality of the variables from our model. That is, it is not clear, from our data, whether mother-daughter low mutuality yielded differences in familism values or whether the differences in familism families increased conflict between mothers and daughters. It could be that differences in familism values were because the different levels of acculturation lead to breakdown in communication between mothers and daughters, or that the difference in familism values is in itself an expression of the low mutuality between the dyads. Moreover, it is not clear whether the low mutuality observed between mothers and daughters could be a consequence of the externalizing and internalizing behaviors (and of the suicide attempt) manifested by the girls, or vice versa. A longitudinal design would help understand the direction of this relationship in the dynamics of these families.

Our findings must include other caveats. Not including fathers limits the extent to which familism was shared by, at least, part of the nuclear family. In addition, our sample was confined to New York City and represented a stratified purposive sampling approach, limiting the randomness of the sample. Therefore, our findings are limited to those Latino subgroups represented in the New York City metropolitan area and to our sample specifically. Given that the sample was collected from community programs and clinics, these data do not necessarily generalize to adolescents who are not involved in social services and mental health facilities. Other diagnostic data and family observations, such as history of sexual and physical abuse, or of drug abuse, were not incorporated into our study which further limits the results of our project. We had a variety of ethnic groups in our sample, with the majority of our girls being from Puerto Rico and we obtained significant differences in familism scores between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Moreover, Colombian adolescents were more likely to be nonattempters than suicide attempters in our sample. Because Latino subgroups differ in terms of mental health profile (e.g., Alegría et al., 2008), caution should be taken in generalizing the present results to all Latino subgroups without accounting for the heterogeneity of the Latino population.

Nonetheless, these results have implications for research and clinical practice. Among the future directions is research that incorporates discrepancies in the acculturation, mutuality, and familism of adolescents and parents. Moreover, family psychology research that includes fathers and siblings, and possibly other members of the extended family who have influence on the adolescent holds the promise of enriching our understanding of the processes that lead to or divert young Latinas from suicide attempts. Clinically, our findings point to the importance of enhancing the commu-

nucational processes between Latinas and their mothers and fathers. While familistic beliefs may suffer some erosion as acculturation and extended residence in the U.S. among Latino families, mutuality in the relationships of parents and their adolescent children can be strengthened that reduce the chances of untoward behaviors.

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