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The Effects of Parental Support, Best Friend Support, and Parental Psychological Control on Loneliness in Latino Adolescents

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Effects of Parental Support, Best Friend Support, and Parental Psychological Control on

Loneliness in Latino Adolescents

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
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ABSTRACT

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The current study examined the relationship of parental support, parental psychological control, and best friend support among Latino adolescents and loneliness using self-esteem as a mediating variable. The sample included 839 Hispanic (primarily Mexican) 9th – 12th graders from west Texas area school districts who were given a self-reported survey to assess parental behaviors and adolescent depression. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), findings indicated that neither maternal nor paternal support was found to be significantly related to loneliness in girls. Only maternal support was found to be significantly related to loneliness in boys. On the other hand, neither maternal nor paternal support was found to be significantly related to self-esteem in boys, while maternal support was found to be significantly related to self-esteem for girls. Results also indicate an interesting cross-gender relationship for loneliness with maternal psychological control significantly related to loneliness for boys but not for girls, and paternal psychological control significantly related to loneliness in girls but not for boys. Best-friend (peer support) was found to be significantly related to loneliness for girls but not for boys. Results indicate that maternal psychological control was significantly related to self-esteem for boys and girls. Results also indicate that paternal psychological control was significantly related to self-esteem for boys and girls. Results also indicate that family structure was found to be significant for girls and its relationship with loneliness. Results are discussed along with implications for therapists working with Latino populations.

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CHAPTER ONE

Effects of Parental Support, Best Friend Support, and Parental Psychological Control on

Loneliness in Latino Adolescents

Although limited in numbers, several studies have examined the topic of loneliness due to its regular, and sometimes dramatic, negative impact on individual and relational functioning during adolescence. In fact, researchers have found that adolescent loneliness – especially when it begins during early adolescence – is associated with concurrent depression and anxiety (Uruk, 2003) and the later-term perpetuation of depression (Fontaine, Yang, Burks, Dodge, Price, Pettit, & Bates, 2009). Loneliness is also associated with higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, increased risk of injuries, risky sexual behaviors, unhealthy dietary behaviors, and physical inactivity in youth (Christopherson, 2002; Johnson, 2005). Furthermore, loneliness has also been found to be associated with lower grades, higher drop-out rates, and other academic-related problem behaviors (Uruk, 2003).

Despite the growing numbers of studies on this topic, there are several key limitations associated with this body of research literature. First, investigations of the topic have not considered the sometimes complex and co-occurring nature of parental *and* peer factors in relation to the outcome of loneliness (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Duriez, & Niemiec, 2008; Uruk, 2003; Windle, 1992). Second, the majority of research models have neglected the various individual characteristics that may mediate the relationship between parental/peer factors and loneliness in adolescents (Asgeirsdottir, Gudjonsson, Sigurdsson & Sigfusdottir, 2010; Arslan, 2009). Finally, only a limited number of studies have examined the topic of loneliness among Latino adolescents (Kirkland, 1989; Regal, 2003). In addressing these limitations, the

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purpose of this study is to explore the effects of parental support, parental psychological control, and best friend support on loneliness in Latino adolescents, using self-esteem as a mediating variable.

Literature Review

Adolescence is considered, in Western industrialized cultures, as a transitional stage in which individuals prepare for adulthood and leave behind the childhood identity and experience. In this regard, adolescence is an important life-cycle stage where risks are encountered that may be harmful to long-term development and well-being. While its occurrence is normative, loneliness is one important risk factor to consider when studying the experiences of adolescent boys and girls. Loneliness has been defined as an unpleasant emotional experience that arises from unsatisfying important relationships, where there is a discrepancy between one's desired relationship quality and the actual composition of one's current relationships (Peplau & Perlman, 1992). Literature suggests that adolescents seek for satisfying relationships such as those attained in a safe parent and sibling relationship. Adolescents seek for this same relationship within peers which can show inadequate to fulfill this expectation. Therefore, the mere perception the adolescent has of this inadequacy shows that the relationship is not able to sustain feelings of connectedness as opposed to feelings of loneliness (Uruk, 2003). The adolescent development theory (Arnett, 1999) tells us that relationships during the adolescent stage shape emotional, cognitive, and behavioral development. Therefore, it is important to understand these relationships and the way they can affect how adolescents experience loneliness. It is during this period of time that adolescents form conceptions of others and self that can be enduring enough to continue into their adulthood years (Arnett, 1999). Since loneliness shapes how we perceive

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and conceive others and the self, loneliness is essential to be studied and understood, especially in the adolescent context.

Parental Support and Loneliness

The broader construct of parental support has been found to be associated with a variety of markers for child/adolescent well-being (Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005). Parental support is conceptualized here as providing an adequate sense of connection, attachment, care, monitoring, and assistance in various aspects of the adolescent life (Mounts, Valentiner, Anderson, & Boswell, 2006). Studies have shown that parental support is positively related to favorable outcomes such as academic success, healthy coping skills, and a favorable sense of self in adolescents, and negatively related to both externalized (e.g. relational aggression, delinquency, and drugs) and internalized (e.g. anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, and loneliness) outcomes (Finkenauer, Engels, & Baumeister, 2005; Hale, Engels, & Meeus, 2006; McCarty, Vander Stoep, & Kuo, 2006; Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004; Valient, Fabes, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2004; Wills, Resko, Ainette, & Mendoza, 2004; Wintre & Bowers, 2007; Wissink, Dekovic, & Meiher, 2006; Wright & Cullen, 2001).

Among the various factors buffering against adolescent loneliness, parental behaviors such as support, empathy, and attachment have been found to be prominently and negatively correlated to feelings of loneliness among adolescents (Christopherson, 2002; Mounts et al., 2006). Additionally, parental support has been found pivotal not only for the onset but also the perpetuation and development of adolescent loneliness (Roekel, Scholte, Verhagen, Goossens, & Engels, 2010). As adolescents feel closer to their parents they find a safe environment to which they can seek support and reassurance, and it can also provide a supportive base so that

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adolescents feel comfortable and secure exploring relationships outside of the parental bond. On the other hand, when there is an unsupportive environment between the adolescent and the parent, it is more likely for the adolescent to retreat to alienation (Larose & Boivin, 1998).

Parental support has been positively correlated to the adolescents' ability to form close friendships (Uruk, 2003), which is also an important factor in the level of loneliness the adolescent experiences. Research has found that when an adolescent fails to form close peer relationships, parental support acts as a buffer to ameliorate the feelings of loneliness and social isolation due to poor peer relationships (David & Franzoi, 1986). It should be noted that it appears that perceived support from the mother has shown to have a stronger impact on adolescent loneliness than paternal support has. Although paternal support has also been found important in the long-term development of the adolescent, it has not been shown to have as much as an impact as maternal support has (Roekel et al., 2010).

These findings are important because even though adolescence is a period of time when youth pay more attention to their peers, parental interaction has been found to be important in how adolescents perceive themselves and their world (Roeket et al., 2010; Uruk, 2003). Furthermore, even though adolescents spend more time with peers, the family and parental unit provides different kinds of support and experiences than what the peer group can provide. In fact, the family is the only unit which provides adolescents the opportunity for interaction with individuals of varying ages, genders and generational cultures (Uruk, 2003). In this sense, parental support cannot be substituted by any other kind of support because of the manner in which it directly and indirectly decreases the likelihood of experiencing loneliness throughout adolescence.

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Peer Support and Loneliness

During adolescence, time spent with family decreases as time spent with peers and friends increases. Close friends who provide support, warmth, and acceptance can help the adolescent feel a sense of belonging, thereby minimizing the possibility of feeling lonely (Uruk, 2003). On other hand, adolescents can become dissatisfied with their peer relationships when they expect these relationships to be similar to that of their family-of-origin relationships (Uruk, 2003). Peer support creates a sense of belonging which is valuable in the creation of a social network, which acts as a buffer against negative consequences of isolation such as loneliness (Baskin, Wampold, Quintana, & Enright, 2010). Indeed, close friendships promote self-validation and afford protection against negative circumstances – such as loneliness - by providing affection, companionship, instrumental, and emotional support (Erath, Flanagan, Bierman, & Tu, 2009).

Studies have found that adolescents who report dissatisfaction and misunderstanding among their peer relationships report high levels of loneliness (Demir, 1990; Storch, & Masia-Warner, 2003). On the other hand, an inverse relationship has been found between number of close friends and level of loneliness, such that as adolescents maintain more close friendships, levels of loneliness decrease (Demir, 1990). Another important factor to consider is that the more the adolescent feels accepted by his or her peers, the lower the risk of experiencing loneliness, especially during early adolescence (Baskin et al., 2010; Erath et al., 2009). This is especially relevant because it has been found that if an adolescent is rejected and experiences loneliness early in adolescence, it continues to be difficult for that adolescent to break from that cycle during middle- and even late-adolescence (Baskin et al., 2010). All of these factors are important as adolescents who have reported unsatisfying friendship relationships during adolescence,

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especially early adolescence, are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness into adulthood (Demir, 1990).

The literature also points out the difference between close peers and a best friend. The relationship with a best friend is closer, more intimate, more supportive, more affectionate, and a mutual trust exists between best friends (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1998). A best friend provides an even more comfortable and protective relationship for the adolescent. A best friend relationship is more conducive to an enjoyable interaction that reinforces social self-efficacy; therefore, reducing feelings of loneliness (Erath et al., 2009).

Parental Psychological Control and Loneliness

Parental psychological control has been defined as a type of manipulative control where the parent intrudes upon the psychological and emotional development of the child (Bean & Northrup, 2009; Finkenauer, et al., 2005). It can also be viewed as an enmeshed parent-child bond where boundaries are nonexistent, blurry, and confusing (Bean & Northrup, 2009; Finkenauer, et al., 2005). Psychologically controlling parents use manipulative and controlling strategies such as guilt, shame, and love withdrawal to ensure compliance thereby undermining the adolescent's psychological development and well being (Bean & Northrup, 2009; Finkenauer, et al., 2005; Shek & Lee, 2005). Parental psychological control has been found to be associated with several negative outcomes such as depression, relational aggression, delinquency, anxiety, confusion, and lower self-esteem (Bean & Northrup, 2009; Finkenauer, et al., 2005; Shek & Lee, 2005; Soenens et al., 2008). Despite some notions that the adolescent might not be able to recognize these behaviors as intrusive but simply as part of normative parenting, the literature suggests that adolescents are able to distinguish between the areas where

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parents are supposed to have control and those in which parents are intrusive (Kakihara &

Tilton-Weaver, 2009). Therefore, regardless of the severity of psychological control exerted by

parents, adolescents know of the intrusion and regard it as hindering their overall sense of well-

being (Kakihara & Tilton-Weaver, 2009). This is important to understand as there are varying

degrees of intrusion; nonetheless, adolescents recognize even the smallest degree of intrusion

and suffer the consequences from such a behavior (Kakihara & Tilton-Weaver, 2009).

Parental psychological control has also shown to be predictive of loneliness in

adolescents (Soenens et al., 2008). Parental psychological control has also been associated with

lower peer support/ relationships which in and of itself represent a buffer against loneliness

(Soenens et al., 2008). It has also been proposed that parental psychological control is not a form

of behavior regulation but a violation of the adolescent's psychological self. An adolescents'

harmed sense of self is predictive of feelings of loneliness; the adolescent is especially

vulnerable during early adolescence when the creation of a sense of self is still in progress

(Barber & Harmon, 2002). It has also been found that adolescents with psychologically-

controlling parents tend to withdraw resulting in alienation and feelings of loneliness (Barber &

Harmon, 2002). Although research is limited, there are studies that suggest a clear relationship

between parental psychological control and adolescent loneliness.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be generally defined as the totality of the individual's thoughts and

feelings with reference to himself as a whole person (Rosenberg, 1986; Çivitci & Çivitci, 2009);

therefore, it can be viewed more as a state than a particular trait. This state can be either positive

or negative and can lead to what is commonly known as high or low self-esteem. Specific to this

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study, a relationship has been found between high or low self-esteem and loneliness (Çivitci & Çivitci, 2009), with higher levels of self-esteem being negatively correlated to loneliness among the general population. In other words, good self-esteem is related to lower levels of loneliness among adolescents (McWhirtner, Besett-Alesch, Horibata, & Gat, 2002).

Parental support

Self-esteem has also been found to be related to negative and positive parental behaviors. For example, studies have shown that parental support is positively associated to high levels of self- esteem (Asgeirsdottir et al., 2010; Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Plunkett, Williams, Schock, & Sands, 2007). There is evidence that when parents show an attitude of support, warmth, love, and encouragement, adolescents are more likely to have greater self-esteem than those whose parents do not demonstrate these kinds of attitudes (Asgeirsdottir et al., 2010; Bean et al., 2003; Berman, 2004; Plunket et al., 2007). This association can be explained in that a supportive behavior carries with it a connotation of acceptance which, in itself, sends a positive message of who the adolescent is, leading to a greater sense of self (Huey, 2005). Thus, adolescents can build knowledge according to the support they receive from their parents, which in turn aids in the construction of their perception of self. On the other hand, studies have shown that low parental support is negatively associated with high levels of self-esteem (Asgeirsdottir et al., 2010; Bean et al., 2003; Berman, 2004; Plunket et al., 2007).

Parental psychological control

As another aspect of negative parenting, parental psychological control appears to be a contributing factor to lower levels of self-esteem among adolescents. Psychologically controlling

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practices damage the caregiver relationship between parent and adolescent, which sometimes results in a loss of connection, and therefore lower self-esteem (Bean et al., 2003). In other words, "adolescents who perceive their parents as using psychological control strategies may see their parents as being unresponsive to their psychological needs, hindering their abilities to recognize their own uniqueness and/or trust their own ideas" (Plunkett, et al., 2007, p. 762) which inevitably leads to feeling of rejection and lower self-esteem.

Peer factors

Along with parenting behaviors, another factor which aids in the protection of high self-esteem is that of peer support. Peer support has been found to be important in this development especially acting as a buffer when there is no parental support, or as a companion to the already-present parental support (Arslan, 2009). The support and acceptance of peers builds self-acceptance and self-confidence during adolescence (Arslan, 2009; Hoffman, Levy-Shiff, & Ushpiz, 1991). In other words, "the self-esteem of an adolescent who is wanted, admired, and accepted by his/her peers will also develop positively" (Arslan, 2009, p. 561). In short, supportive peers can have a positive impact throughout adolescence as they provide an instrumental role in the creation of self-esteem, and at the same time buffering against low self-esteem (Berman, 2004; Hoffman et al., 1991).

Nonetheless, limited studies show that peer support alone can successfully predict high levels of self-esteem (McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1994; Windle, 1992). Most studies have found that peer support is important but insufficient and not a strong enough contributor to stand alone without the help of another kind of support such as parental support (Berman, 2004; Plunket et al., 2007). Nevertheless, adolescents do spend more time with peers, and they do help

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construct the adolescents' self-image which is internally related to self-esteem. All of this information suggests that self-esteem has a mediating interaction between parental behaviors and peer relationships with loneliness among adolescents.

Latino Adolescents

The U.S. Latino population is ever-growing and in some states such as California and Texas, Latinos represent more than half of the total population (USA Census 2000). Therefore, it is reasoned that the study of Latino populations is essential for a better understanding of the country as a whole, but also to allow for the provision of better services for members of this ethnic group.

Studies have shown that Latino adolescents experience the same – or increased – levels of loneliness throughout their adolescent years (Regal, 2003). Many Latino adolescents deal with issues of acculturation in which Latino adolescents still have to adjust with belonging to two countries and two cultures (issues of belonging), pressures of being a minority and the low privilege that this implies, physical, emotional, and verbal assaults due to racism, lack of opportunities and resources due to their legal status, and possible trauma with memories of crossing the border or being left behind for a season. These and more factors contribute to high levels of loneliness among Latino adolescents (Bagner, Storch, & Roberti, 2004; Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt, 1994; Regal, 2003). It is important to note that some of these challenges mentioned are not unique to the Latino population as they are also tied to being a recent immigrant group. In short, even though Latino adolescents are in some ways no different than any other adolescent, the factors mentioned above can exacerbate the experience of loneliness experience by Latino adolescents, making it more stressful and depressing (Regal, 2003).

Because of the need to understand the Latino adolescent experience, studies have examined loneliness among Latino adolescents and the various factors that might contribute to or buffer against loneliness (Bagner, et al., 2004; Levitt et al., 1994; Regal, 2003; Storch et al., 2003; Suarez, Fowers, Garwood, & Szapocznik, 1997). More specifically, findings indicate that Latino adolescents who demonstrate higher levels of loneliness are more likely to experience depression. (Bagner et al., 2004; Levitt et al., 1994; Regal, 2003). Some of these adolescents are not "trouble-makers," and their loneliness is often invisible for most people that come in contact with them as their loneliness is often internalized (Regal, 2003). Unfortunately, as these adolescents continue to feel lonely and consequently alienate themselves more, depression comes as a manifestation of loneliness. Sometimes, this depression can lead into suicidal thoughts, lacking hope and trust of others (Regal, 2003). This depression is often accompanied by internalized anxiousness which can also be invisible for most people that deal with the Latino adolescent. It is important to pay close attention to this type of adolescents who internalize.

Other adolescents externalize feelings of loneliness and often present their feelings in the form of risky behaviors. For example, Latino adolescents who are lonely are likely to drink, smoke, and be involved in some kind of drug abuse (Kirkland, 1989; Regal, 2003). They are also likely to be involved in risky sexual behaviors, teen pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (Kirkland, 1989). Some of them might also get involved with criminal offenses, drop out of school, have lower academic achievements, and become rebellious inside the classroom causing the development of the "trouble-maker" label, which sticks with the Latino adolescents for years (Kirkland, 1989).

These negative consequences are important to study and understand as the Latino population continues to increase in number within the United States (Bagner et al., 2004; Regal,

2003; Suarez et al., 1997). Latino adolescents need to be understood not only as a different culture, but also as a defining aspect of the United States population which can be fruitful if given the necessary attention. This study is one attempt to determine which variables help buffer the painful experience of loneliness among Latino adolescents and which hinder that experience as well – such as parental psychological control.

Consistent with findings for non-Latino populations, parental and peer support, along with parental psychological control have been found to be related to loneliness among Latino adolescents (Levitt et al., 1994). In turn, these three variables have also been found to be related to self-esteem which is also related to loneliness (Levitt et al., 1994). This study will attempt to fill the gap in the literature in the way that it will use self-esteem as a mediating variable. There is little research on the effects of parental support and parental psychological control among Latino adolescents and their levels of self-esteem. There is also little research done on the effects of peer support and self-esteem among Latino adolescents. This study will focus on the relationship not only of peers but that of a best friend which has not been studied among Latino adolescents. Also, there is little research which uses self-esteem as a mediating variable in regard to the Latino adolescent population. This study also adds to the already existing research as it has the purpose of assessing potential differences between father and mother and their respective impact on boys and girls.

Hypotheses

In regards to specific hypotheses, it is expected that the following relationships (parameters) will be noted in the resulting structural equation model:

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- Self-esteem will be a mediating variable (at least partially) between parenting (support, psychological control) and peer variables (support) and the outcome of adolescent loneliness.
- Parental support and peer support will be significantly and positively associated with self-esteem.
- Parental psychological control will be significantly and negatively associated with self-esteem.
- Parental support and peer support will be significantly and negatively associated with loneliness.
- Parental psychological control will be significantly and positively associated with loneliness.

Given the exploratory nature of this study for a Latino population, a post-hoc analysis is also proposed for examining the final structural model for gender-based differences (child gender). It is hypothesized that important gender differences will be found between boys and girls based on the available, albeit limited, literature. More specifically, based on the existing literature (Kirkland, 1989; Regal, 2003), girls have shown to be more strongly impacted by loneliness compared to boys. Girls have been found to internalize parental psychological control, low parental support, and low peer support more than boys. Boys, on the other hand, have shown to externalize these behaviors and seem – in some ways – more resilient to loneliness than girls (Kirkland, 1989; Regal, 2003). Nonetheless, given the fact that these specific studies have not been published in peer-reviewed journals, this relationship needs to be further explored to have a better understanding of this difference. Also, studies have not taken into account the impact of mother and father separately for each girl and boy.

CHAPTER TWO

Method

Participants

Data are from the Youth and Family Project, a 2003-2004, school-based, self-reported survey of 9-12th graders from schools in the Lubbock Independent School District - west Texas area school districts. Based on teachers' willingness to allow surveying in their classrooms, 4150 students were eligible for participation and consent forms were sent home to the parents of these students. As such, 2292 surveys were completed for a 55.3% response rate. Seventy-eight surveys were discarded due to concerns regarding response integrity, with a resultant sample of 2214.

In terms of ethnicity, 11.6% self-identified as African American, 38.7% as Anglo American, 37.9% as Latino, 1.0% as Asian American, with another 7.9% identified as belonging to other ethnic groups or having a multi-ethnic heritage, with this study focusing only on the Latino population portion of this survey (n=840). For the Latino subsample, 359 (42.7%) were males and 480 (57.1%) were females. The participants' age ranged from 14-19 years old, with a mean of 16 years old. The participants' grade was distributed in the following percentages, 92 (11%) were freshman, 249 (29.6%) were sophomores, 279 (33.2%) were junior and 220 (26.2%) were seniors. Out of the total Latino subsample 143 (17%) were AP students and 697 (83%) were Non-AP students. The participants' family structure was distributed in the following percentages, living with mother and father (two-parent family) 63.7%, and 26% living in single-parent families with the rest of the percentages living with other relatives, foster parents, or living alone.

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Measures

Parental Support. Parental support was measured using the 10-item Acceptance subscale from the revised Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI; Barber, 1996; Schaefer, 1965). Respondents responded on a 3-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *not like her (him)* to 3 = *a lot like her (him)* as to how well items described their mothers and fathers. High scores on both parental acceptance subscales indicate greater parental acceptance/support (i.e. measures the extent to which parents are available to the child, comfort the child, enjoy the child's company, etc.)

The measure consists of ten items. Sample items include (a) "makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her/him" and (b) "is able to make me feel better when I am upset." Higher scores indicate greater parental acceptance/support in terms of the extent to which parents are available to the child, comfort the child, enjoy the child's company, and so forth. Reliability coefficients were found to be $\alpha = .920$ for mothers, and $\alpha = .917$ for fathers.

Parental Psychological Control. The constructs of mother's and father's psychological control were measured by a seven-item version of the Psychological Control Scale–Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR; Barber, 1996). Participants responded on a 3-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *not like her (him)* to 3 = *a lot like her (him)* in describing parental psychological control. High scores on both psychological control subscales indicate greater parental psychological control (i.e. assesses the extent to which parents intrude on the psychological development of their children through constraining verbal expression, manipulation of emotions, etc.).

The measure consists of eight items. Sample items include (a) "is always trying to change how I feel or think about things" and (b) "if I have hurt her/his feelings, stops talking to me until I please her/him," with higher scores indicating greater levels of reported psychological control

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from parents. Reliability coefficients were found to be α = .672 for mothers, and α = .864 for fathers.

Best Friend Support. Respondents reported on the response to the following statement, "In answering the following questions, please think of your best same-sex friend (for example: if you are a girl, think of your best girlfriend)." The measure consists of seven items to which respondents responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 = *Never* to 5 = *Every day* relative to the frequency of doing the following: (a) "if you needed help with something, how often could you count on this friend to help you?" and (b) "how often do you tell this friend thing about yourself that you wouldn't tell most kids?" Higher scores indicate higher peer connection. Reliability coefficient was found to be α = .617. It is important to note that this measure excludes opposite-gender friendships.

Self-esteem. The construct of self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, a commonly used measure of adolescent self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). The measure consists of ten items to which participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree* in terms of their agreement about themselves. Sample items include (a) "I am able to do things as well as most people" and (b) "at times I think I am no good at all." Items were coded so that high scores indicate high self-esteem. Reliability coefficient was found to be α = .883.

Loneliness. The construct of loneliness was measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale, a widely used measure for loneliness (Russell, 1996). Participants responded on a 4-point Likert-type scale with a total of 20 items from 1 = *Never* or 4 = *A lot* from questions such as (a) "how often do you feel this way: left out, lack of companionship" and (b) "I am no longer close to

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anyone" with higher scores indicating higher levels of loneliness. Reliability coefficient was found to be $\alpha = .829$.

Proposed Data Analyses

Initial data analyses will include bi-variate correlations among study variables and mean difference tests (T-tests) of study variables on the basis of student gender. Findings from these tests, along with means and standard deviations, will be presented prior to examination of the hypothesized model (see Figure 1). Structural equation modeling will be utilized to explore the relationships between maternal and paternal parenting dimensions and the youth outcome variables using AMOS 17.0 (Arbuckle, 2003).

In examining the parenting models, several parameters will be estimated including: (a) path coefficients between each parenting variable and the depression variable; and (b) coefficients among the exogenous variables. The hypothesized model will first be examined, controlling for family SES and child age. Second, the resultant model will then be examined, using group comparisons, to determine whether the model and, more specifically, the path coefficients differed by child gender. Group comparisons (by the use of AMOS) following the procedure set out by Bollen (1989) will fit the data separately for each group and then we will be using a chi-square difference test to examine the question of group equivalence. This is done by first establishing a "baseline" or unconstrained model, referred to as "hypothesis of form" or "H-form", in which all parameters are unconstrained. Using H-form as comparison, the model will be run again with the path coefficients constrained to be invariant between groups, and the chi-squares for the two models will be compared. If the chi-square difference test is found to be significant, this indicates a group difference (e.g., males versus females) in the nature of the relationships between the parenting dimensions and youth outcomes.
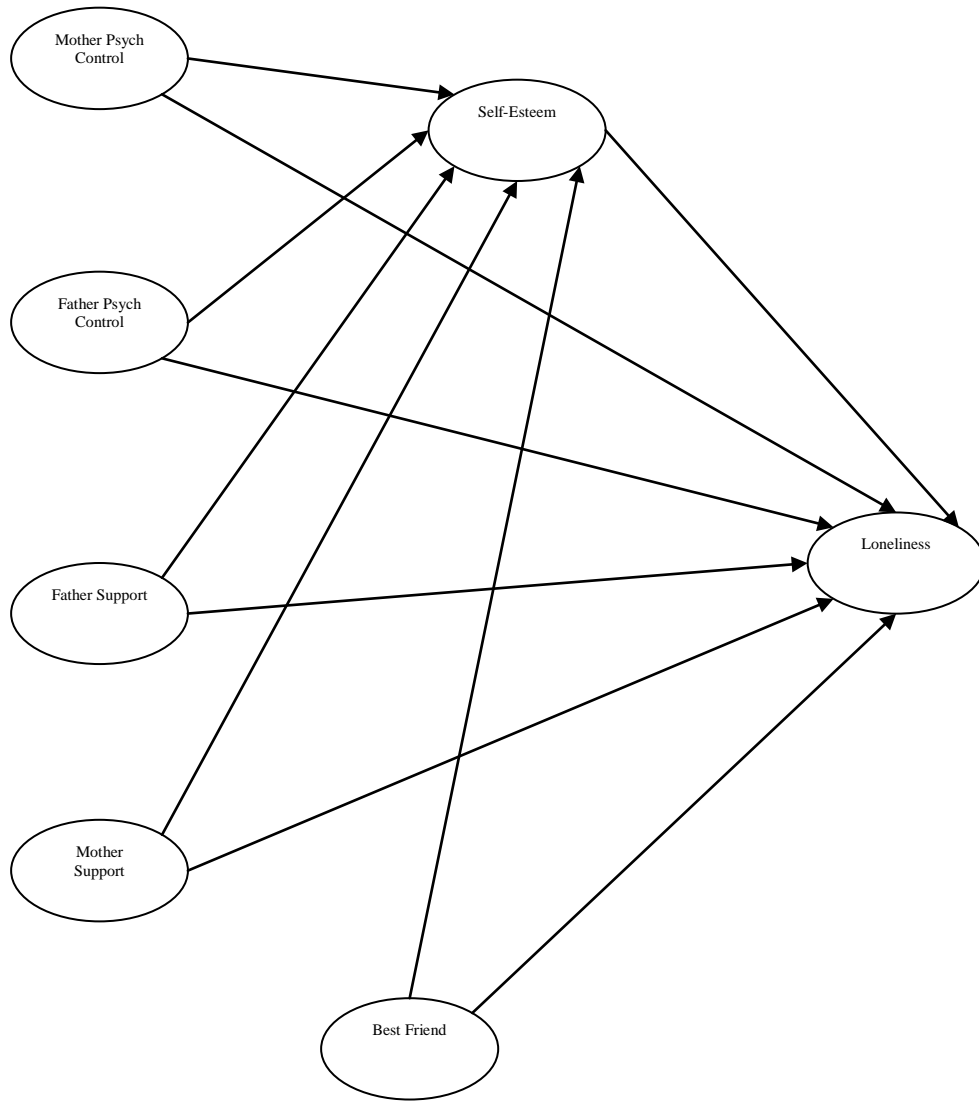
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Figure 1. Hypothesized Full Model

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Means and standard deviations for all study variables are presented in Table 1.T-test results demonstrated significant gender differences for several parenting variables (i.e., perceived maternal support, maternal psychological control, paternal psychological control) and peer support.

Bivariate correlations were also calculated among the parenting, peer, and self-esteem variables and the outcome variable of loneliness for boys and girls (see Tables 2 & 3). Correlation findings were found to be significant and in the expected direction except for the positive relationship between maternal support and loneliness for boys (.21, $p < .01$). Neither maternal nor paternal support was found to be significantly related to loneliness in girls. Only maternal support was found to be significantly related to loneliness in boys (.21, $p < .01$). On the other hand, neither maternal nor paternal support was found to be significantly related to self-esteem in boys, while maternal support was found to be significantly related to self-esteem for girls (.20, $p < .01$). There was an interesting cross-gender relationship for loneliness with maternal psychological control significantly related to loneliness for boys (.34, $p < .001$) but not for girls, and paternal psychological control significantly related to loneliness in girls (.23, $p < .01$) but not for boys. Best-friend (peer support) was found to be significantly related to loneliness for girls (-.19, $p < .001$) but not for boys. Results indicate that maternal psychological control was significantly related to self-esteem for boys (-.29, $p < .01$) and girls (-.32, $p < .001$). Results also indicate that paternal psychological control was significantly related to self-esteem for boys (-.47, $p < .001$) and girls (-.29, $p < .01$). As hypothesized, self-esteem was found to be significantly related to loneliness for boys (-.59, $p < .001$) and girls (-.54, $p < .001$).

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Structural Equation Analysis. As control variables, neither youth age nor family SES level were found to be statistically significant in relation to loneliness and were, consequently, dropped from the model to allow for greater parsimony. However, family structure was found to be significantly related to loneliness for both boys (.16) and girls (- .08). These divergent findings, while unexpected, are consistent with previous studies that found significant differences in loneliness for boys and girls depending on their family structure (Bacallao, & Smokowski, 2007; Brady, 1995; Garnefski, & Diekstra, 1997, Uruk, & Demir, 2003.

Fit indices for the unconstrained model were within professional standards, allowing for the bias associated with large samples (X^2 *= 2422.3, df=1414, p< .001)*, with CMIN/DF = 1.71 (below the recommended 2.0 limit, Carmines and McIver (1981)), with CFI being .932 (above the .90 minimum) and RMSEA being .029 (less than the .05 standard). All fit indices indicate a good fit between the model and data, and the models, as presented in Figures 2 and 3, explain half of the variance in youth loneliness for both groups (boys: R^2= .51, girls: R^2= .50).

Group Comparisons. While some gender differences can be noted when comparing the strength (and in some cases, the direction) of specific coefficients, the models for boys and girls should be compared statistically. Following the procedure set out by Bollen (1989; see also Bartle-Haring, 1997), group comparisons were examined by fitting the data separately for each group and then by using a chi-square difference test to examine the question of group equivalence. This was done by first establishing a "baseline" or unconstrained model, in which all parameters are unconstrained. Using the unconstrained model as comparison, the model was run again with the path coefficients constrained to be invariant between gender groups, and the chi-squares for the two models were compared. As reported above, relevant findings for the unconstrained model were X^2=2422.32, *df=1414*, *p*<.001, while the findings for the constrained

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model (with beta weights assumed to be invariant) were X^2=2455.58, df=1426, p <.001. The Chi-square difference test was found to be significant (X^2=33.26, df=12, p < .01), indicating that the model does not fit equally well for boys and girls.

Follow-up analyses were conducted to further examine the specific nature of the gender differences in models. By constraining a single path coefficient at a time, models were compared to the baseline unconstrained model and chi-square difference tests conducted. While chi-square difference tests were found to be approaching significance for several paths (i.e., best friend to self esteem (.07), paternal psychological control to loneliness (.06), maternal psychological control to loneliness (.08), the only model found to be significantly different than the unconstrained model was one where the path between best friend and loneliness was constrained to be equal for boys and girls (X^2=7.72, df=1, p < .01). This indicates that the relationship between best friend support and loneliness differs significantly based on child gender (boys: .02 p < .714 and girls: -.20 p < .001). In other words, girls seem to have a best-friend in which they can confide and receive support, while boys might not have a separate best-friend and more of a group of friends who do not necessarily share vulnerabilities with each other.

Several specific hypothesized relationships were found to be significant, including: a) perceived maternal support and self-esteem in girls, b) perceived maternal psychological control and self-esteem in boys and girls, c) perceived paternal psychological control and self-esteem in boys and girls, d) perceived maternal support and boys' loneliness, e) perceived maternal psychological control and boys' loneliness, f) perceived paternal psychological control and girls' loneliness, g) best friend relationship (peer support) and girls' loneliness, and h) family structure and loneliness for boys and girls.

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Direct and Indirect (Mediating) Relationships. For the boys' model, only maternal

psychological control was found to be significantly related to loneliness both indirectly (through

self-esteem) and directly. On the other hand, paternal psychological control was initially found

to be directly related to boys' loneliness ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$), but when the path was modeled

between it and self-esteem, the direct path was found to be non-significant and nearly zero in

value ($\beta = -.02$, $p = .83$). In this instance, self-esteem was found to almost completely mediate

the relationship between paternal psychological control and boys' loneliness. In the boys'

model, there were some unexpected findings as the mediation effects were examined (e.g.,

maternal support was initially found to be non-significantly related to loneliness ($\beta = .06$, $p = $

.37), but after adding the path for maternal support and self-esteem, the direct path was found to

be significant ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$). This may indicate the need, in future studies, to examine self-

esteem as a moderating variable instead.

For the girls' model, only paternal psychological control was found to be significantly

related to loneliness both indirectly (through self-esteem) and directly. As noted above for boys

and paternal psychological control, the direct relationship between maternal psychological

control and girls' loneliness was significant ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$), but when the path was modeled

between maternal psychological control and self-esteem, the direct path was found to be non-

significant ($\beta = .10$, $p = .29$). This shift from significance to non-significance, along with the

reduced size of the beta coefficient, indicates that self-esteem partially mediates the relationship

between maternal psychological control and girls' loneliness. For the girls' model, no other

relationships between predictor variables (parenting and peer) and loneliness were markedly

affected by the modeling of paths to self-esteem.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Findings demonstrated that the model fit equally well for both genders although some gender differences in the specific associations between variables were noted. Consequently, it can be concluded that results only partially support the hypotheses established at the beginning of this study. None of the initially proposed control variables examined were found to be statistically significant in relation to loneliness (i.e., age and socio-economic status (SES). In the case of youth age, this might be partially explained by the long-span of time in which loneliness is experienced during adolescence, which makes it hard to narrow down to a specific age group. (Arnett, 1999). In terms of the socio-economic status variable, the finding of non-significance may be related to the inadequacy of the measure utilized.

As an additional control variable, family structure was examined in relation to loneliness and was found to be significantly related to loneliness. This finding is supported by the literature which suggests that adolescents from one-parent and stepparent families report more symptoms of loneliness than do children coming from intact families (Garnefski, & Diekstra, 1997, Uruk, & Demir, 2003). This result can be explained due to the support, cohesion, and quality time that adolescents can spend with parents who are not burdened with the additional stresses that single or stepparent families may experience (Garnefski, & Diekstra, 1997). The increased availability and responsiveness of two biological parents, with generally stronger and longer (in duration) ties to children, appears to be significantly related to reduced feelings of loneliness.

This study found, contrary to Garnefski, and Diekstra (1997), that girls seem to be less lonely in single-parent families compared to intact families. This finding can be partially explained by studies that show that adolescent girls who have a good sense of their entire self, or

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good self-esteem, tend to report lower feelings of loneliness despite their family structure arrangement (e.g., Brady, 1995). Another possible explanation is that other research has found that the biggest predictor of loneliness in girls is the relationship they have with father after separation (Brady, 1995). It is also plausible that these girls maintained a good relationship with their father after the initial separation of her parents and now finds lesser levels of stress living with mom while maintaining close support from dad. A third possible explanation might be that maternal, paternal and peer support have been found to have a greater impact on loneliness than family structure (Brady, 1995; Uruk, & Demir, 2003); therefore, it seems probable that these girls were able to maintain a good level of support from her parents and peers that living in single parent family did not affect levels of loneliness.

A factor that is important to consider from this Latino sample is that there is usually a deep, intimate relationship between mother and daughter related to the notion of *marianismo* (Bean, & Northrup, 2009). It is also a possibility that adolescent girls were less lonely in an environment where they were able to get more focused attention from their mother. It is also important to consider that some families who immigrated to the United States came in packs rather than the whole family (Bacallao, & Smokowski, 2007). This is explained by the fact that it is not uncommon to have the father come first and then have the whole family migrate after years of being apart and spending most of the time with the mother and other extended family (such as grandparents). Therefore, the family structure before migrating resembles a single parent family; which explains the familiarity the children have with the accommodation and may in fact prefer it (Bacallao, & Smokowski, 2007). It seems highly plausible that girls would prefer the anterior family structure compared with the possible intrusion from the father (see parental psychological control section for cross-gender explanation). Again, more research is necessary to

understand gender roles and how it relates to parenting. Each of the significant specialized relationship found in this study are discussed in more detail in this section.

Best Friend (Peer) Support

Significant gender differences were found as results partially supported our hypothesis relating best-friend support and its impact on boys and girls. Results partially supported the initial hypothesis that best-friend support would be significantly related to loneliness, as best-friend support was found to be significant only for girls. This result can be partially explained by the notion that *marianismo* is associated with women being dominant in the emotional realm whereas *machismo* emphasizes independence as a sign of virility (Bean, & Northrup, 2009). The emphasis placed on the emotional sphere in *marianismo* provides a good explanation on a how best-friend relationship would be more intimate and significant for girls where there is freedom of expression, whereas boys' emphasis on independence would make their friendships more global and less intimate. While this result is certainly indicative of possible Latino culture upbringing, it is also true that Western girls' upbringing tends to emphasize close relationships, while boys' upbringing emphasizes a more independent outlook (Finkelstein, 2001); therefore, results might be more universal than just specific to Latinos. This result might also be indicative that during adolescence boys tend to have a group of friends, while girls do have at least one best-friend. In this way, it is likely that there are differences in the nature of best friendships for boys and for girls; whereas might have many best friends; girls might have one single best friend (Erath et al., 2009). The difference in this peer process might partially explain why best-friend support might be significant for girls and non-significant for boys (Erath et al., 2009).

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Results did not support the initial hypothesis that best-friend support would be significantly related to self-esteem since best-friend support was not significantly related for girls or boys. These findings can be partially explained by the strong relationship mothers and daughters usually have and how this relationship might have overpowered the relationship between best- friends. As mentioned previously, it seems that maternal support was significant in terms of self-esteem for girls. The literature has also suggested that the paternal relationship provides a kind of support that cannot be provided or substituted by peers (Uruk & Demir, 2003). In this way, the relationship between boys and parents seems more significant than a possible relationship with a best friend.

Parental support

Parental support was hypothesized as being positively (and significantly) associated with self-esteem, a finding that was noted for girls but not boys. In contrast, parental support was not found significantly related to loneliness in girls, but maternal support was significantly related to loneliness in boys. In short, maternal support was found to be significant in relation to self-esteem in girls, and loneliness in boys. This result supports studies that have found that maternal support is often more strongly and more significantly related to adolescent well-being than is paternal support (Liu, 2006; Roekel et al., 2010; Vaughan, Foshee, & Ennett, 2010). This gender-based effect can be explained with the notion that mothers are more often the primary caregivers and, therefore, have more contact, and greater intimacy with their children than fathers do (Regal, 2003). Conceptually and pragmatically, support can be given more regularly and perhaps more efficiently by mothers because of more face-to-face time with teens or because there are some inherent differences in the overall impact of maternal versus paternal support.

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Another possible explanation might be related to the type of support or nurturance perceived by the adolescent. In other words, while the mother provides more of a "nurturing" support – which coincides with the cultural view of mothers in the Latino culture – the father's support might be perceived as less affectionate (Caldwell, Silverman, Lefforge, & Silver, 2004).

The effect that maternal support had on girls' self-esteem can be explained culturally by the notion that the mother is primarily in charge of teaching the basic notion of *respeto* (respect) for the family, parents, and oneself. Latino girls who internalize this message have shown to have greater appreciation for their family, their parents, their culture, and themselves which might be a stronger contributor in helping them have a positive self-esteem (Caldwell et al., 2004). Another explanation is that girls tend to identify themselves as a whole person (Rosenberg, 1986) with the same-gender parent, in this case with their mother; therefore, it seems reasonable to expect maternal support to impact their self-esteem (Ellerman, 1993; Liu, 2006; Roekel et al., 2010; Vaughan et al., 2010).

The relationship between maternal support and its impact to loneliness in boys can be partially explained by the concept of *marianismo* and how it impacts the mother-son relationship. Boys might feel more comfortable being emotionally vulnerable with their mother as she exemplifies the emotional and spiritual spheres of the parenting relationship (Bean, & Northrup, 2009). This relationship might also be explained by the overall sense of support boys receive from their mother as it is not necessarily expected for the mother to teach the boys how to be a "man" as that falls within the father-son relationship. This overall sense of support with no direct sense of pressure per se might be a big contributor in helping adolescent boys feels less alone. Little research has been done on this concept and further exploration is needed to understand this relationship. Nonetheless, it seems that the dimension of parental support was largely or partially

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overpowered by the influence of psychological control. It is also possible that the strong relationship between self-esteem and loneliness (correlated at the -.47, *p* < .001 for girls and -.58, *p* < .001 for boys) might have overpowered the relationship between parental support and its effect on boys and girls.

Parental Psychological Control

Results partially supported the initial hypotheses that paternal psychological control was going to be significantly related to loneliness. Maternal psychological control was found to be significantly related to boys but not girls and paternal psychological control was found to be significantly related to girls but not boys. There seems to be an interesting cross-gender relationship when measuring parental psychological control and how it affects boys and girls separately. Little is known about the relationship between parental psychological control and loneliness, especially with Latino populations. While this relationship is not well researched, we do know that the perceptions of being "controlling" might be different for boys compared to girls and the ways these controlling behaviors play out with gender differences; hence, the discrepancy in results (Kakihara & Tilton-Weaver, 2009).

The cross-gender relationship between mother and son can be partially explained by the concept of *marianismo* and how that affects males (Bean, & Northrup, 2009). While Latino mothers are taught to be disciplinarians with both boys and girls, discipline tends to be enforced in a stricter manner with the girls compared with the boys – therefore leaving a more nurturing relationship with boys. When this relationship is harmed by psychological control boys might feel the effects of the intrusion stronger than girls because of the nature of the mother-son relationship, leaving the adolescent boy with feelings of loneliness (Finkelstein, 2001). Another

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possible explanation is that of Latina mothers being responsible for most of the autonomy granting, and with boys being more socialized to independence, due to *machismo*, resent firm control and consider it intrusive and harmful leading to feelings of loneliness (Finkelstein, 2001).

The cross-gender relationship between father and daughter can be partially explained by the concept of *machismo* and how it affects females (Bean, & Northrup, 2009). While not all Latino families experience *machismo* in the same way, there is the possibility that the underlying message with *machismo* is that of male superiority and female inferiority. While females might be socialized to be more passive and used to more regulations (Finkelstein, 2001), firm control coming from father might have a stronger impact, and girls might resent that intrusion because of the underlying negative message about whom they are as females. More research is needed in this area to have a more accurate representation and explanation of this cross-gender finding.

Another possible explanation can be attributed to gender socialization literature. Parents within the Latino culture tend to socialize their same-gender son or daughter in a more traditional manner (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In other words, fathers socialize their sons to be more traditionally masculine and mother socializes their daughters to be more traditionally feminine (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). This is something deemed of extreme importance within the culture; therefore, it is possible that the parents approach this responsibility in a strict manner which could be perceived as psychologically controlling. Nevertheless, it is possible that sons and daughters have learned to expect this behavior and in fact perceive it as normative. In other words, sons expect their father to be stricter with them, and daughters expect mothers to be stricter with them. Therefore, when parents target this same behavior towards the opposite gender child it is unexpected and is experienced as controlling and disruptive. It is important to note that even though psychologically controlling behavior might be normative, there is room for

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it not to be liked or appreciated by the same gender child although it might not have the same negative attributions associated with the opposite gender child. Another fact to consider is that while parents (mothers to daughter and fathers to sons) engage in behavior that is negatively experienced, there are probably other behaviors which occur that help to balance this out in terms of positive interactions or the level of parental involvement by that same gender parent. For example, it might be that even though mother might be psychologically controlling at times with daughter she also engages in plenty of support at school, friends, and other activities so whatever level of psychologically controlling behavior that daughter experiences is buffered somewhat (or perhaps plenty) by her mother's investment and involvement. Again, more research is needed in order to understand this cross-gender relationship.

Results confirmed the two initial hypotheses that maternal and paternal psychological controls were going to be significantly related to self-esteem in boys and girls. These results confirm past research in that either maternal or paternal forms of psychological control are harmful to both boys' and girls' self-esteem (Bean, & Northrup, 2009; Plunkett et al., 2007). These results can be explained by the notion that all psychologically controlling behaviors harm the parent-child relationship regardless of how close the adolescent might be to the parent. When the parent-child relationship is harmed adolescents perceive their parents as unresponsive, unsupportive, and a threat to their core being, to their whole as a person (Plunkeet et al., 2007; Rosenberg, 1986). This threat is in direct violation of their state as a person and is therefore in direct violation of the adolescents' self-esteem.

Self- esteem

Results indicated that self-esteem partially mediating the relationship between the parenting, and peer variables and loneliness. Specifically, self-esteem completely mediated the relationship between maternal/paternal psychological control on loneliness for boys and girls (note cross gender results). This result might be partially explained by the fact that psychological control directly harms the whole self, or self-esteem, of the adolescent (Bean et al., 2003; Plunkett, et al., 2007). In this way, with their core self damaged it is much more likely to experience feelings of loneliness. Therefore, based on this study it is reasonable to argue that parental psychological control affects the adolescents' self-esteem, and in turn, that affects the level of loneliness experienced throughout adolescence. Self-esteem was found to mediate the relationship between maternal support and loneliness for girls. This result can be partially explained by same gender identification and how receiving support from mother might be more meaningful than receiving support from their father (Ellerman, 1993; Liu, 2006; Roekel et al., 2010; Vaughan, et al., 2010). It might be explained by the fact that mothers are usually at home much more and have more options to provide support than fathers do. In this way, as the adolescent girl receives support from same-gender parents she is able to conceptualize a healthy image of herself as a whole, which in turn affects her relationships positively within and outside the family bonds leading to decreased feelings of loneliness (Larose & Boivin, 1998). On the other hand, self-esteem was not found to mediate maternal support and loneliness for boys, nor did it mediate the relationship between paternal support and loneliness for either boys or girls. Also, self-esteem was not found to mediate the relationship within best-friend support and loneliness for both boys and girls. Nevertheless, this study shows that self-esteem mediates the

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effects parental psychological control and loneliness for boys and girls. It has also shown that it mediates the effects of maternal support and loneliness for girls.

Implications for Therapy

Because the present study is one of an exploratory nature, clinical decisions should not be made solely on the basis of these findings or recommendations, however it is hoped that this information will be helpful to therapists working with Latino families. Since preliminary results indicate that maternal support is helpful for both girls and boys (self-esteem and loneliness respectively), it is important to continue to nurture this relationship. It is also important to understand, by way of enactments perhaps, how the girl or boy wishes to receive support and how the mother currently expresses support. This might be helpful in bridging a gap between the mother/son, and mother/daughter relationships, as it is important to help mothers learn appropriate ways to show support to their sons and daughters without making them feel triangulated into the parents' relationship or become a pseudo-husband.

It is also important to note that paternal support was not significant. With higher rates of absent-fathers in Latino homes (DeBell, 2008), it is important for clinicians to strive to involve the father in his parenting role. This might necessitate talking about his role as a breadwinner (so deeply ingrained in Latino males), and his role as a father. In this sense, some Psychoeducation might take place in showing that support is necessary for both boys and girls besides being able to provide economically. It might also be helpful to provide some practice doing role-playing at first, as it might be uncomfortable, and out of the father's comfort zone to do so. In other words, it is important for both parents to practice enactments for the experience of getting comfortable showing that vulnerability in front of their children without compromising their strong image

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(not skill building) in order to prepare them to have the experience with their children in terms of love and support and affection. Once parents, feel more comfortable experiencing those emotions and communicating them some enactments with their children would be suggested to foster that sense of support and connection the adolescent needs from father.

It is important for clinicians to pay attention to the level of psychological control exerted by parents onto their adolescent. It might be helpful to educate parents on what psychological control entails, and more appropriate ways to balance support and control. Another intervention that might prove helpful is to teach Latino parents appropriate communication skills such as listening skills, validating skills, not interrupting, summarizing skills and so on. These would be practiced through role-play at first and the move on to enactments where they can practice these skills in session with adolescents. Doing so is likely to create an environment of collaboration and understanding which can decrease the need parents feel to use psychological control. It might also create empathy while parents understand how it affects their adolescent, and the adolescent comes to understand the difficulty in being parents, this is also likely to reduce the need for psychological control within the relationship.

Another important factor that clinicians should be aware of is that there are key cultural lenses that work in Latino families such as gender socialization expectations from parents. It is important for clinicians to be aware of ethnocentrism in their analysis of the child's interpretation of parenting behaviors (i.e. psychologically controlling behaviors). In other words, if father is being what would seem as "tough" and even controlling on his son, it is important to understand that the son might perceive it as normative and expected as it might be a sign of investment in him and his father's commitment in helping him become a man. In this case, clinicians should consider viewing this interaction as pathological but rather as normative of healthy gender

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socialization within the Latino culture. However, if the clinician view this same of controlling behavior being turned at the opposite-gender child, in this case the daughter (or to the son by the mother) there is some evidence pointing that this should be addressed during therapy sessions.

Clinicians can also use the information provided in this preliminary story to help parents understand the role that peers have in their children's lives. This is especially helpful for parents who have adolescent girls and wish to help them feel included within the community. It might also provide more incentive for the parents to become more involved and know more about the friendships their adolescent sons and/or daughters have, and be able to provide support and guidance.

Clinicians should also explore the family structure of the family, but more importantly how the family came to be where they are in the present. It is important for clinicians to understand their journey coming to the United States (who stayed behind and for how long?) This will provide essential information that will guide therapists towards understanding stronger connections the adolescent might have with mother versus father, or weaker connections with mother and stronger connections with grandmother etc. Understanding all of these factors can help Latino families achieve more cohesion and harmony or, as framed in Latino cultures, *familismo.*

Limitations

Although the strengths of the present study include its use of under-researched Latino sample and its utilization of structural equation modeling (a preferred method when testing multiple interactions, Hill et al., 2003; Rowe, Vazsonyi, & Flannery, 1994), the results must be considered in light of some limitations. Chief among these is that the acculturation level of

respondents was not measured directly in this study. Acculturation is typically measured multi-dimensionally using indicators such as language preference, fluency, generation status, food and media preferences, and ethnic diversity of friends (Hill et al., 2003). Studies have also shown that Latino adolescents can experience higher levels of loneliness depending on their level of acculturation. The less acculturated the adolescent is the more likely he or she is to experience high levels of loneliness (Suarez, et al., 1997).Given the very real probability that acculturation level may conceivably affect parenting, family interactions, and levels of loneliness further research that examines the effect of acculturation on family dynamics more directly and comprehensively is needed (Hill et al., 2003, p. 201). An indirect measure of the sample's acculturation level is found in the fact that participants were surveyed in their high school English classes, a methodological decision that suggests a moderate-to-high acculturation levels which might not represent the rest of the Latino population.

Another limitation to the present study is one recognized by Bradford et al. (2003), which utilized a similar data collection methodology. Specifically, it is important to recognize that this sample only includes school-going youth and school attendance can be viewed as an indicator of higher functioning or compliance to authority on the part of adolescents. Therefore, it would not be justified to conclude that the common family patterns revealed in these findings would be the same for families whose children were not attending school which is also highly related to level of acculturation (Bradford et al., 2003).

A third limitation to the present study is that the single-informant design of this study makes the data's accuracy and representativeness dependent on the adolescent without also considering the perspective of parents. This is important to consider since Latino adolescents experience something different than most adolescents in the way that they tend to differ in their present values and the values of their parents. This creates an internal conflict and has been

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correlated to high levels of loneliness (Suarez et al., 1997). This internal conflict cannot be measured due to the lack of information we have on the values their parents hold. This approach is, or course, subject to criticism (Bradford et al., 2003) as similar findings achieved through multiple methods and sources of information are often more credible.
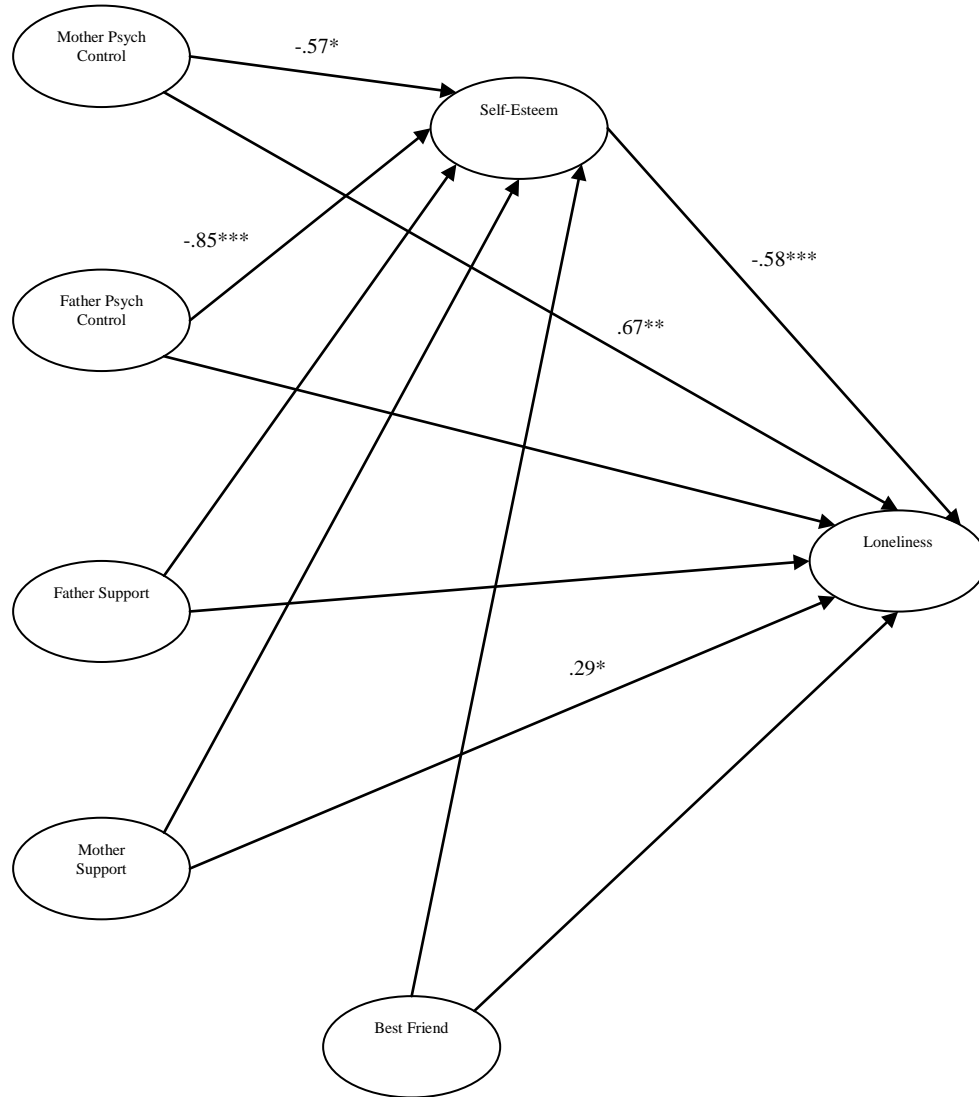
The final limitation presented for this study is that tests were performed on cross-sectional data, and thus the direction of influence between variables cannot be determined conclusively (Dumka et al., 1997). Longitudinal data are needed to determine causal processes in order to expand our knowledge of the processes at work in Latino families.

Given the limitations listed above, however, there is considerable value in these findings based on: (1) the use of a viable SEM model, (2) reliance on reliable, valid measures, and (3) utilization of a large sample of Latino youth, an under-researched ethnic group.

Conclusion

This study examined parenting variables along with peer variables and its impact in Latino adolescent loneliness. By the use of SEM this study was able to account for half of the variance for youth and their experience of loneliness (boys: $R^2= .51$, girls: $R^2= .50$). Results show maternal support is significant for both boys and girls and how they experience their self-esteem and loneliness. It is important to note that paternal support was found not significant for any of the paths. Cross-gender results can help therapists understand the relationship between mother/daughter and father/son, and how to foster deeper support and affection between one another. It is important to nurture friendship relationships for girls but especially for boys to increase their support group. This research adds to the knowledge researchers and clinicians have on the Latino population and how to most efficiently treat them.

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Appendix

Diagram with nodes: Mother Psych Control, Father Psych Control, Father Support, Mother Support, Best Friend, Self-Esteem, Loneliness, with path coefficients: -.57*, -.85***, -.58***, .67**, .29*

X^2 = 2422.3, df=1414, p< .001

Boys: R^2= .51; Girls: R^2= .50

Goodness of Fit: CFI= .932, RMSEA= .029

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

Figure 2. SEM Results for Modified Model, Boys' Perception of Loneliness
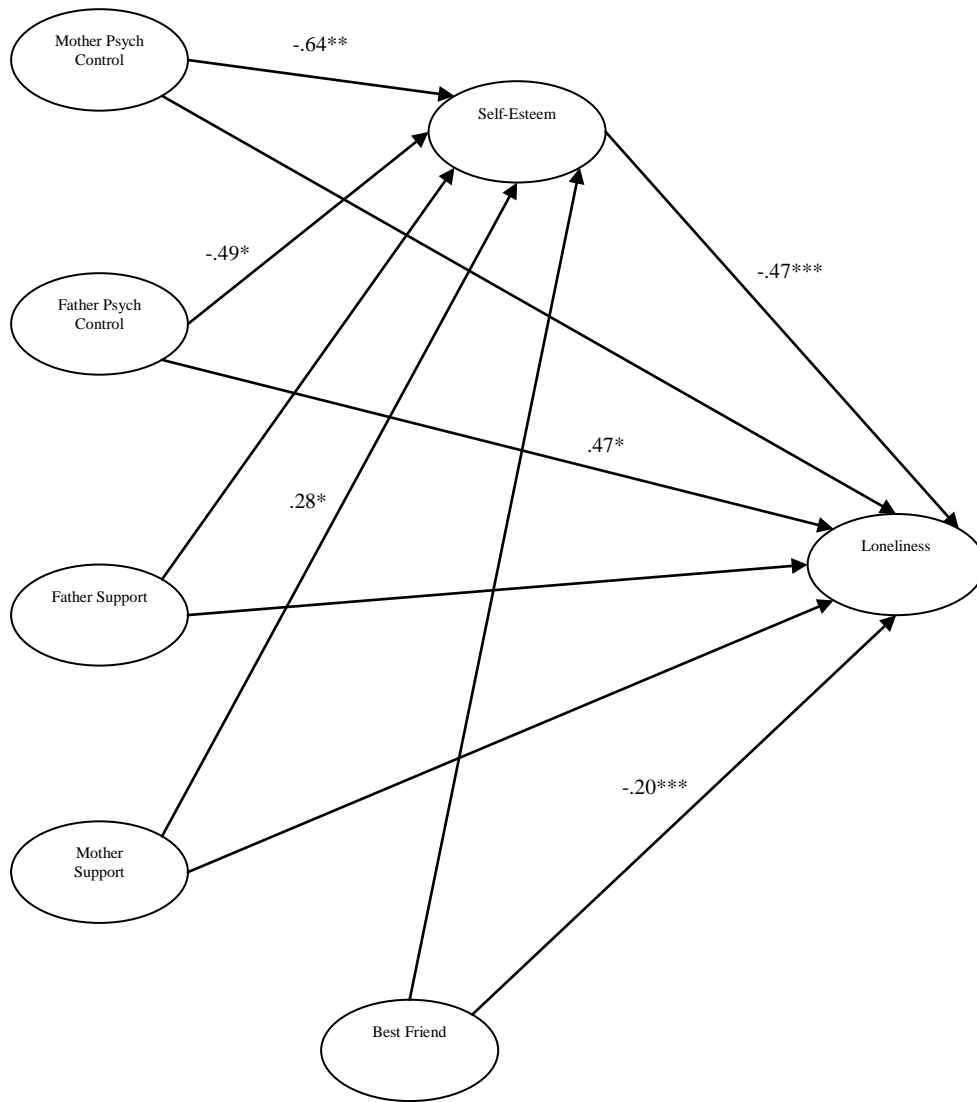
X^2 = 2422.3, df=1414, p< .001

Boys: R^2= .51; Girls: R^2= .50

Goodness of Fit: CFI= .932, RMSEA= .029

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

Figure 3. SEM Results for Modified Model, Girls' Perception of Loneliness

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Maternal/Paternal Support Questionnaire

Please report to the following items by telling us how well they describe your mother using responses ranging from 1 (not like her/him) to 3 (a lot like her/him).

1. Makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her

2. Smiles at me very often

3. Is able to make me feel better when I am upset

4. Enjoys doing things with me

5. Cheers me up when I am sad

6. Gives me a lot of care and attention

7. Makes me feel like the most important person in her life

8. Believes in showing her love for me

9. Often praises me

10. Is easy to talk to

Maternal/Paternal Psychological Control Questionnaire

Please report to the following items by telling us how well they describe your mother using responses ranging from 1 (not like her/him) to 3 (a lot like her/him).

1. Changes the subject whenever I have something to say.

2. Blames me for other family members' problems.

3. Brings up past mistakes when she criticizes me.

4. Often interrupts me.

5. Is less friendly with me if I do not see things her way

6. Is always trying to change how I feel or think about things.

7. Will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her.

8. If I have hurt her feelings, stops talking to me until I please her.

In answering the following questions, please think of your best same-sex friend (for example: if you are a girl, think of your best girlfriend) using responses ranging from 0 = *Never* to 5 = *Every day*.

1.   How often do you call this friend on the phone?

2.   If you needed help with something, how often could you count on this friend to help you?

3.   How often do you and this friend go over to each other's houses?

4.   How often do you tell this friend thing about yourself that you wouldn't tell most kids?

5.   How often do you feel like it's hard to get along with this friend?

6.   How often do you and this friend go places together, like a movie, skating, shopping, or a

sports event?

7.   When you do a good job on something, how often does this friend praise or congratulate

you?

Loneliness (UCLA) Items Questionnaire

In answering the following questions, please think "How often do you feel this way…" using responses ranging from 1 = *Never* to 4 = *A lot.*

1. I lack companionship.

2. I feel left out.

3. I am no longer close to anyone.

4. I feel isolated from others.

Self-esteem (Rosenberg) Items Questionnaire

In answering the following questions, please respond on how much you agree with the following statements using responses ranging from 1 = *Strongly agree* to 5 = *Strongly disagree.*

1. I am able to do things as well as most people.

2. I certainly feel useless at times.

3. At times I think I am no good at all.

4. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

6. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

7. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

8. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

10. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

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Table 1.

Means (Standard Deviations) for Parenting, Peer and Youth Variables

	Boys (*n*=352)	Girls (*n*=476)	T-tests
Maternal Support	2.3(.52)	2.3(.57)	.01
Paternal Support	2.1(.59)	2.1(.58)	.02
Maternal Psychological Control	1.5(.81)	1.6(.48)	.02
Paternal Psychological Control	1.6(.52)	1.5(.45)	.01
Best Friend (Peer) Support	2.0(.73)	2.3(.71)	.02
Loneliness	1.9(.79)	2.1(.80)	.02
Self-Esteem	2.8(.38)	2.8(.35)	.01
Family Structure	3.5(1.0)	3.4(.94)	.03

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Table 2.

Bivariate Correlations Among Parenting and Youth (Boys) Variables

	L	MS	PS	FS	MPC	PPC	BFS	SE
Loneliness (L)	1	-.226[**]	-.262[**]	-.022	.260[**]	.261[**]	-.077	-.217[**]
Maternal Support (MS)	-.226[**]	1	.514[**]	-.166[**]	-.274[**]	-.106	.109[*]	.136[*]
Paternal Support (PS)	-.262[**]	.514[**]	1	-.136[*]	-.150[**]	-.449[**]	.121[*]	.145[*]
Family Structure (FS)	-.022	-.166[**]	-.136[*]	1	.039	.069	-.120[*]	-.075
Maternal Psychological Control (MPC)	.260[**]	-.274[**]	-.150[**]	.039	1	.300[**]	.015	-.191[**]
Paternal Psychological Control (PPC)	.261[**]	-.106	-.449[**]	.069	.300[**]	1	.039	-.139[*]
Best Friend (Peer) Support (BFS)	-.077	.109[*]	.121[*]	-.120[*]	.015	.039	1	-.001
Self-Esteem (SE)	-.217[**]	.136[*]	.145[*]	-.075	-.191[**]	-.139[*]	-.001	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
    *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3.

Bivariate Correlations Among Parenting and Youth (Girls) Variables

	L	MS	PS	FS	MPC	PPC	BFS	SE
Loneliness (L)	1	-.331**	-.250**	.018	.344**	.329**	-.235**	-.266**
Maternal Support (MS)	-.331**	1	.293**	-.154**	-.557**	-.198**	.120**	.143**
Paternal Support (PS)	-.250**	.293**	1	-.103*	-.184**	-.456**	.119*	.100*
Family Structure (FS)	.018	-.154**	-.103*	1	.081	.055	.011	.045
Maternal Psychological Control (MPC)	.344**	-.557**	-.184**	.081	1	.396**	-.070	-.182**
Paternal Psychological Control (PPC)	.329**	-.198**	-.456**	.055	.396**	1	.009	-.218**
Best Friend (Peer) Support (BFS)	-.235**	.120**	.119*	.011	-.070	.009	1	.007
Self-Esteem (SE)	-.266**	.143**	.100*	.045	-.182**	-.218**	.007	1

Note: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
　　　*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)