THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN GENDER ROLE BELIEFS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISTRESS AMONG

LATINA COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

by

ALLISON JANINE NIEBES-DAVIS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2012

Major Subject: Counseling Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The Role of Family and Academic Support in the Relationship between Gender Role

Beliefs and Psychosocial Distress among Latina College Students. (August 2012)

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College is a time marked by a significant level of stress, especially for Latina students. One of the changes that often occurs during an individual's time in college involves one's gender role beliefs, shifting from traditional gender role beliefs to more liberal beliefs. Though a great deal of research has been done to show that college attendance plays an important role in the liberalization of gender role beliefs, little is known about this relationship for Latina students. This is particularly problematic as Latina students face unique challenges on the college campus, including issues relating to acculturation. Because the Latino cultural norms often dictate women to be dependent on their family, a move towards nontraditionalism can create family conflict and intragroup marginalization, both of which can contribute to psychosocial distress in ethnic minority groups. As Latina students face unique educational challenges, and may develop family conflicts, a supportive academic environment may serve to buffer some negative effects. This study conceptualizes this supportive environment as "academic families" which foster family like relationships in the college setting. This study examined the relationships between gender role beliefs, family conflict, family

intragroup marginalization, academic family support, and psychosocial distress among a sample of 170 Latina college students to get a clearer picture of how changing gender roles impact this population. A statistically significant relationship was found between gender role beliefs and family intragroup marginalization, as well as between gender role beliefs and family conflict, though different from initially hypothesized. A statistically significant relationship was also found between family conflict and psychosocial distress, though academic family support was not shown to moderate this relationship. Implications for researchers and educators are also discussed.

DEDICATION

       This dissertation has been an incredible labor of energy and determination. Though my name is printed on the title page, many more deserve to have their names listed there, as this project would not have happened without the love and support of so many. I want to first thank my husband, Matt, for his unending support and guidance. You are my partner in both personal and professional pursuits, and I am continually inspired and blessed by your love and desire for us to dream big. To my parents, who have provided me with unlimited opportunity and support. You have always encouraged me to follow my heart, staying close beside me for moments when I feared and wondered, "Can I really do this?" Without your guidance and love, I would be lost. To my brother Ryan, one of the biggest influences on my life, thank you for inspiring me in ways you will never know. You motivate me to step outside my comfort zone and embrace life for all it has to offer. To my friends and extended family, I am so grateful for your encouragement and influence over the course of my life. Even when I am unsure of what I need, you know my heart and remind me of what matters most. I am beyond grateful.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

College is a time marked by a significant level of stress. Students deal with a variety of issues, including academic performance, social relationships, and family conflict, which all serve as stressors for the typical college student. Facing new experiences and adapting to new environments often lead to intrapersonal change within college students (Castillo, Cano, Chen, Blucker, & Olds, 2008). While this transition to becoming a college student can be challenging for many, it is especially stressful for Latina students as they face additional challenges such as acculturative stress and family conflict (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). One of the changes that often occurs during an individual's time in college involves one's gender role beliefs. In particular, a shift from traditional gender role beliefs to more liberal beliefs may occur as Latina students acculturate to the college culture (Phinney & Flores, 2002). In this study, I explore Latina gender role beliefs and how this relates to family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress.

Concepts of gender have been a part of psychological research for several decades. Gender roles have dominated a great deal of this research, building on the research of Bem (1974), exploring constructs such as masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. However, around the same time, ideas about gender role attitudes emerged and have begun to receive greater attention in recent decades. Although the distinction between gender role and gender role attitudes may seem trivial, there are important

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differences. Gender role stereotypes capture *expectations* about gender-specific characteristics and behaviors (Sczesny, Bosak, Diekman, & Twenge, 2008), while gender role beliefs address the *attitudes and values* an individual has about how men and women should think, feel, and act. Spence, Helmreich and Stapp (1975) pointed out that an individual's gender role is not inevitably the same or even related to an individual's gender role beliefs; they are distinct constructs. In their study, the authors sought to compare femininity, (as measured by gender role stereotypes), with gender role beliefs. Using a sample of 530 male and female freshmen college students, participants were asked about their beliefs toward women as well as their gender role stereotypes. When measuring gender role beliefs, participants were asked about their beliefs about *appropriate* roles for women. Gender role stereotypes were measured by asking participants to label behavior and attributes as "masculine" or "feminine." Results of the study showed modest correlations between gender role stereotypes and gender role beliefs, suggesting that the two constructs are different and should be measured separately. Spence et al. suggest that just because a female has a high score on a femininity scale, one cannot infer or assume anything about her gender role beliefs or gender role associated behavior. Though these concepts are often discussed together, they are separate constructs and should be considered as such (Spence et al., 1975). As beliefs precede behavior, it seems important for studies to first explore how these gender role beliefs, as opposed to gender role behaviors, affect an individual.

Gender Role Beliefs among Latinas

Latina gender roles and gender role beliefs have been well documented throughout social science research. There are strong and marked divisions between what is expected of men and women in the Latino culture, as men are expected to be dominant, masculine, independent, and problem solving, characteristics of *machismo* (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). Women, on the other hand, are expected to be reserved, dependent, wholesome and submissive, characteristics of *marianismo*, a concept first described by Stevens (1973). This cultural construct encourages women to be nurturing and dedicate the majority of their time and energy to fulfilling the roles of mother, wife, and primary caretaker (Castillo, Perez, Castillo, & Ghosheh, 2010).

The current theory of marianismo shows that it is a multidimensional construct, and five factors have been identified as integral in the concept of marianismo (Castillo et al., 2010). Factor 1, Family Pillar, addresses the idea that women should be focused on family happiness and unity. Women are expected to place a high priority on nuclear and extended families, a concept embedded in the cultural value familismo (Castillo & Cano, 2007). Sacrificing personal priorities for the interest of the family is common for Latina women. Within a family unit, girls are often expected to forgo college or attend close to home, so that they can help care for grandparents and siblings. This expectation is rarely present for Latino males who can help the family from a distance, sending portions of their income or financial aid home to their family.

Factor 2, Virtuous and Chaste, involves the expectation that Latina women are to remain pure, both morally and sexually. Honor is an important concept in Latino families, and women are expected to behave in a way that is in line with this value, particularly concerning morals. Promoting a virtuous and wholesome image is important, and families often expect their daughters to remain sexually pure and adopt the values of their religion (Castillo et al., 2010).

Factor 3, Subordinate to Other, calls for Latina women to be cognizant and obedient to the hierarchical power structure that exists in Latino culture. Respeto, a cultural value with marked gender differences, promotes adherence to the Latino power structure (Castillo & Cano, 2007). Men hold most positions of power in the family, and women are expected to support these individuals as well as this power structure. Fathers and brothers are often primary decision makers for the family, and daughters, regardless of their age, are encouraged to seek the advice and approval of family leaders.

Factor 4, Self-silencing to Maintain Harmony, addresses the idea that Latina women should keep personal beliefs and thoughts to themselves to keep peace in relationships. The value simpatia permeates Latino culture and encourages women to promote and maintain harmony in relationships, even if she experiences personal discomfort in this pursuit (Castillo & Cano, 2007). If a woman disagrees with the choice or action of a relative or friend, she is discouraged from confrontation. Avoidance of discord is key is this pursuit of harmony.

The final factor, Factor 5, Spiritual Pillar, calls women to take charge of the spiritual growth and development of the family (Castillo et al., 2010). Women are

charged with getting family members to religious services and promoting spiritual growth among family members. In this respect, children often turn to their mothers and sisters with questions about their spiritual development.

Gender role expectations are often communicated to Latinas from a young age, as the culture sends both implicit and explicit messages about the value of traditional gender role beliefs (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). A study conducted by Raffaelli and Ontai sought to examine how participants perceived their gender socialization. Using a two phase study design, with a small sample of in-depth interviews with 22 women and a larger survey of 166 male and female college students, they found that across both samples, participants identify with having received socialization towards traditional gender roles from their parents.

Despite this apparent socialization, it is unclear whether this socialization manifests into an actual gender role division within the Latino culture. A recent study suggested that despite cultural values such as marianismo, Latina adolescents support nontraditional gender role beliefs more so than their White peers. In addition, younger Latina adolescents support these more liberal views more often than then older Latina adolescents, suggesting a possible shift in socialization (Flores, Carrubba, & Good, 2006). Behavioral studies also suggest that Latinas may not strictly adhere to the values of marianismo. Studies of sexual behavior show that Latina adolescents report higher rates of sexual activity, more so than their white peers (Eaton et al., 2006), and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) posits that over 60% of Latinas report having sex by their senior year in high school. Amaro (1988) conducted a survey of 137

women and concluded that their results contradict common gender role stereotypes evidenced by great diversity across the sample on attitudes and behaviors generally ascribed to by marianismo. These characteristics of marianismo included religiosity, desires to have a large family, and passivity in decision-making regarding family planning. While previous theories suggested that there would be little diversity in these characteristics among Latinas, results showed that there was great diversity in participant responses regarding these issues, suggesting that Latina values may not be as simple and stereotypical as initially thought.

Despite the findings that gender role attitudes may not always manifest into *actual* traditional behaviors, traditional gender socialization appears to be a occurring on some level within the Latino culture. Further, stereotypes have been shown to have powerful effects, and it may be the case, that regardless of behavior, attitudes and early socialization remain impactful.

Gender Role Beliefs in College

As mentioned, college is a time marked with change in many areas, one of which is gender role beliefs (Bryant, 2003.) In the past forty years, attitudes towards women have become more egalitarian (Byrne, Felker,Vacha-Haase, & Rickard, 2011), suggesting a move in society to adopt more nontraditional gender roles. Motivated by the women's movement, this change has shown most dramatically for college students, as first year students' gender role beliefs have become less traditional over time (Bryant, 2003). In an attempt to explore the proposed liberalization of gender role beliefs, Spence and Hahn (1997) examined gender role beliefs among four different cohorts of students,

all at the same university. Using data from 1972, 1976, 1980, and 1992, they explored

participants' responses on a 15 item measure of gender role beliefs, with each time point

containing a mixed gender sample of at least 500 participants. The researchers found

highly significant differences in total scores between the 1992 cohort and the three

earlier groups, suggesting that college cohorts have, in fact, become more nontraditional

in their gender role beliefs.

This shift towards more nontraditional gender beliefs has not just shown up on a

societal level, but on an individual level as well. A 2005 study (Cunningham, Beutel,

Barber, & Thorton, 2005) examined the impact of accumulation of education on

attitudes towards gender roles, utilizing a three-wave study, examining 887 18-year-old

individuals in 1980, and then again in 1985 and 1993. Their results revealed that at each

age interval, post-secondary education revealed a move towards nontraditional gender

role attitudes. It was proposed that exposure to post-secondary education encourages

more liberal gender role beliefs. Similarly, in a national longitudinal sample of over

14,000 male and female college students from multiple ethnic groups, Bryant (2003)

measured students' attitudes towards the role of married women and found that students

became less conventional over four years of college. These results suggest that college

attendance plays an important role in the liberalization of gender role beliefs.

However, results from a longitudinal study provided contradictory results in

regard to gender role belief changes in college students (Corbett, Rudoni, & Frankland,

1981). Researchers studied a sample of 250 male and female college students during

their first, second, and third years of college, and found that while gender role beliefs

became more nontraditional during students' first year, they became more traditional during their second year, suggesting that the college experience may have a more complex effect on gender role beliefs than others have shown (Bryant, 2003). However, despite this possible complexity, the majority of studies suggest that gender role beliefs do indeed become more nontraditional over time, particularly during the college experience.

A problem in the study of gender role beliefs is that research in this area has largely been limited to White female students, who frequently have different cultural values (e.g., individualism) from Latino culture (e.g., collectivism). In addition, research suggests that although both genders become more nontraditional with respect to gender role attitudes during college, White women, compared to other ethnic groups, exhibit greater levels of nontraditional gender role attitudes at various points including college entry, throughout college, and college graduation (Bryant, 2003). For example, one study examined the relationship between attitudes towards the roles of married women and ethnicity (Bryant, 2003). Results showed a significant relationship between ethnicity and traditional gender role beliefs, but only when contrasting White women against all other ethnic groups. This relationship suggested that White students were more nontraditional than all other ethnic groups; however, no differences were found between any of the ethnic minority groups, suggesting that these groups are equally traditional in their gender role beliefs.

A move towards nontraditionalism occurs in a variety of areas including women's primary responsibilities, educational and professional opportunities, as well as

function in both marriage and motherhood (Cunningham et al., 2005). An individual's amount of education is positively associated with attitudes of nontraditionalism (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004), which suggests a dose effect of college on gender role belief change. A variety of characteristics in the college student are positively associated with increases in nontraditionalism including living in an urban environment (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004), having a working mother (Davis & Greenstein, 2009), possessing more liberal political beliefs (Bettencourt, Vacha-Haase, Byrne, 2011), and having less religious affiliation (Bettencourt et al., 2011; Bryant, 2003). Once in college, other factors continue to be positively associated with more liberal gender role beliefs including paid employment (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Davis & Greenstein, 2009), taking ethnic studies or women's study courses, time spent studying, student's grade point averages, and discussing issues related to diversity (Bryant, 2003).

Though a great deal of research has been done to show the liberalization of gender role beliefs that can occur during a student's time in college, most of this research has been done with White college students. Little is known about the relationship between ethnicity and college gender role beliefs, leaving an important gap in the literature. This is particularly problematic for Latina students as they face unique challenges on the college campus. Issues relating to financial hardship, acculturation, and gender role conflicts serve as stressors that are particularly challenging for Latino students (Castillo et al., 2008), and research suggests that this experience is exacerbated for Latina students who often experience an acculturative process in college (Castillo et al 2004).

Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the process of change that occurs within an individual as she or he is exposed to the dominant culture. This change involves both exposure to and adoption of the values of the dominant culture (Berry, 1998). Castillo and colleagues (2004) contend that Latinos undergo an acculturative process as they enter college and witness, learn and begin to adopt the norms of a college campus. The college environment is supported and maintained by a set of dominant and widely accepted values and expectations including competition and independence. Over time Latino college students engage in a process of learning about and adopting these dominant values. Though this process occurs for most students, it is somewhat of a dual process for Latina students as they must learn both White American values as well as the values of the college system (Castillo et al., 2004). This process of acculturation can often be difficult for students as their heritage group's culture can differ from the new group's culture, particularly in regards to gender role beliefs (Roccas, Horenczyk, & Schwartz, 2000). Latina students report a variety of psychosocial problems including depression, anxiety, and tension that have been shown to be related to interpersonal distress in college (Crocket, Iturbide, Torres Stone, McGinley, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2007).

Castillo et al. (2004) examined known variables that contribute to distress in Mexican American college students, including acculturation and income, as well as psychosocial variables, White attitudinal marginalization and family support. Using a sample of 247 Mexican American undergraduate and graduate women, these researchers distributed surveys assessing the above-mentioned variables. Results showed that

income was a significant predictor of distress for Mexican American college students, which is important considering 90 percent of study participants reported that their education was primarily financed through personal means or institutional-based programs including financial aid, grants, and work study. White attitudinal marginalization was also found to be a significant predictor of distress, suggesting that balancing the values and beliefs associated with two different cultures is both difficult and stressful for students.

Surprisingly, the authors found that acculturation was not significantly related to distress, though the acculturation instrument may have played a large role in this finding, as the measure is more sensitive to first generation Mexican Americans than second and third generation students. In addition, family support was found to play an important role in distress, as greater levels of family support were associated with lower levels of distress in students.

In a more recent study, researchers examined acculturative stress among Latino college students, focusing on the role of family conflict and intragroup marginalization Castillo et al., 2008). Utilizing a mixed gender sample of 194 Latino college students, the researchers confirmed previous studies and found that low parental income is related to higher acculturative stress among college students. They also found low acculturation to be related to higher stress, confirming the belief that the acculturation process is related to stress among Latino college students. Perceived family conflict and intragroup marginalization were also found to be related to higher acculturative stress among Latino college students.

The acculturation process is concerned with adopting the norms of the dominant culture, and therefore a variety of beliefs and attitudes held by some Latina students may shift when they adopt beliefs that are more aligned with the dominant culture. A variety of studies and theoretical models (e.g. Berry, 2003) give support to this idea, suggesting that changes toward the views of the dominant group will occur in a variety of psychosocial dimensions including behaviors, attitudes, values, and self-concept.

Furthermore, a bilinear model of acculturation suggests that individuals can acculturate to a culture as well as adhere to heritage culture norms. Kim and Abreu (2001) give support to this idea as first generation Latinas adhere more strictly to the norms of their heritage group, as opposed to their peers who have been exposed to the dominant culture for several generations as well as adhere to heritage culture norms. Gender role beliefs are one of the many constructs that is shaped during this acculturative process. However, as Latinas begin to be exposed to nontraditional gender role beliefs, conflict with traditional gender role beliefs prescribed by their heritage culture can arise and impact their psychological adjustment (Castillo & Hill, 2004).

Psychosocial Effects of Gender Role Beliefs

Though the majority of available research regarding the relationship between nontraditional gender role beliefs and psychosocial outcomes deals with White college students, it is important to examine this research to better understand the potential effects for Latina students. Research examining this relationship has provided some mixed support (Landrine & Klonoff, 1997), although the majority of studies support a link between nontraditional gender role beliefs and psychosocial outcomes (Fischer & Good,

2004; Moradi & Subich, 2002). Rederstorff, Buchanan, and Settles (2007) examined the moderating effects of gender role beliefs and race on the relationship between sexual harassment and distress. Black and White undergraduate women (n=258) completed surveys, and results illustrated that for White women, nontraditional gender role beliefs serve as a buffer from the negative effects of sexual harassment (e.g. depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, life satisfaction). Women with more traditional gender role beliefs were more likely to experience negative psychosocial effects following sexual harassment. This relationship was not found, however, among Black women, as nontraditional gender role beliefs exacerbated the negative effects of sexual harassment. The authors posited that nontraditional gender role beliefs in Black women may be associated with an increased awareness of inequality among various societal groups, which may lead to feelings of being personally targeted or at continued risk. The authors encouraged future research in this area to explore the idea that nontraditional gender role beliefs may have a differential impact for ethnic minority groups, such as in the Latino culture.

The positive effects of nontraditional gender role beliefs are also shown throughout some of the body image literature. Murnen and Smolak (2008) completed a meta-analysis of 26 studies examining the link between nontraditional gender role attitudes and measures of body image and eating concerns. Results revealed a positive, significant association between nontraditional beliefs and body attitudes, though this result was strongest for older women. In addition, Saunders and Kashubeck-West (2006) explored the association between gender role beliefs and psychological well-

being among a sample of 244 women of diverse ages and backgrounds. Results showed

nontraditional gender role beliefs were significantly related to psychological well-being,

such that women who endorsed more nontraditional beliefs reported higher levels of

overall psychological well-being. A similar study by Moradi and Subich (2002)

illustrated the buffering effect of nontraditional gender role attitudes. Researchers used a

sample of 106 undergraduate and 85 faculty/staff women to explore the relationship

between nontraditional gender role attitudes, women's perceived experiences of sexism,

and psychosocial distress. Results revealed that women who endorsed more

nontraditional gender role beliefs showed less distress related to recent sexist

experiences, while women who identified as more traditional reported greater distress

following similar recent sexist events (Moradi & Subich, 2002).

Thoughts about what contributes to the positive effects of nontraditional gender

role beliefs often point to the decreased pressure to conform to traditional societal

pressures about how women should think, look, and act (Saunders and Kashubeck-West,

2006). Landrine and Klonoff (1997) posit that feminist beliefs provide individuals with a

unique framework that allows them to cognitively structure the world around them as

well as their experiences. This framework allows them to recognize sexist experiences

and differential treatment as results of their gender, as opposed to personal deficits. For

example, a woman with nontraditional gender role attitudes who is sexual harassed may

be more likely to consider societal and sexist sources contributing to her victimization,

instead of placing blame on herself, believing that a personal flaw or feature led to the

victimization.

Though there appears to be clear psychosocial benefits to nontraditional gender role beliefs, the situation may be more complicated for Latina college students. As mentioned previously, the majority of past research has examined gender role beliefs among White students; however, scholars contend that Latina students are at risk to experience negative psychological outcomes (i.e. depression, anxiety, interpersonal problems, social adjustment) due to conflict that occurs when changing their gender role beliefs. (Baron & Constantine, 1997; Vasquez, 1982). Such conflict can occur both within and outside the individual. Internal conflict occurs when an individual tries to integrate two sets of dissonant values and beliefs. Cognitive dissonance theory posits that when there is contradiction between two cognitive factors, or between one's thoughts and one's behaviors, stress occurs as the individual attempts to make these two elements harmonious (Draycott & Drabbs, 1998). External conflict can occur when trying to integrate the individual's changing gender role beliefs with the stagnant beliefs of family and close friends. However, in a study examining how sociocultural sources of stress (socioeconomic status, acculturation, gender role attitudes, and support from family and friends) influence distress in 254 Latinas college students, results revealed that while SES is related to stress for Latinas students, gender role beliefs are not (Castillo & Hill, 2004). These authors found that gender role beliefs did not contribute to distress among Latinos, suggesting that navigating between traditional and nontraditional gender role beliefs may not be a stressor for Latina students as previously suggested. However, as purported by Castillo and Hill (2004), the lack of significant finding in this area may be due to the scale used to measure gender role beliefs. Though

the Attitudes Toward Women Scale has been normed on majority populations, it appears to have limitations with a Mexican American sample. The authors state that no current study has examined the scales reliability and validity with a Latina sample, which may impact the study results.

Finally, in order to adequately assess Latina gender role beliefs, a culturally specific measure is needed. Hence, this study examines Latina gender role beliefs with a measure that assesses the extent to which a Latina feels that she should subscribe to the values that make up marianismo

Impact of Gender Role Beliefs on Family Conflict and Family Intragroup Marginalization

One of the greatest sources of stress surrounding a change in gender role beliefs among Latina students concerns the family of origin. Differing expectations often exist among family members and college peers and instructors, creating a source of tension and conflict at home (Lee, Cho, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Lee & Liu, 2001). These differing expectations are often due to a difference in rates of acculturation between immigrant parents and their children. Immigrant parents often acculturate to the dominant culture at a slower rate holding true to many of the values from their heritage culture, while their children tend to adopt and adapt to the values and attitudes of the dominant culture (Lee et al., 2000; Lee and Liu, 2001). While these differing expectations can encompass a variety of factors, one factor in particular can be associated with family conflict is parent-child discrepancy on gender role beliefs. As mentioned earlier, Latinas are socialized to adhere to traditional gender role beliefs, a message that is often

communicated strongly by family members. However, as Latina students progress through college and acculturation occurs, individuals' gender role beliefs may change. Jack (1991) points out that as women become more nontraditional in their gender role beliefs, they move from being dependent on others to define themselves and their roles in society, to being more independent and in control of their own identity. Because the Latino cultural norms emphasize collectivism (Castillo et al., 2010), this move towards nontraditionalism can create conflict in the family unit.

In addition to family conflict, Latina college students can also experience family intragroup marginalization in response to the acculturation process (Castillo, Conoley, Brossart, & Quiros, 2007.) Intragroup marginalization is concerned with the reaction of the heritage group, in this case the family, as the individual moves farther from the heritage group's values and closer to the values of the dominant group (Castillo et al., 2007; Marques, Abrams, & Sorodio, 2001; Ojala & Nesdale, 2004). The heritage group views the individual's actions as a threat to their group identity, and reacts to this threat by creating interpersonal distance between the individual and the group (Castillo et al., 2007). Castillo and colleagues (2008) point out that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization are indeed separate constructs, as family intragroup marginalization addresses the reaction and distance created from family conflict.

Several studies have documented the role of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization in psychosocial distress in ethnic minority groups (e.g. Lee & Liu, 2001; Castillo et al, 2006; Castillo et al., 2008). In their study, Lee and Liu (2001) sought to compare three groups (Asian American, White, and Latino) in terms of the

likelihood of intergenerational family conflict, coping strategies, and their collective effect on psychosocial distress. Using a mixed ethnicity, mixed gender sample of 406 college students, with 121 Latinos, results showed that for both Asian American and White students' indirect coping mediated the effect of family conflict on psychosocial distress. However, for Latinos, this relationship was only partially mediated by indirect coping suggesting that a direct link continued to occur between family conflict and psychosocial distress. Similarly, in a previously mentioned study, Castillo et al. (2008) examined acculturative stress among Latino college students, focusing on the role of family conflict and intragroup marginalization among a mixed gender sample of 194 Latino college students. While perceived family conflict and intragroup marginalization were both found to be related to higher acculturative stress among Latino college students, intragroup marginalization was found to play a uniquely predictive role in acculturative stress once parental income, acculturation, and perceived family conflict were accounted for (Castillo et al., 2008), suggesting that intragroup marginalization is an important additional factor to consider when examining family conflict.

Academic Family Support as a Protective Factor

In recent years, several researchers (e.g. Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Torres & Solberg, 2001) have begun to examine multiconstruct models in the role of supporting Latina students in the unique educational challenges they experience. Several of these models point to the importance of social, familial, and institutional support in serving as buffers against psychosocial distress, though no model has integrated these constructs into a cohesive construct. Social support has been shown to be an important buffer

against the psychosocial distress, particularly stress experienced by Latina college students (e.g. Dennis, Calvillo, & Gonzalez, 2008; Castillo & Hill, 2004). Higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of distress, and research has documented the importance of both family and peer support in the lives of Latino college students (Dennis et al., 2008; Castillo & Hill, 2004). The role of family support is not surprising, given the Latino values of collectivism and familismo, which value both support and harmony (Gloria, Castellanos, Lopez, & Rosales, 2005). In addition, institutional support is critical to the success and health of Latino students, and the role of faculty and staff, particularly in the form of mentoring. Effective mentorship involves regular contact addressing students' academic progress, skills, needs, and overall educational experience (Johnson, 2007).

The need to incorporate each of these three types of support (social, familial, institutional) is critical in supporting Latina college students and reducing psychosocial distress. In a recent article, Castellanos and Gloria (2007) called for an improved model to help Latino students achieve success. Their proposed approach is integrative and is built on a psychosociocultural framework, with the social factor emphasizing regular contact with Latino peers, organizations, and faculty members in the college environment. Some researchers have referred to these social connections as "academic families" as they foster family like relationships in the college setting, with Latino peers serving as sibling connections and faculty members serving as "academic parents" providing students with guidance, direction, and mentorship (Gloria, 1997; Segura-Herrera, 2006). Building on their framework, this study proposes the concept of

"academic family support" to describe the unique integration of social, familial, and academic support that can come from a faculty member. Through this support, Latina students can be supported and encouraged in a way that is most helpful and relevant considering some of the unique challenges they face in higher education.

Present Dissertation

Most studies examining gender role beliefs suggest that college generally liberalizes students' gender role beliefs (Bettencourt et al., 2011; Bryant, 2003; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Davis & Greenstein, 2009), although most of this research has been done with White college students. Little is known about the relationship between ethnicity and college gender role beliefs, leaving an important gap in the literature, particularly for Latina college students. This is particularly problematic as Latina students face unique challenges on the college campus (Castillo et al., 2008). There are also mixed results about the relationship between gender role beliefs and psychosocial distress among Latinas (Baron & Constantine, 1997; Vasquez, 1982; Castillo & Hill, 2004). In addition, while literature has pointed to the benefits of social support in moderating psychosocial distress (Dennis et al., 2008; Castillo & Hill, 2004), the role of "academic family" support has not been thoroughly investigated, particularly with regard to psychosocial distress. As such, this study examined the relationship among gender role beliefs, family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress among a sample of Latina college students. Furthermore, this study examined the role of academic family support as a protective factor against psychosocial distress.

It hypothesize that individuals with more nontraditional gender role beliefs will experience greater family conflict and family intragroup marginalization. Second, individuals with greater family conflict and family intragroup marginalization will likely have higher level of psychosocial distress. Finally, it is hypothesized that academic family support will moderate these relationships, such that higher levels of support will be associated with lower levels of psychosocial distress, thus serving as a buffer between these family factors and psychosocial distress.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were obtained as a part of a larger project examining the influence of cultural identity and psychosocial wellbeing among Latino college students. All participants were female, sampled from a four-year college in the southern region of the United States. Participants for the current study self-identified as being Mexican American. The final sample contained 170 individuals, aged 17 to 45 years, with an average age of 20.95 (SD = 3.84). Participants were nearly evenly split across grade, with 32% First year (N = 54), 19% Sophomore (N = 33), 28% Junior (N = 48), and 20% Senior (N = 34), with one graduate student (.6%). On average participants had a 3.09 GPA (SD = .49), and the majority identified with being of working class background (54%, N = 96). Most participants were either first or second generation Mexican American (58%, N = 99).

Procedures

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to this study. Participants were recruited from a South Texas university and given extra credit at the discretion of their professors for study participation. Participants were provided with informed consent, detailing the benefits and risks associated with study participation as well the purpose of the study. Potential participants were also given the opportunity to decline participation. Participants completed the following test items in a paper-pencil

format. Identifying information was not collected; therefore, results were anonymous. The survey took 30 to 45 minutes, on average, to complete. To avoid coercion, participants were allowed to skip any and all questions they chose. Further, because of the sensitive nature of some test questions, referral information was provided to participants should they have any questions or incur stress during survey administration. Although the proposed study had the potential to bring up some negative feelings or concerns for some participants, it was deemed that the data collection did not offer more than minimal risk to participants.

<div align="center">**Measures**</div>

Demographics

Demographic information was collected from participants for descriptive purposes. Information included race/ethnicity, age, social class, educational level, and major, among other items. See Appendix A1 for a complete list of the demographic items.

Gender Role Beliefs

The Marianismo Beliefs Scale (MBS; Castillo et al., 2010) is intended to measure the extent to which a Latina feels that she should subscribe to the values that make up marianismo.   The MBS is comprised of 24 items, including 5 factors: (a) family pillar, (b) virtuous and chaste, (c) subordinate to others, (d) self silencing to maintain harmony, and (e) spiritual pillar. Items are scored on a four-point Likert-type scale (1= *strongly disagree* to 4= *strongly agree)*, and the overall score is represented by the mean of all the items. Higher scores represent more traditional gender role beliefs.

Internal reliability was found for the MBS's subscales to be .77, .79, .76, .78, and .85, respectively. The MBS was shown to have good convergent validity when compared to scales measures similar constructs (Castillo et al., 2010). Alpha for this study was .85.

Family Conflict

The Family Conflict Scale-likelihood scale (FCS; Lee et al., 2000) was used to assess family conflict. The FCS describes ten typical family conflicts which are likely to arise for Asian American families and assesses how likely and serious the participant would rate the conflict. Likelihood of family conflict is measured with a five point Likert-type scale (1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*). Scores on the subscale range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating greater likelihood. The FCS-likelihood was shown to have strong internal reliability (.89), construct validity, and stability (Lee et al., 2000). Lee et al. found FCS-likelihood to be more important in the concept of family conflict than FCS-seriousness, specifically for parent-child intergenerational and acculturation conflicts. Therefore, this study consisted only of the FCS-likelihood subscale. The subscale was adapted for use with Hispanic participants by substituting key words indicating Asian American for words indicating Hispanic culture, as done in Castillo et al. (2006) who found an alpha coefficient for this adapted version of .95. Alpha for this study was .89.

Family Intragroup Marginalization

Family intragroup marginalization (FIM) was measured using the Family scale of the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory (IMI; Castillo et al., 2007). The IMI is designed to measure the interpersonal distancing that can occur as acculturating

individuals are perceived to be adopting behaviors and beliefs of a group different from their heritage group. The Family scale is one of three scales in the IMI and consists of twelve items, with four factors: (a) Homeostatic Pressure, which reflects the family's desire for the individual not to change and adopt new values; (b) Linguistic Expectation, which assesses the family's expectation that the individual maintains their native language; (c) Accusation of Assimilation, which measures the family's charge that the individual is adopting White American norms and beliefs; and (d) Discrepant Values, which assesses the family's belief that the individual's beliefs are becoming too discrepant from the family's beliefs. Participant responses are based on a seven point Likert-type scale (1= never/does not apply to 7= extremely often) with higher scores indicate more perceived family intragroup marginalization. Reliability estimates have been found to be good with an alpha coefficient of .80, and measures of content, construct, and divergent validity all supporting the validity of the IMI's Family scale (Castillo et al., 2007). Alpha for this study was .80.

Academic Family Support

The Perceived Social Support from Academic Family scale (PSS-AF; Castillo & Niebes-Davis, 2010) was used to measure the construct of academic support. Some items from the measure was adapted from Procidano and Heller's (1983) Perceived Social Support – Family (PSS-F) scale, which the authors have supported as being a valid and reliable measure of perceived social support from family. The PSS-F includes ten statements that include emotions and experiences typically expressed by someone who feels supported by his or her family. Items for the PSS-AF were created to ask

about emotions and experiences with college faculty members, thus measuring the

concept of an academic family (e.g. "There are faculty members at the university I

attend that I rely on for emotional support.") Participants indicate a response of "yes,"

indicating a score of 1, and "no" and "I don't know" a score of 0. Scores across the 10

items are summed with higher scores indicative of a greater level of perceived academic

family support. Alpha for this study was .87.

Psychosocial Distress

The Kessler-10 (K10; Kessler et al., 2002) is a measure of global psychosocial

distress, primarily addressing individual levels of anxiety and depression. The ten item

measure asks respondents to answer the items using a five-point Likert-type scale rating

the severity of their symptoms in the last four-weeks (1 = *none of the time* to 5 = *all of*

the time).   Total scores are obtained by summing all of the item responses, with higher

scores indicating more severe levels of psychosocial distress. The K10 has been found

to have a Chronbach's alpha = .84 (Hides et al., 2007), suggesting good internal

reliability. Alpha for this study was .85.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Prior to SEM analysis, a check of the assumptions required for analysis was conducted. Three major assumptions in SEM exist, such that data are assumed to be normally distributed, exhibit homoscedasticity and linearity, and be free of multicolinearity (Kline, 2005). To assess these assumptions, the process as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) was completed. Examination of skewness, kurtosis, normality plots, and plots of the residuals all suggested that the data were normally distributed and exhibited homoscedasticity and linearity. Pearson r correlation coefficients were calculated for all variables chosen *a priori* and were used to check for erroneous variables unrelated to other variables in the analysis as well as to examine for multicolinearity. This check of bivariate relationships showed no evidence of multicolinearity. However, it was also determined when examining these coefficients that academic family support to be unrelated to all other variables. This suggested that at the bivariate level, degree of perceived academic support was unrelated to the variables in the model. However, as academic family support was hypothesized to moderate the relationships between psychosocial distress and family conflict and between psychosocial distress and family intragroup marginalization, this variable was retained in the final model. Table 3.1 presents all Pearson *r* correlation coefficients for the modeled variables.

Table 3.1. Pearson *r* Correlation Matrix for Variables in Model 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender role beliefs	--	.244[**]	-.015	-.062	-.037	.141	.164[*]
2. Family conflict (FC)		--	.554[*]	.024	.078	.109	.361[**]
3. Family intragroup marginalization (FIM)			--	.010	.054	.025	.231[**]
4. Academic family support (AFS)				--	.096	.052	.048
5. FC * AFS					--	.327[**]	.078
6. FIM * AFS						--	.009
7. Distress							--
Mean	2.26	21.68	23.76	3.25	.75	.19	19.84
SD	.35	10.16	11.13	3.03	30.75	31.57	6.26

Note. [*] $p < .05$, two-tailed. [**] $p < .01$, two-tailed.

The model for the total sample is shown in Figure 3.1. It was hypothesized that a direct relationship would exist between the variables gender role beliefs and the variables family conflict and family intragroup marginalization. It was also hypothesized that the factors family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would have a direct relationship with the factor psychosocial distress. Academic family support was hypothesized to moderate the relationships between family conflict and psychosocial distress as well as family intragroup marginalization and psychosocial distress, such that a high degree of perception of academic support would buffer the effects of these family variables on psychosocial distress. Lastly, it was hypothesized that gender role beliefs would have an indirect effect psychosocial distress through family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, such that individuals with more traditional gender role beliefs would have greater psychosocial distress.

Chi-square test of model fit was not found to be statistically significant, which suggested that the model fit the data accurately, $\chi^2(N = 146, df = 7) = 4.832, p = .68$. The CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR (1, 0, and .03, respectively) were all found to indicate good fit. These results suggested good model fit, which allowed appropriate interpretation of the path coefficients.

Results provide limited support for the expected relationships of the a priori model. A statistically significant relationship was found between gender role beliefs and family intragroup marginalization, such that individuals with more nontraditional gender role beliefs were more likely to experience family intragroup marginalization
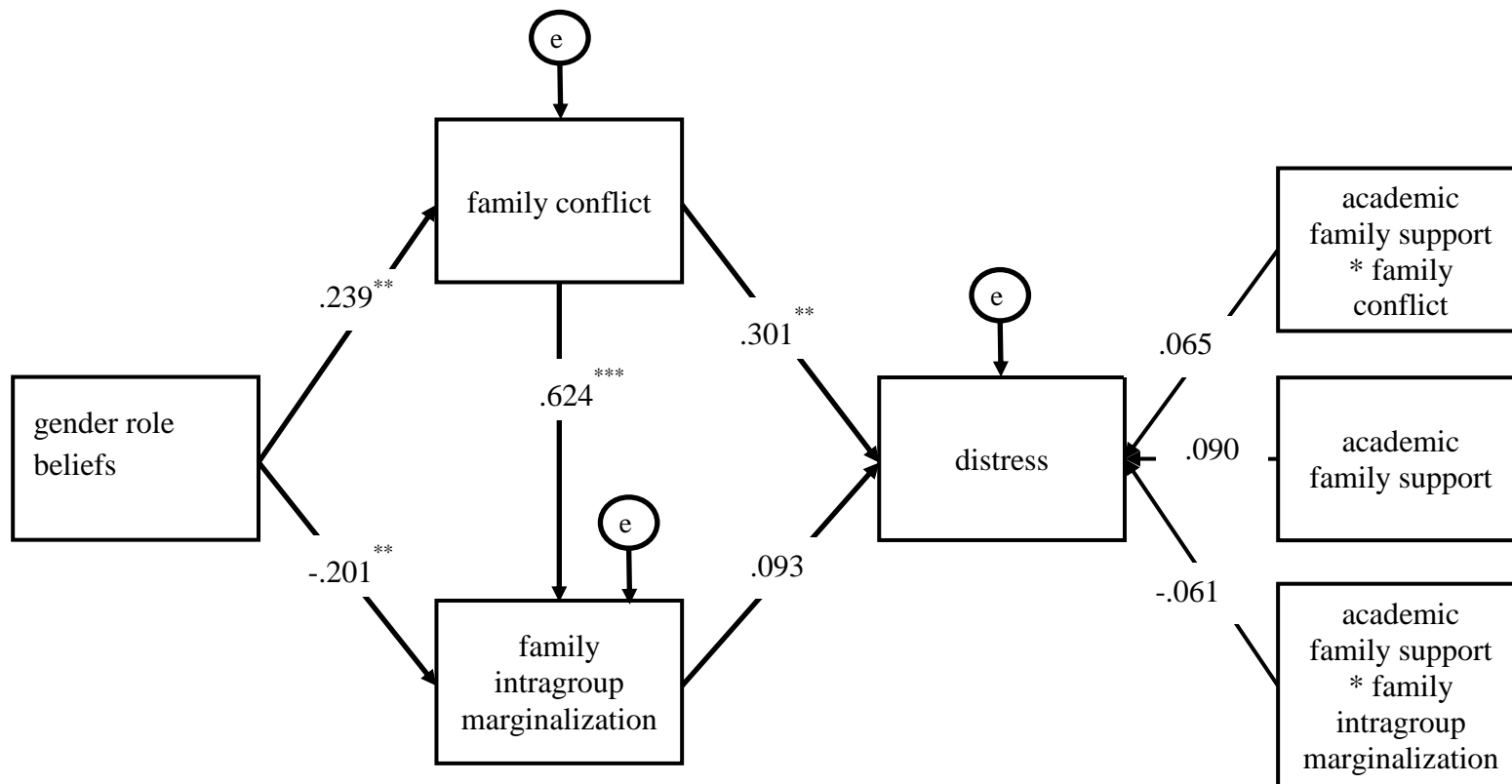
Figure 3.1. *A priori* structural equation model of the relationship among gender role beliefs and psychosocial distress, mediated and moderated by family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and academic family support. *Note*. Indirect effects are not depicted. $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

(b = -.20, SE = .07). A statistically significant relationship was also found between gender role beliefs and family conflict (b = .24, SE = .08) in the model; however, the direction of the relationship was contrary to the initial hypothesis. This relationship suggested that more traditional gender roles were related to a greater perceived amount of family conflict. As predicted, individuals who experienced more family conflict were statistically significantly more likely to experience psychosocial distress (b = .3, SE = .09). The relationship between family intragroup marginalization and psychosocial distress was not statistically significant (b = .09, SE = .10), suggesting that greater perceived marginalization by an individual's family was not related to greater perceived psychosocial distress. A statistically significant relationship was also found between family conflict and family intragroup marginalization (b = .62, SE = .06) such that the more family conflict an individual perceives the more family intragroup marginalization she experiences.

Moderation and Mediation Analyses

Contradictory to hypothesized results, academic family support was not a statistically significant moderator between family conflict and psychosocial distress (b = .07, SE = .08) or between family intragroup marginalization and psychosocial distress (b = -.06, SE = .08). This suggested that the amount of perceived support from an individual's academic faculty did not buffer the negative relationship between family conflict and psychosocial distress, nor the change the relationship between intragroup marginalization and psychosocial distress.

Examination of the indirect effects within the model suggested that a statistically significant indirect relationship existed between gender role beliefs and psychosocial distress through family conflict ($b = .07$, $SE = .03$). This relationship suggested that more traditional gender role beliefs was related to greater family conflict which was then related to increased psychosocial distress. No statistically significant indirect relationships were found between gender role beliefs and psychosocial distress through family intragroup marginalization ($b = -.02$, $SE = .02$) or through family conflict and intragroup marginalization ($b = .01$, $SE = .02$).

The total effects of the model accounted for 14% of the variance in psychosocial distress ($R^2 = .14$). Further, the model accounted for 6% and 37% of the variance in family conflict and intragroup marginalization, respectively ($R^2 = .06$ and $R^2 = .37$).

Ad Hoc Analyses

As the *a priori* model examined above was unable to find an association with academic family support when examined as a continuous variable, the question arose as to what would occur if academic family support was examined as a dichotomous variable? Thus, would those students who identified as having high academic family support have different relationships among the remaining variables than those who identified as having low support? To examine this question, a multigroup SEM analysis was conducted in Mplus v. 6.1 using the already mentioned fit indices and estimation techniques. Multigroup analysis consists of a series of analyses that specifies the same model structure on two samples in increasingly constricted models, comparing structure of the models, path coefficients, mean structures, and intercepts at each successive step.

Prior to analysis, a median split of the data was conducted on the variable academic family support (*Median* = 3) with individuals who scored ≤ 3 classified as perceiving "low academic support" (*N* = 84) and individuals scoring > 3 classified as perceiving "high academic support" " (*N* = 72). As academic family support is no longer specified in the models as a variable, the current model specified can be viewed in Figure 3.2

As a first step to examining the invariance of the two samples on the model, structural equivalence was examined. This analysis examines the degree of similarity between the two samples in regard to how the variables relate to each other. Without structural equivalence, subsequent models cannot be appropriately specified, thus declaring the samples variant. The results of the structural equivalence test can be viewed in Figure 3.2. It was found that the two samples did not meet the requirements for structural equivalence as evidenced by the fit indices (χ^2 [*N* = 156, *df* =2] = 9.23, *p* < .01; CFI = .922; RMSEA = .215; SRMR = .058). As such, it can be inferred that individuals perceiving a high degree of academic support have different relationships among the variables than do those perceiving low support. The path coefficients for those reporting low academic support are similar in size and interpretation to those found for the total sample (see Figure 3.1); while the relationships among students perceiving high academic support were virtually non-existent.

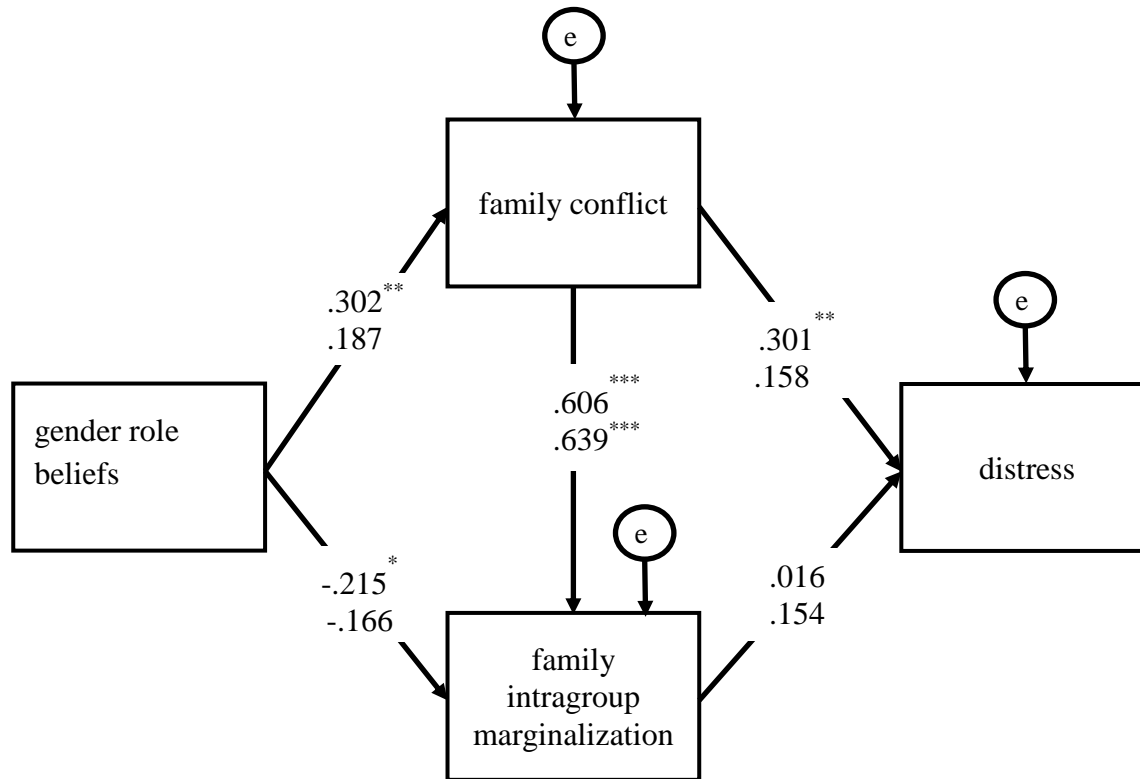Figure 3.2. *Ad hoc* multigroup structural equation model of the relationship among gender role beliefs and psychosocial distress, mediated by family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, comparing high vs. low perceived academic support. *Note*. The top path coefficient = low academic support; bottom path coefficient = high academic support. Indirect effects are not depicted. [**]$p < .01$; [***]$p < .001$

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

This study documents the relationships between gender role beliefs, family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress among Latina college students, with an interest in the moderating effect of academic family support on these variables. College has been shown to be a stressful time for students, particularly for Latina students who must balance a variety of roles and expectations. Research suggests that as students progress through college, they adopt more liberal, nontraditional gender role beliefs (Bryant, 2003). Most of this research has been done with White American students, leaving an important gap in knowledge about Latina college students' experience. Changing gender role beliefs have been associated with a variety of factors, including family conflict (Lee et al., 2000), family intragroup marginalization (Castillo et al., 2007), and psychosocial distress (Rederstorff et al., 2007). This study aimed to explore these variables as well as the moderating effect of academic family support as a buffer against potential distress.

Support for the initial hypotheses was mixed. A negative relationship between gender role beliefs and family intragroup marginalization was found, suggesting that individuals with more nontraditional gender role beliefs were more likely to experience family intragroup marginalization. This is consistent with literature that suggests acculturation and the adoption of the dominant groups' values are positively related to interpersonal distancing among family members (Castillo et al., 2007). Family members

of individuals with more nontraditional gender role beliefs may tease the individual for "acting white," or they may express a desire for the individual to "act the way they used to." From this, we can understand that as individuals undergo the acculturation experience throughout their college years, they begin to experience a disconnect with their family. This is important to understand as college aged individuals may begin to feel a loss of relationship and support from their family, a common pillar in Latina culture (Castillo et al., 2010). This familial marginalization may impact individuals in a variety of ways.

Interestingly, the relationship between gender role beliefs and family conflict was significant, though not in the direction initially hypothesized. A positive relationship between these variables was found, such that the more nontraditional one's gender role beliefs, the less family conflict she reported. This finding is surprising and inconsistent with previous literature (e.g. Lee & Liu, 2001). There may be a variety of reasons for this finding, one of which may be associated with the developmental period of interest in this study. Adolescence and young adulthood is a time marked with heightened family conflict (Van Doorn, Branje, & Meeus, 2011), and it may be that participants were reporting normative family conflict. A second potential explanation may concern those individuals who are just beginning to explore more nontraditional gender role beliefs and are experiencing a form of cognitive dissonance. According to Erikson's (1968) stages of development, the end of adolescence is marked with a desire to explore and establish one's personal identity. This often involves separating oneself from one's family, and discovering who one is, separate from one's family. Erikson also points a period of

moratorium during this time, where individual responsibilities are put on hold, as identity exploration becomes a central task. Often during this time, role confusion can occur, which could suggest that individuals of this developmental period are beginning to question personal values and beliefs, even if recognition is not present.

It may be helpful at this point to consider an example. Nineteen-year-old Krystavel is living at home and attending a nearby college. Though she would describe her gender role beliefs as "fairly traditional", she is beginning to question her gender role beliefs, wondering if her current gender role beliefs are, in fact, consistent with her worldview. These questions and discrepancies may lead to increased family conflict, particularly on FCS items like "your parents tell you what to do with your life, but you want to make your own decisions" and "your parents want you to behave like a proper Hispanic female, but you feel that they are being too traditional." In short, while these women would still report having fairly traditional gender role beliefs, they may be in a stage of exploration or curiosity, associated with increased family conflict. However, the current study does not examine this directly and future research would be warranted to determine if this is occurring.

As predicted, there was a significant relationship between family conflict and psychosocial distress, such that the more family conflict an individual experiences, the more distress she reports feeling. This is supported by previous literature, suggesting that family conflict is a stressor for individuals, particularly college students (Castillo et al., 2008). The role of family is important, especially for Latinas, so it is not surprising that family conflict is a stressful experience and related to general distress in one's life.

Interestingly, the similar relationship, between family intragroup marginalization and psychosocial distress was not significant, as initially hypothesized. This contradicts previous research (Castillo et al., 2008) and leaves a great deal of question as to what may be occurring between these two variables. However, the fact that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization had conflicting relationships with both psychosocial distress and gender role beliefs supports Castillo and colleagues' (2008) assertion that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization are in fact separate constructs with unique properties.

The role of academic family support as a moderator between family conflict and psychosocial distress and family intragroup marginalization was not significant, as initially hypothesized. Though this variable was constructed using previous literature on perceived social support (Procidano & Heller, 1983), the scale itself was developed for this study. There are a variety of reasons as to why this moderation was not supported. One potential reason may be that the participants in the current study had relatively low levels of distress. In primary care settings, cut off scores are used to categorize individuals' distress levels. Scores 20-24 indicate mild mental disorders, scores 25-29 indicate moderate mental disorders, while scores 30 and above indicate severe mental disorders. However, scores below 20 indicate that individuals are likely to be well (Andrews & Slade, 2001). Participants in this study had a mean distress score of 19.84 (SD=6.26), indicating low to moderate levels of distress. This suggests that the opportunity and/or need for academic family support was not necessarily as great as for groups where distress levels were more significant and apparent. This could mean that

students did not feel the need to seek out support, or it could suggest that academic officials did not feel as great of a need to provide support to students. This may be more likely as participants were from a predominately Hispanic serving institution in which a majority of the students lived at home. Simply stated, when distress levels are low, the opportunity for intervention is likely reduced.

However, due to lack of findings when perceived academic family support was examined as a continuous variable, it was determined important to examine potential differences when participants were broken into two separate groups, those perceiving high academic family support and those perceiving low academic family support. Perhaps once students feel a certain level of support, the relationships among family conflict, psychosocial distress, and family intragroup marginalization do not hold true. Findings supported examining these groups separately, as the findings suggest that the relationships initially reported among the variables in the model only held for those reporting low academic family support. In other words, when students perceived a certain level of support from an academic family on campus, their distress was no longer related to their family conflict. Similarly, family conflict and intragroup marginalization were no longer related to gender role beliefs. While these findings are inconclusive, they point to the validity of the current study's purpose, supporting the need for future research to examine these relationships with additional measures of academic support. Further studies should explore whether the quality of academic family support is important, or whether the mere presence of support is enough. It might also be

important to explore how these relationships differ for Latina students in a traditionally White institution versus Latina students in a more diverse institution.

There are several limitations in this study. The first is the cross-sectional nature of the data, as opposed to longitudinal. Studying changes in gender role beliefs, particularly during the college experience, would benefit by examining individuals over the course of their college career, monitoring gender role beliefs, family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress. However, because longitudinal studies are often not feasible and taxing in resources, a cross sectional design was used. Future studies are warranted to test the findings of the current study utilizing a longitudinal dataset so that researchers can track changes in the proposed variables as well as the moderating effect of academic family support throughout the college years.

The sample used in this study was a second limitation. By design, the sample was entirely Latina; however, the college from which the sample was collected was also largely Hispanic. This provides a different snapshot than a primarily White institution, where participants face acculturation to not just the college environment, but also to white cultural values (Castillo et al., 2004). White values are associated with more nontraditional gender role beliefs than Latina values (Bryant, 2003) and would therefore likely affect study participants differently. An additional limitation was that the current sample encompasses five generation statuses. Differences may occur among generations; however, due to the small sample sizes of groups, analyses of these differences were not appropriate. In addition, many of the students that attend the college in this study live at home with their families. This is in contrast to the living-on-

campus model that many institutions encourage and likely biases the results. The acculturation process is likely different, particularly for Latina students, when they live at home, versus when they live on campus among their peers. Future studies should explore the impact of these environmental factors. The relationships among gender role beliefs, family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress may be different for those students attending predominantly White institutions versus students attending predominantly Hispanic institutions, as well as students living on campus versus students living at home with family. Further, the sample size, while appropriate for the current analyses, was limiting for more advanced statistical methods, such as a fully latent SEM model, which may have flushed out more in the data.

The results of this study have implications for both researchers and university officials. First, gender role beliefs were shown to be related to both family intragroup marginalization and family conflict, though the latter relationship was different than anticipated. Gender role beliefs are a salient factor in the daily lives of Latina college students, particularly when they have significant impact on family harmony on connectedness. Furthermore, this study revealed that family conflict is significantly related to psychosocial distress for Latina students, contributing to the heavy burden that many Latina students face as they acculturate to the college environment. Stress has repeatedly been shown to interfere with personal and academic functioning (Suldo, Shaunessy, Thalji, Michalowski, & Shaffer, 2009); therefore, it is critical that we work to understand and explore not only how this stress affects Latina students, but more

importantly how educators and researchers, can reduce the level of stress students experience.

This study also suggests that it may be important to consider engaging students' family in some way to reduce the relational conflict, and subsequently, reduce students' distress. Whether this is increased communication or increased contact with parents in orientation settings, it may be possible to intervene at the level of family conflict. Additionally, academic family support did not moderate the relationship between family variables and psychosocial distress as initially expected. This is an important finding for researchers and educators everywhere, as an academic family support, as defined in this study, does not seem to be effective. Having a faculty member that is supportive or feeling that a professor is invested in one's growth does not seem to be enough to moderate students' distress. While these experiences are likely not harmful, they do not seem to be playing the supportive role we imagined. Therefore, a different moderation variable must be explored. One critical concept of support that is missing from the academic family support variable is peer support. Friends and peers are an important part of college life, and it may be that peer support is an important concept in buffering students' distress. While this alone may be significant, it may also be that combining this peer support with academic family support will provide a successful combination in reducing psychosocial distress for Latina college students. It may also be important to consider having support from a source that shares students' Latina culture. As previously discussed, mariansimso is an important cultural construct, and it may be that students need to be able to relate and express this value with someone on campus,

whether it be an academic official or another student. These ideas are important to understand and explore as we work to make the college experience less stressful for Latina students.

In conclusion, college is a time marked with significant change and stress for Latina students. Gender role beliefs, family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychosocial distress are relevant features in the lives of Latina college students, and it is imperative that we continue to explore these relationships, as well what we can do to reduce the stress that Latina students experience as they progress through college.

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APPENDIX

Sex: 1. male   2. Female

Age: _____

Race/Ethnicity:

1. Hispanic (please specify):
    Mexican American ____
    South American   ____
    Spanish American ____
    Puerto Rican   ____
    Cuban American   ____
    Central American ____
2. White (non-Hispanic)
3. African American
4. Asian American
5. Native American
6. Biracial/Multiracial (specify)
    _____
7. Other (specify)
    _____

If you are Hispanic, circle your generation level.

1. **1st generation** (you were born in Latin America)
2. **2nd generation** (you were born in the US, either parent born in Latin America)
3. **3rd generation** (you and your parents born in US, grandparents born in Latin America)
4. **4th generation** (you and your parents born in US, at least one grandparent born in Latin America with remainder grandparents born in US)
5. **5th generation** (you, your parents, all your grandparents born in US)

Social Class
1. working class
2. middle class

3. upper-middle class
4. upper class

GPA: _____

College Level:

1. freshman   3. junior
2. sophomore   4. senior

Major_____

Are you the first person in your immediate family to go to college?

1. yes

2. no

Highest level of education you <u>WISH</u> to complete.

1. 1 year of college
2. 2 years of college
3. 3 years of college
4. Bachelor's degree (4-year college degree)
5. Master's degree
6. Doctoral degree, Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D.
7. Professional degree such as a lawyer

Highest level of education you <u>EXPECT</u> to complete.

1. 1 year of college
2. 2 years of college
3. 3 years of college
4. Bachelor's degree (4-year college degree)
5. Master's degree
6. Doctoral degree, Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D.
7. Professional degree such as a lawyer

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