Parenting Styles in a Cultural Context: Observations of “Protective Parenting” in First-Generation Latinos

MELANIE M. DOMENECH RODRÍGUEZ, PH.D. *
MELISSA R. DONOVICK, M.S. *
SUSAN L. CROWLEY, PH.D. *

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Current literature presents four primary parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. These styles provide an important shortcut for a constellation of parenting behaviors that have been characterized as consisting of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting. Empirically, only warmth and demandingness are typically measured. Research reporting on parenting styles in Latino samples has been equivocal leading to questions about conceptualization and measurement of parenting styles in this ethnic/cultural group. This lack of consensus may result from the chasm between concepts (e.g., authoritarian parenting) and observable parenting behaviors (e.g., warmth) in this ethnic group. The present research aimed to examine parenting styles and dimensions in a sample of Latino parents using the two usual dimensions (warmth, demandingness) and adding autonomy granting. Traditional parenting styles categories were examined, as well as additional categorizations that resulted from adding autonomy granting. Fifty first-generation Latino parents and their child (aged 4–9) participated. Parent–child interactions were coded with the Parenting Style Observation Rating Scale (P-SOS). In this sample, the four traditional parenting categories did not capture Latino families well. The combination of characteristics resulted in eight possible parenting styles. Our data showed the majority (61%) of Latino parents as “protective parents.” Further, while mothers and fathers were similar in their parenting styles, expectations were different for male and female children. The additional dimensions and implications are discussed. The importance of considering the cultural context in understanding parenting in Latino families is emphasized, along with directions for future research.

*Department of Psychology, Utah State University, Logan, UT

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Melanie M. Domenech Rodriguez, at the Utah State University, 2810 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322. E-mail: Melanie.Domenech@usu.edu
Over 40 years ago, Diana Baumrind (1966) set the stage for major shifts in research and practice in the area of parenting by presenting three primary parenting styles that could be used as a shortcut to describe a wide-ranging constellation of parent behaviors and childrearing goals. A couple of decades later Maccoby and Martin (1983) added a conceptual fourth style, neglectful, for which Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) provided empirical support. These parenting labels—authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful—have permeated research, practice, and popular culture. These parenting style labels provide an important framework for a constellation of parenting behaviors and childrearing goals and have been primarily characterized as consisting of varied combinations of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting. However, although the styles are conceptually built on these three dimensions, only two dimensions are typically measured: warmth and demandingness.

An authoritarian parenting style is characterized by low responsiveness, high demandingness, and low levels of autonomy granting. An authoritative parenting style is characterized by high responsiveness, high demandingness, and autonomy granting. A permissive parent shows high levels of responsiveness and autonomy granting and low levels of demandingness. A neglectful parent is disengaged, showing low levels of both responsiveness and demandingness and autonomy granting (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003).

Generally, research supports the use of these parenting style labels in a majority culture. However, when examining the literature on Latinos’ parenting styles the support is less robust. Research targeting the observation of these styles in Latino samples has been equivocal leading to questions about conceptualization and measurement of parenting style in this specific ethnic/cultural group. One possible explanation for this lack of consensus is that the chasm between the concepts (e.g., authoritarian parenting) and the observable parenting behaviors (e.g., warmth) is too great when applied to a cultural group with potentially different childrearing practices and goals from the mainstream. Alternatively, it is possible that, contrary to Baumrind’s original gold standard, many of these studies have been conducted using survey measures which have obscured or confused results. To our knowledge, no studies of Latinos’ parenting styles have used observational procedures.

The present research aimed to better understand the disparate findings in the literature on Latinos’ parenting styles by examining Baumrind’s parenting styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful) in a study using direct observations of parent–child behaviors. In addition to using an observational methodology, the dimension of autonomy granting as originally conceptualized by Baumrind was added. Finally, and given early warnings of gender as an important childrearing context by both Baumrind and also Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979), we examined the influence of parent and child gender on the three parenting dimensions.
BAUMRIND’S BUILDING BLOCKS

Baumrind’s seminal work presented labels for parenting practices in the service of examining parents’ behaviors and attitudes on child behavior. A major motivation underlying her classic work seemed to be to debunk myths surrounding the impact of parents’ disciplinary practices and provide empirical evidence that tempered parental control was ideal in childrearing. Interestingly, in presenting her evidence, Baumrind also set the stage for future research and made explicit suggestions for clinical applications. She explicitly selected published studies for the literature review of her 1966 paper in which child behaviors are directly observed, and parents’ behaviors were either observed or obtained through interviews (rather than surveys), thus making a statement about the importance of observational data in parenting research. Further, she cogently contextualized behavioral research that might suggest that punishment is ineffective by noting that parental love and respect serve as powerful variables in making punishments effective.

In providing an affective-interactional context, Baumrind built a bridge between parenting styles, parenting behaviors, and existing research to build knowledge based on animal models and extended it to humans. She also set the stage for empirically based intervention strategies. In her 1966 article, she presented 12 myths and carefully debunked each one, providing data to support each of her arguments. Notably she argued for “mild punishment” coupled with specific parental feedback to the child about the reason for the punishment and the presentation of an alternative appropriate behavior. She also presented evidence for the importance of active correction of child misbehavior. Both of these recommendations can be clearly and broadly seen in parenting interventions today (e.g., Kazdin, 2005). Similarly she recommended that parents not use parental love as a contingency for behavior, and even stated that this action “probably poses a greater threat to the child’s ability to make a conscious choice than even the use of unqualified power assertion” (p. 904). The focus on high levels of warmth and maintenance of positive parent–child bonds is also a hallmark of contemporary empirically based parenting interventions.

In her original manuscript Baumrind (1966) did not outline the three dimensions of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting, although she mentioned them all repeatedly. Indeed, she stated “It is of interest to evaluate empirically the effects on children of various combinations of extreme scores on . . . [parental] ‘firm control’ and ‘restricts child’s autonomy,’” rather than to assume that they form a single dimension.” (p. 901). By 1996, Baumrind was clearly delineating “responsiveness” and “demandingness” as the primary dimensions in parenting. Interestingly, empirical investigations have reported finding the three dimensions, however, chose not to incorporate autonomy granting in statistical analyses (e.g., Lamborn et al., 1991).

RELEVANCE OF PARENTING STYLES AND DIMENSIONS

Parenting styles have been useful in understanding complex behaviors and attitudes of caregivers and how these relate to child outcomes. Because these styles in effect “package” complex information into four memorable and simple categories, they are highly useful in intervention (and clinician training) contexts. The four parenting styles are based on variations in levels of the parenting dimensions of responsiveness (warmth), demandingness (parental control), and autonomy granting, and have been found to relate to child outcomes.

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Warmth implies being involved and interested in the child’s activities, listening to the child, and being supportive (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). Demandingness refers to the amount of control a parent imposes on a child (e.g., expectations for behavior), the implementation of standards and rules, and the degree to which a parent enforces the standards and rules (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). Autonomy granting is described as allowing children autonomy and individual expression within the family (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbush, 1994).

The authoritative parenting style has been correlated with positive child outcomes such as social and cognitive functioning (Baumrind, 1989, 1993), academic achievement (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992), self esteem (Carlson, Uppal, & Prosser, 2000), social adjustment (Stewart et al., 1998), and social competence (Fagan, 2000). The authoritative parenting style is also correlated with low rates of child psychopathology (Reiss et al., 1995), while authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been shown to be associated with increased rates of child psychopathology (Shelton, Frick, & Wootton, 1996).

Although there is a substantial body of literature addressing parenting styles, there are significant limitations when attempting to understand parenting in Latino families. First, the vast majority of studies base their findings on parenting styles that were conceptualized using majority White, middle class families’ values, cultural norms, and parental expectancies. Inferences made regarding child outcomes are based on parenting styles which may or may not apply to Latino families. The strongest indication of a misalignment between the traditional parenting styles and Latino parenting comes from the equivocal findings in the literature regarding the predominant style for Latino parents as well as the ability of parenting style to predict child outcomes. These equivocal findings coupled with historical (Baumrind, 1966, 1996; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and more recent (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002) calls for a focus on the contexts in which parenting occur, suggest that attempts to further elucidate Latinos’ parenting styles is warranted.

PARENTING STYLES IN LATINO FAMILIES

The available literature concerning Latino parenting styles is sparse and inconsistent. Some researches have described Latinos as permissive (Julian, McKenry, & McKelvey, 1994) and others as authoritarian (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Hammer & Turner, 1990). Vega (1990) found that parent and child interactions were characterized by warmth and nurturing. Controversy that emerges in the existing literature regarding parenting styles and child outcomes among Latino families highlights several themes. Some researchers have concluded that an authoritative parenting style is predictive of overall positive child outcomes in Latino families (Carlson et al., 2000; Dornbush et al., 1987; Radziszewka et al., 1996; Steinberg, Dornbusch et al., 1992; Steinberg, Lamborn et al., 1992) In contrast, other researchers contend that authoritative parenting predicts positive child outcomes in White children only, and the same association is not evident in Latino families (Lindahl & Malik, 1999; Park & Bauer, 2002).

As an alternative to the predominant categorical conceptualization of parenting styles, researchers have suggested the use of dimensions instead. Barber (1997) and Darling and Steinberg (1993) have suggested the separate parenting dimensions of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting are better indicators of parenting
characteristics than parenting styles. Stewart and Bond (2002) theorize that parenting dimensions are universal and thus are better indicators of parenting behaviors especially in ethnic cultural groups where the culture-specific meaning of the behavior may differ. It is important to note, however, that others (e.g., Stewart & Bond, 2002) assert that parenting styles are optimally useful in research and practice because they accurately describe naturally occurring clusters of parenting behaviors. Examining parenting dimensions as discrete entities has the potential of creating sets of parenting characteristics that are not reflective of what is real (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In addition, parenting styles are thought to be cohesive and fairly consistent across time and situations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1993).

**STUDY PURPOSE**

This paper presents findings on an examination of parenting behaviors that are conceptualized across parenting dimensions and parenting styles using videotaped observations. The observational scale developed to measure dimensions and styles is presented. The paper investigates the applicability of existing parenting categories (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, neglectful) to first-generation Latino/a mothers and fathers of young children. New potential categories of parenting styles are presented (see Table 1). The categorization of Latino parents into these eight style categories is presented and differences across parent gender and child gender are examined. The investigation occurs in the context of direct parent–child observations.

**METHODS**

**Participants**

Spanish speaking Latino families with a child between 4 and 9 years of age were included in the study. At least one parent was a first-generation immigrant. A total of 50 families were recruited from a rural western area. One family did not complete the study resulting in 46 fathers and 49 mothers participating ($M_{age} = 33.9, SD = 5.5$). The majority of families were two-parent (88%), of Mexican origin (81%; 17% reported other Latino origins; 2% did not report origin), and reported a yearly income <$35,000 (83.2%; 15.8% below $15,000, 46.3% $15,000–$25,000, 7.4% above $35,000, 9.5% did not report income). Twenty male (40%) and 30 female (60%) children participated and the average age was 6.64 years ($SD = 1.44$). There were one to seven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1</strong> Parenting Styles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warmth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglectful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglectful II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children in the home \(M = 3.1, SD = 1.3\). Sample demographic characteristics are presented in Table 2.

Level of acculturation was assessed using Cuéllar, Arnold, and Maldonado’s (1995) Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II. The majority of participants were classified as traditional/separate \((78.9\%, n = 75)\), with 17.9\% \((n = 17)\) identified as bicultural, and 1.1\% \((n = 1)\) each classified as assimilated and marginalized (data was missing for one participant). These orientations can be easily understood in a 2 × 2 grid where Mexican orientation and Anglo orientation are juxtaposed in high and low categories. Traditional participants are high in Mexican orientation and low in Anglo orientation. The inverse is true for those who are assimilated. Bicultural individuals score highly in both Mexican and Anglo orientation and marginalized persons score low on both dimensions.

The sample was recruited through local churches, announcements at schools and community parent support groups, flyers placed throughout the community, personal face-to-face recruitment by research assistants, and word of mouth by participants. Media outreach was also utilized, including a radio advertisement on a local station during Spanish-language programming and a web posting. Research on the present sample showed that word-of-mouth was a critical recruitment strategy to obtain a prevention sample (Domenech Rodríguez, Rodríguez, & Davis, 2006).

### Procedures

Participants in the current study were enrolled in a larger study aimed at culturally adapting a parenting intervention for Spanish speaking families. Potential participants made initial contact with the researcher via telephone. Study inclusion criteria included participants that were Spanish speaking and had a child between the ages of 4 and 9. Participants that met inclusion criteria were scheduled for appointments at

**Table 2**

Demographic Information on Child and Parent Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of child participants</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Children:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family constellation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological parents (intact family)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step parent and biological parent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent: mother only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent: father only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school education or less</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed education in country of origin</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed education in USA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the convenience of the family. If families had more than one child in the age range, they were asked to identify the child that they struggled with most. Data collection took place in one visit lasting about 2½ hours at a university psychology services clinic. Childcare and transportation were provided for families if needed.

Upon arrival, participants were welcomed and provided a brief introduction to the facility. Parents completed informed consents and were allowed time to ask questions. Special emphasis was made to ensure participants that all information provided by participants would be kept confidential including their legal status. Once informed consent was obtained, parents completed the study questionnaires. Two research assistants were present to assist the family and answer any questions.

Observational data were collected in a separate room where there were a television and video recorder present as well as three video cameras placed throughout the room. Four interaction tasks were completed and all were videotaped. First, both parents (one parent in a single parent family) participated in a 5-minute cooperation task with their child. After the cooperative task, one parent (determined randomly) was asked to return to the research laboratory to finish completing study questionnaires. The remaining parent and the child participated in two 5-minute problem-solving tasks, one child-selected and one parent-selected. Problem-solving tasks were selected based on a list of common events that lead to parent–child conflict (e.g., child interrupts parents when they want time alone); once the most problematic event was selected, as self-reported by parent or child, the dyad was asked to discuss the problem and attempt to find a solution. Finally, the parent–child dyad engaged in an 8-minute long skills-building task. This task included a packet of academic English-language worksheets that included reading, math, and grammar that was one grade level above the child’s grade. Thus, the child was challenged and required the assistance of the parent. At the conclusion of the skills-building task a short break was taken with snacks and refreshments provided. Following the break, the same procedures were completed with the other parent present if a two-parent family. When the second segment of the study was completed, a debriefing with parents took place. Two parent families were paid $50 and single parents were paid $25 for participation. In all cases, a small gift was given to the participating child.

Materials

Paper and pencil measures included a demographic information sheet and the acculturation measure.

Parenting Style Observation Rating Scale (P-SOS)

The Parenting Style Observation Rating Scale (P-SOS) is a standardized coding scheme used to quantify parent behaviors demonstrated in parent–child interactions. The coding scheme was developed specifically for use in the present study based on conceptualizations of authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles (Lamborn et al., 1991) as well as the parenting dimensions of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Scale Development

Development of the P-SOS coding scheme took place in three phases. First, the conceptual and empirical literature on parenting styles and the three parenting dimensions was reviewed. As part of this process, existing measures used to assess the
constructs of interest were identified including measures such as The Authoritative Parenting index (Jackson, Henricksen, & Vangie, 1998), and the HOME inventory (Bradley & Caldwell, 1984) among others (e.g., Hasan & Power, 2002; Park & Bauer, 2002; Stewart & Bond, 2002). The initial item pool contained items taken or adapted from existing measures along with some created by the research team. The pilot measure contained 20 items assessing parental warmth, 18 items assessing demandingness, and 20 items assessing autonomy granting.

The second phase of development included getting feedback on the pilot measure from expert raters in the field of parenting. To identify experts, an e-mail was sent to two American Psychological Association (APA) listservs—Division 45 (Ethnic Minorities) and a broad early career network for APA members—asking for participants. This resulted in seven participants. Known experts from the Oregon Social Learning Center were contacted and asked to participate resulting in two more expert raters. Finally we asked local experts, including doctoral students and faculty with specialization in parenting research and/or clinical practice. This last effort resulted in three expert participants. Overall, 12 experts responded with interest and 10 provided feedback. The expert rater sample reported 10.89 mean number of years involved in parenting research (range 3–30). Expert raters were sent the pilot coding form with instruction to rate each item by how well (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) they judged the item to tap the construct being assessed (warmth, demandingness, autonomy granting). In addition, the expert raters were asked to judge overall how well each construct was assessed (very poorly to very well) and were asked for any additional comments or suggestions. Items rated as “agree” or “strongly agree” by 80% or more of the expert raters were retained.

Expert raters had the highest degree of agreement on item suitability for the warmth scale. When the 80% agreement rule was applied, 18 of the 20 items were selected for inclusion into the final observational scale. Because of high items overlap, one item “Parent is responsive to child’s feelings or needs” was dropped resulting in 17 items assessing warmth. For the autonomy granting scale 12 items were eliminated based on low agreement (<80%) from the expert raters leaving eight items on the final scale. Demandingness proved to be the most problematic scale. Only two items were selected by at least 80% of the raters as measuring the construct: “Parent is strict,” and “Parent has high expectations of child’s behavior.” A review of suggestions from the expert raters indicated that the scale seemed to be tapping two separate dimensions of demandingness, “high expectations/supportive” and “high expectations/nonsupportive or coercive.” As a result, almost all items were retained and divided into two scales labeled supportive demandingness (9 items) and nonsupportive demandingness (8 items). One item was eliminated because some reviewers noted that it was more in line with the construct of warmth. In line with the conceptualizations of authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful parenting in the literature, the “high expectations/supportive scale” was used as a measure of demandingness. The items of the P-SOS are presented in Table 3.

The third phase of instrument development included training coders to use the measure and assessing the ability of separate coders to reliably rate each item/dimension. Coders were trained starting with a review of the conceptualized parenting constructs in the measure through discussion and exercise during several training sessions. Next, the coders viewed and coded videotapes (not used in the study) until an acceptable level of reliability (.70 or above) was reached between the two coders.
Two coders coded all behavioral observation tapes. The coders were a Latina graduate student and a Latino undergraduate research assistant, both in psychology. Following the coding of 15% of study tapes, the intraclass correlations between coders

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ranged from .74 to .87. In order to safeguard against coder drift reliability was assessed at random. Videotapes of the two problem-solving tasks and the skill-building task were coded on each dimension. The initial cooperative task included both parents resulting in a different parenting context. To assess each parent–child dyad separately, the cooperative task was not used in scoring parenting behaviors. For each taped interaction, coders rated the parent’s behavior on a scale of 1 (very untrue) to 5 (very true) with a midpoint of 3 (unclear) for each item of the P-SOS. A mean item score was calculated for each parent (if both participated) on each dimension (warmth, autonomy granting, demandingness-supportive) across tasks. For the purposes of categorizing parenting into categories (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian), a mean score of 3.01 was considered to be “high” with scores of 3.0 and below consider “low.”

RESULTS

Parenting Dimensions

Parenting dimensions among Spanish speaking Latino parents were examined by calculating descriptive statistics of individual parenting dimensions (i.e. warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting). Latino parents scored high on warmth (M = 3.83, SD = .32, range 2.69–4.53), high on demandingness (M = 3.66, SD = .43, range 2.22–4.63), and medium to low on the autonomy granting dimension (M = 2.65, SD = .92, range 1.0–4.21). Thus, parenting dimensions were observable in parent–child interactions of Spanish speaking Latino parents. The three scales showed low to moderate correlations with autonomy granting and demandingness having a negligible relationship (r = .028), while demandingness and autonomy granting both had a moderate relationship with warmth (r = .30 and .31, respectively, p < .01). Internal consistency reliability data was calculated across all four tasks (including the family fun task) and was adequate to good. Cronbach’s $\alpha$s for the warmth, autonomy granting, and demandingness scales were .79, .91, and .70, respectively. Although not used in analyses for the present manuscript, the nonsupportive demandingness scale also showed good reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and our sample showed relatively low levels of nonsupportive demandingness (M = 2.2, SD = .53, range 1.00–3.63).

Parenting Styles

Consistent with the theoretical model of Baumrind (1991) and the work carried out by Steinberg, Dornbush et al. (1992) and Steinberg, Lamborn et al. (1992), authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles were created. The use of high and low scores across these dimensions resulted in eight possible parenting categories, the ones set forth in the literature and those parents who scored high on warmth, high on demandingness, and low on autonomy granting which was labeled “protective” and parents who scored high on warmth, low on demandingness, and low on autonomy granting which was labeled “affiliative.” There were three categories with no parents in them: authoritarian, cold, and neglectful II (see Table 1).

The majority (61%) of parents were categorized as protective, followed by 31% classified as authoritative (see Table 4). The four traditional parenting categories only accounted for approximately one-third of the Latino families, suggesting that traditional parenting categories do not capture Latinos’ parenting styles well. Notably, however, full application of the original theoretical model (i.e., including autonomy granting) captured the parenting behaviors observed.
Differences in Parenting Dimensions by Parent and Child Gender

The mean scores on the parenting dimensions of warmth, autonomy granting, and demandingness were calculated and are presented in Table 5. Parents were generally high on warmth and demandingness, and lower on autonomy granting. When the means for each dimension were compared for mothers and fathers, the results indicate that parents display relatively similar levels on each dimension (no statistically significant difference at \( p < .05 \)). Comparing mean scores for male and female children indicated that parents were lower on autonomy granting for girls as compared with boys (\( t = 3.36, df = 93, p = .001 \)) and higher on demandingness with their daughters as compared with their sons (\( t = -2.57, df = 93, p = .012 \)). The differences in parenting based on child gender raises the question, is there an interaction effect between the parent’s gender and the child’s gender in parenting? Three 2\( \times \)2 ANOVAs were calculated with parent gender and child gender as the independent factors and the three parenting dimensions as the dependent variables. None of the parent \( \times \) child gender interactions were statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Parenting styles research has been marked by two major disconnects: (1) the conceptual importance of three parenting dimensions (i.e., warmth, demandingness, autonomy granting) vis-à-vis the empirical exclusion of autonomy granting, and (2) the predominant use of self-report scales to measure the dimensions in light of Baumrind’s (1966) explicit statement regarding the importance of observational research. Some parenting researchers (e.g., DeGarmo & Forgatch, 2005) have relied heavily on observational methods and decades of research have supported the importance of including observational measures to best understand parent–child interactions and outcomes. Indeed, behavioral observation methods have been used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Warmth</th>
<th>Demandingness</th>
<th>Autonomy granting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglectful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Means of Parenting Dimensions for Total Samples, by Parent Gender, and by Child Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warmth</th>
<th>Autonomy Granting</th>
<th>Demandingness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom (n = 49)</td>
<td>Dad (n = 46)</td>
<td>Boy (n = 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.85 (.31)</td>
<td>3.82 (.33)</td>
<td>3.79 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.56 (.87)</td>
<td>2.59 (.99)</td>
<td>2.95 (.89)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.73 (.40)</td>
<td>3.60 (.45)</td>
<td>3.53 (.44)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistically significant at \( p < .05 \).
successfully in multicultural (e.g., Domenech Rodríguez et al., 2006) and cross-cultural (e.g., Tam & Lam, 2003) samples. In the context of understanding parenting styles and maximizing their utility for research and intervention purposes, it is critical to consider their applicability across ethnic/cultural groups (e.g., Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). The disparate findings in the literature regarding Latinos' parenting styles called into question the applicability of the parenting styles rubric to Latino samples. Further, questions could also be raised about the applicability of mainstream parenting interventions to this group since they are based on these concepts. The present study suggests that the omission of autonomy granting as an observed and measured dimension may offer some explanation for the inconsistent findings.

A major contribution of the present study is the development of the Parenting Style Observation Rating Scale. The P-SOS scale is a compilation of published self-report scales with added items and will be helpful to parenting styles researchers interested in using an observational method to examine parenting styles. An examination of the scale items shows a fair amount of variability regarding how these are measured and, as such, may also explain the differences in findings across studies. The P-SOS is a relatively comprehensive scale that shows promise of utility through its ease of application and promising preliminary psychometric characteristics. Along with the potential to further parenting style research, the scale can also be used by clinicians seeking to intervene with Latino families. From an intervention perspective, the P-SOS can assist clinicians to gain a firmer grasp on the key characteristics on which families may differ. Further, the measure can provide specific data on parenting behaviors that can be targeted and tracked throughout an intervention.

The present study has limitations in scope and generalizability. Further research is needed to better understand the concurrent and predictive validity of P-SOS for Latinos and its applicability to other ethnic/cultural groups. The present sample is relatively small, entirely Latino, rural, predominantly Mexican-origin (88%), and low income. Further research with varied Latino samples, such as nonimmigrants, and Latinos with varied levels of acculturation, educational attainment, and economic status would shed light on the generalizability of these findings to other Latinos. Further work with other Latino samples is particularly relevant given that research shows a relationship between Latino parents’ practices and children’s outcomes in the context of culturally relevant experiences (e.g., in identity development; Schwartz, Mason, Pantin, & Szapocznik, 2008), and diverse experiences across immigrant and nonimmigrant samples (e.g., Parra-Cardona, Córdova, Holtrop, Villarruel, & Wieling, 2008).

Another area for extending the present research is related to developmental context. The children in this sample are between 4 and 9 years of age, which may be strongly related to the relatively low levels of autonomy granting in the sample; this is not necessarily due to developmentally inappropriate tasks, but with parental expectations of what constitute appropriate contributions from children in parent–child interactions at a particular age. However, recent survey research by Ingoldsby, Schvaneveldt, Supple, and Bush (2003) with two international samples of Latino adolescents shows low level of autonomy granting in their sample as well. Of particular interest is their finding that autonomy granting, among other parenting variables, predicted a lower achievement orientation. In a U.S.-based qualitative study, Guílamo-Ramos et al. (2007) with Latino immigrant mothers and their adolescents, the authors reported that mothers stated the importance of continued or even increasing
control and monitoring during adolescence. Thus, the concept of autonomy and the parental practices associated with autonomy granting could benefit from further study within Latino samples.

The fact that the scale is built on a foundation of well established measures suggests that there is a good likelihood that the P-SOS is applicable for use with White Americans, at a minimum, and possibly a broader socioeconomic group than the low income group represented in the current sample. However, there is ample documentation for proceeding with care in using scales developed for one cultural group with another (e.g., Steele, Nesbitt-Daly, Daniel, & Forehand, 2005). Finally, a critical examination of the subscales’ reliabilities suggests that the demandingness scale could be improved to achieve better reliability, with more items that more broadly measure the construct. The creation of the subscale presented challenges from its inception stemming from the broad conceptualization of demandingness in the literature as potentially positive or negative and representing a wide range of behaviors.

A particular strength of the present findings is their potential for broadly informing research and practice. Domenech-Rodríguez and Wieling (2004) advocate for “decentering” interventions; in order words they explicitly encouraged using intervention research with ethnic minority samples to inform research and interventions with ethnic majority samples. That the present research was carried out with a Latino sample is a function of a need created by research findings and the research agenda of the authors. Prior research with a culturally diverse sample (Lamborn et al., 1991) suggests that there is empirical support for examining parenting using three dimensions. This paper further supports the incorporation of autonomy granting to measurement of parenting styles for other ethnic groups.

Parental differences in autonomy granting and demandingness across male and female children have implications for both research and practice. In the research domain, it may be relevant to pursue further investigation of these parent expectations in both a developmental and a cultural context. For example, it may be that Latino parents expect their girls to mature earlier than boys, so they may have more expectations for young girls than for boys of the same age. It is very possible that as culturally informed gender roles are activated across the lifespan, parents shift their demandingness for boys and girls (e.g., by expecting a boy to obtain a job outside of the home at an early age). Similarly, higher autonomy granting in boys may be tied to expectations that boys will be heads of household and, as such, must practice a skill set that involves active participation in household rules and activities (e.g., Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007). The importance of gender in differential parenting behaviors is strongly documented across developmental stages (e.g., Joussemot et al., 2008; McKee et al., 2007). The inclusion of fathers in the present study was a strength, and allowed for the examination of parental style differences across fathers and mothers. The similarity in degree of warmth, demandingness, and autonomy granting across fathers and mothers in their interactions with their child is of great interest. It suggests that interventions targeted at parents can be equally applicable for fathers and mothers and may need to directly address parents’ differential expectations for male and female children.

Existing research has documented that parenting is a central task in the lives of Latino parents (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). Supporting Latino parents in having success as they navigate parenting—an already tremendous task—in a context of adversity (see Parra-Cardona et al., 2008) is of critical importance to service
providers. Family therapists also have a tremendous task in supporting Latino families given the dearth of information available to support the tailoring of family interventions for cultural context. There is a need for further publication of clinical and research findings with Latino families. In addition to the replication (e.g., other ethnic groups) and extension (e.g., prediction to child outcomes) of these findings, it would be of interest to conduct more complex examinations of parenting styles and how they relate to broader cultural socialization, including cultural values. Future research may also explore the distinction between supportive and nonsupportive demandingness. The present findings suggest that these may be ends of one “demandingness” continuum; however, they could also be conceptualized separately into “appropriate expectations” and “harsh parenting” constructs. Finally, that parental expressions of warmth were equal across genders, but differed for boys and girls on demandingness and autonomy granting, has implications for both future basic research and intervention development.

REFERENCES


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