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2016

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jonathan_santo/51/

Socio-Emotional Development in Latin America: Family and Peer relations

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The goal of this special issue is to build a context-specific foundation of knowledge which accurately represents the Latin American experiences and perspective of socio-emotional development. Ultimately, we hope that the research contained in this issue will inform discussions of issues relating to socio-emotional development among children and adolescents, including awareness-raising and policy-building efforts, as well as to stimulate further research among Latin American populations. To this end, this final special issue aims to explore research on socio-emotional development in relation to family and peer relations from underrepresented contexts. In doing so, we have invited articles examining a range of topics from the lives of children of incarcerated women in Brazil, to the development of adolescents of migrant parents in rural Mexico, and the study of peer rejection among Colombian children. The papers included in this special issue explore the role of family and peer relations from various parts of Latin America, insight into which is not widely disseminated to academic audiences in the United States and elsewhere.

Keywords: Socio-emotional development, children/childhood, adolescents/adolescence, family relations, peer relations

The current issue of the Journal of Latino/Latin-American Studies represents the third and final installment on socio-emotional development in Latin-America. The first (published in April 2014), focused on promoting positive socio-emotional development. The second (published in September 2015), explored the development of children and adolescents in adverse circumstances. This issue aims to bring together these themes within the context of socio-emotional development with an examination of the role of family and peer relations.

It's been our contention in these special issues to highlight that the vast majority of current theory and knowledge related to socio-emotional development is derived from research conducted in the North America and Europe. In recent years, developmental scholars have increasingly focused on understanding socio-emotional development of children and adolescents in other parts of the world. For example, in 2002, the Study Group on

Adolescence in the 21st Century (sponsored by the Society for Research on Adolescence) published an edited volume on The world's youth: Adolescence in eight regions of the globe (Brown, Larson, & Saraswathi, 2002).

More recently, there has been considerable concern that a disproportionate amount of developmental theory, data, and publications come from the minority world (North America and Europe), resulting in a bias that leaves the rest of the world's population (i.e., the majority world) understudied and, more problematically, underrepresented (Arnett, 2008). This bias remains a threat to the ecological validity of field of psychology in general and, more specifically, the study of socio-emotional development, which may not be universally generalizable. To address this dire concern, we've solicited manuscripts that move beyond applying concepts from theories derived in North America and Europe to evaluating them critically and proposing alternatives or expansions. This work may

include critical evaluations of existing models in a novel context, use of mixed method and qualitative studies to generate new theories of adolescent development, or rigorous cross-cultural tests of widely used developmental models. Therefore, another aim of this special issue is to compile recent studies conducted in Latin America which not only describe the most current state of family and peer relations influences in the context, but which also critically analyze the conclusions reached by the researchers based on the characteristics of different contexts.

Family relations. Families are considered one of the most relevant contexts in regard to the socio-emotional development of children and adolescents. Further, while many studies conducted in the North America and Europe take into account the ethnicity of its participants when examining how families influence socio-emotional development, considerably less attention is given to the thriving literature produced about such processes within Latin American settings. The lack of understanding of how family relations influence child development in Latin America hampers the ability to interpret appropriately the data obtained about Latino families.

Peer relations. In addition to the considerable influence of family factors, interactions with peers also have a profound effect on children's socio-emotional development. Specifically, these relationships provide a unique context for the fostering of fundamental cognitive, social, and emotional competencies of children (Sullivan, 1953; Schneider, 2000). Therefore, to provide a comprehensive analysis of interpersonal influences, this issue includes work by researchers in Latin America examining the positive or negative effects that peer interactions

have on the socio-emotional development of children and adolescents.

The ultimate goal of these special issues of the Journal of Latino/Latin American Studies is to build on the foundation of descriptive work by presenting a new generation of studies that provide a Latin American perspective on socio-emotional development. Ultimately, we hope that the research contained in this issue will inform discussions of topics relating to socio-emotional development among children and adolescents, including awareness-raising and policy-building efforts, as well as to stimulate further research among Latin American populations.

Children of Incarcerated Women in Brazil: Vulnerability and Traumatic Experiences in Their Lives

The number of incarcerated women in Brazil has shown an upsurge over recent years, with an approximate increase of 7,000 women between 2008 (estimated at 27,000) and 2011 (34,058; Ministry of Justice, 2011) and the vast majority are young adults with children (SAP, 2009). Yet, little is known about the experiences of these children. In general, children whose parents have been arrested face challenges such as social stigma, feelings of abandonment, eating and sleeping disturbances, anxiety, and other adjustment difficulties including attention deficits, aggressive behavior (Johnston, 1995), and delinquency (Graham, Harris, & Carpenter, 2010). However, analyses specific to children of incarcerated mothers in Brazil are needed, given the recently increasing population of incarcerated women in Brazil.

To address this, Ormeno, Fogo, Santini, and Williams (this issue) conducted interviews with 150 incarcerated women in São Paulo, Brazil, the most populous state and situated within the Southeast region which has the highest number of incarcerated or arrested females (Fonseca &

Ramos, 2008). The majority (57.3%) of their children were under 12 years old and most were cared for by their mothers' relatives, although a substantial minority (32.5%) were cared for by their fathers or their fathers' relatives. Over 15% had witnessed their mother's arrest. The women reported that their children expressed sadness (24.2%) and intense crying (12.79%) when they learned of their mother's arrest, but 27.2% could not identify their children's feelings.

The children of these incarcerated children also faced other situations which may compound the challenges they face. For example, many (38.1%) of the children had previously witnessed domestic violence in which their mother was the victim of their father's physical or psychological abuse and some had a father who was also incarcerated (19.86%).

Together, results indicate that Brazilian children whose mothers are incarcerated experience distress as a result of the arrest and may also be coping with other traumatic experiences such as the incarceration of their fathers and exposure to domestic violence. These experiences pose significant risk factors for negative adjustment outcomes. It is suggested that the disruption of attachment bonds created by these situations may be a highly relevant contributing factor to poor future adjustment (Bowlby, 1973). Given the prevalence of incarcerated parents, Ormeno et al. (this issue) call for greater attention from public policy in addressing the challenges faced by these children to mitigate the potential for future maladaptive behavior.

Promoting Socio-emotional Development in Adolescent with Migrant Parents of a Rural Community in Southern Mexico

Migration is becoming increasingly prevalent in Mexico (Institute for the Development of Mayan Culture, 2012). Due to limited opportunities in

their location of origin, many adults find it necessary to relocate either permanently or temporarily in order to acquire sufficient income to satisfy basic needs and to obtain better living conditions, educational opportunities, and other resources, such as health care (Fondo de las Naciones Unidas para la Infancia [UNICEF], 2010). This often occurs within the family context, such that one or both parents opt to migrate to gain the resources necessary to provide for their family. Migration of parents changes not only their own conditions, but also those of family members, including children, who remain in the location of origin, such as disruptions or changes in family dynamics (Ghiso Cotos, Tabares Ochoa, Ramírez Robledo, & Morales Mesa, 2009). As supported by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), changes in the context of the family are likely to have significant influence of individuals' development and wellbeing. Yet, little research has examined the effect of parental migration on children's psychosocial adjustment.

The effects of parental migration may be particularly influential during adolescence and have significant lasting impact given that the primary tasks of adolescent, such as identity and social development, may set the stage for important outcomes in adulthood (UNICEF, 2010). Therefore, Briceno-Gamboa, Chan-Mex, Castillo-Leon, and Fuentes-Gomez (this issue) explored the socio-emotional impact of parental migration on adolescents in rural Yucatan, Mexico, using participant observation, interviews, and self-report information. Genuine accounts of adolescents' real day-to-day experiences are shared via excerpts from the interviews, allowing a more nuanced understanding of how adolescents who have experienced parental migration adjust to their new context.

The adolescents reported being well-integrated in their communities, participating in a

range of activities and social relationships with both friends and other family members. However, the adolescents did report difficulties with emotion regulation, although there was evidence of using effective coping mechanisms such as obtaining social support. Adolescents whose fathers had migrated often reported positive relationships with their mothers. Characterized by support and affection. Despite their father's physical absence, many were able to form and sustain relationships via technological methods, such as phone calls and video communication (e.g. Skype). Many also maintained positive attitudes about migration, viewing their parents' choice to migrate as a beneficial to the family and also viewing migration as a potential option for themselves later in life, as a means for obtaining better resources.

The results indicate that many adolescents continue to report positive adjustment despite parental migration and have learned to accept their parents' migration as a natural and beneficial life circumstance. Although some difficulties were reported in emotional adjustment, it is not clear whether these represent significant deviations from typical adolescent development. Due to the increasing prevalence of migration and the influence of socio-emotional development during adolescence on later wellbeing, further examination of adolescents' adjustment to parental migration will be needed in order to support positive outcomes.

Mother and Father Figures in Biological and Stepfamilies: Youths' Perceptions of Parent-Child Relationship Quality and Parental Involvement

Relationship quality within the family context can have profound effects on children's development, including influences on peer relationships and general social and psychological adjustment (e.g., Ainsworth, 1991; Khaleque & Rohner, 2004; Sroufe, Egeland,

Carlson, & Collins, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Given that familism, or the importance of close and quality relations among family members, is central in many Latin American cultures, understanding familial relationships in such cultures is likely to yield significant insights into children's development and functioning throughout their youths and into adulthood. Recently, socio-demographic changes have led to increasing diversity of family structures (e.g., Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000; Nicholson, Fergusson, & Horwood, 1999), including extended families, single-parent families, and step-families in addition to more traditional nuclear families, yet surprisingly little research has investigated differences in the quality of relationships in various family configurations, and even less has examined this in non-Western populations.

Previous research addressing family dynamics across diverse family structures has demonstrated that although stepfamilies have often been characterized as higher in conflict and lower in warmth (Golish, 2003; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1999), a number of studies have identified positive qualities within stepfamilies, including acceptance and warmth (Agudelo Bedoya, 2005) and greater involvement of biological parents (Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1998). Some researchers have proposed that negative developmental outcomes observed in offspring of stepfamilies, including behavior problems, poorer adjustment across social, psychological, and academic domains, and less secure attachment relationships (Lopez, Melendez, & Rice, 2000; Love & Murdock, 2004), may result from the stress and trauma of the processes of separation, divorce, and remarriage (e.g., Kobak & Madsen, 2008), rather than stepfamily structure per se. This suggests that the quality of relationships may be a more important factor to consider in regards to healthy development than the type of family structure.

However, systematic analyses of how relationships function within stepfamilies as opposed to biological families is scarce, particularly in non-Western populations.

To address these voids in the literature, Ripoll-Nunez and Carrillo (this issue) explored adolescents' and young adults' perceptions of relationship quality and parental involvement in three types of family structures: biological families, in which both parents are biologically related to offspring; stepfamilies in which the mother is biologically related, but the father is a stepparent; and stepfamilies in which the father is biologically related, but the mother is a stepparent. For greater depth of understanding, the researchers analyzed perceptions of several discrete dimensions of relationship quality (i.e., communication, trust, alienation) and parental involvement (e.g., discipline and teacher responsibility, support, praise and affection) separately for maternal and paternal figures. Further, relationship quality and parental involvement were also compared across offspring's ages (adolescent or young adult) and sex, as well as type of family structure.

Analyses revealed wide variation in these dimensions across types of family structure, which also interacted with offspring's ages and gender. However, in general, high levels of communication and trust and low levels of alienation were observed for all family structure types, although ratings were often more positive in biological families, although these effects differed across dimensions and offspring's ages and gender. An interesting effect emerged such that perceptions of paternal communication and involvement were higher in stepfamilies with a biological father and stepmother. Relations with and involvement of stepmothers appeared to be the least positive for offspring of all ages.

As a whole, these results reinforce the complexity of attempting to understand

relationship differences as a function of family structure, which may differ as a function of maternal versus paternal figures and offspring's age and sex. This suggests the need to take a very fine-grained approach to the analysis of the impacts of family structure on adjustment and development as well. Such investigations, in addition to the current study, may shed light on which aspects of stepfamilies promote positive versus negative outcomes in offspring. Because positive relationships with parents serve a protective function, facilitating positive adjustment throughout development (Bumpus & Boyce Rodgers, 2009; Gomez Cobos, 2008; Rohner, & Khaleque, 2011), pinpointing the precise nature of negative perceptions of relationships with stepparents may illuminate better targets for improving relations within stepfamilies, perhaps thereby improving outcomes for offspring in these complex family structures.

Peer Rejection as a Social Regulation Mechanism of Group Norms: The Case of Aggression Across Sex

Social norms serve important functions for both individuals and groups. At the individual level, they provide a guideline about context-appropriate behavior (Chang, 2004; Miller & Prentice, 1994). In particular, exposure to different group norms has been shown to influence the prevalence of individual behaviors such as aggression; when children perceive that aggressive behaviors are normative, there tends to be an increase in their aggressive behavior (e.g., Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). At the group level, social norms serve to support the functioning of a cohesive group. For this function to operate, it is necessary for groups to develop a social regulation mechanism or punishment for violating social norms (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Consistent with evidence that children who display behaviors which violate social norms, particularly aggression, are less accepted by the

peer group (e.g., Wright, Giammarino, & Parad, 1986), the authors assert that peer rejection may serve as the social regulation mechanism within early adolescent peer groups, specifically as a mechanism for regulating aggressive behavior. Thus, they improve upon the limitations of previous evidence by assessing this proposition for both direct and indirect forms of aggression and considering the influence of gender norms.

In line with Maccoby's (1998) "two cultures" model of gender, different norms of aggression have been identified for boys versus girls, such that direct aggression tends to be more normative for the former, whereas indirect aggression tends to be more normative for the latter (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Such evidence supports the authors' conjecture that the social regulation mechanism of peer rejection may function differently for boys and girls, such that the form of aggression that is non-normative for each gender is likely to result in the greatest punishment by rejection. In a novel extension of gender norm effects, the authors also examine whether the presence or absence of the other sex peer group influences these effects by examining differences in the social regulation of each form of aggression among girls in all-girls schools compared to mixed gender schools. In accordance with between-group contrast theory (Harris, 1995), the authors hypothesized that peer rejection would be less prevalent for girls who use the form of aggression that is typically non-normative for their gender, direct aggression, in all-girls schools because no group of boys is present to reinforce the perception of gender norms of aggression.

Evaluation of these hypotheses was conducted using a sample of early adolescents (4th-6th grades) compiled from mixed-sex and all-girls schools in Colombia who completed peer nomination measures of both direct and indirect aggression as well as sociometric ratings to

identify peer rejection. Analyses revealed the expected gender norms of aggression, such that indirect aggression was more normative for girls, whereas direct aggression was more normative for boys. Support was also found for differential social regulation of each form of aggression based on gender of the peer group: direct aggression was more strongly associated with peer rejection for girls and indirect aggression was more strongly associated with peer rejection for boys. Interestingly, the between-group contrast effect was not supported. That is, there was no evidence that these associations differed between mixed-sex and same-sex (all girls) schools.

Together these results provide further evidence for the influence of social norms of aggression on both individual behavior and peer group dynamics, particularly the effect of gender norms. Importantly, this study also supports peer rejection as a social regulation mechanism, demonstrating that early adolescent peer groups are active in "policing" the behavior of their own members. In this regard, peer rejection may be seen as having significant utility in the peer group context, allowing for determent of behaviors like aggression that may harm the group as a whole. In this way, Velasquez et al. (this issue) provide a functional account of peer rejection in early adolescence.

Adaptación y Sistematización de una Escala de Apego Para Niños Pequeños

The study presented by Rodríguez and Oiberman (this issue) derives from attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1967) and analyzes the patterns of attachment in a Latin American context. Their objective was to validate an attachment scale for Argentinian children. The Strange Situation Procedure was used and adapted for the Argentinian population. Their sample included 102 Argentinian mother-child dyads. One of the main results was that

researchers were able to design a new protocol called PASE (Procedimiento Argentino de la Situación Extraña) that entailed the specificities of the attachment relationship in the Argentinian context. This study is unique in that it attempted to answer a number of questions concerning attachment theory and patterns while analyzing and categorizing the specificities of this bonds in the Latin American context.

Correlates of Early Adolescent Friend Choice Order in a Colombian Sample: Interactions between Friend, Individual, and Contextual Prosocial Behavior and Aggression

Similarity models of friendship selection and attraction have posited that similarities between the characteristics of children and their peers are driving factors in the choice of friends (Byrne, 1971). Further, as derived from interdependence theory, social norms may also play a role in friendship choice by influencing expectations and salient characteristics for friendship formation and maintenance (Kelley, 1979). In integration of these theories, Santo, Saldarriaga, Velasquez, Meyer, & Bukowski (this issue) aimed to explore how characteristics of the individual, friend, and context interact to predict friend selection, specifically, the hierarchical ranking of choice of friends. To demonstrate these effects, this study focused on two characteristics previously found to be relevant in friend selection, prosocial behavior and aggression (Bukowski, Brendgen, and Vitaro, 2007), and two contextual characteristics which influence social norms and psychological processes, individualism and collectivism (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995).

The relationships among individual prosocial and aggressive behavior, friends' prosocial and aggressive behavior, contextual orientations of individualism and collectivism, and friendship choice rankings were examined in a sample of early adolescents from Bogota, Colombia.

Results provided support for similarity models of friendship selection for both prosocial and aggressive behaviors, such that those high on each characteristic reported higher friend choice rankings for friends also high on the same characteristic. Support for interdependence theory was also demonstrated; specifically, collectivism was found to impact the salience of prosocial behavior in friend selection, whereas individualism was found to impact the salience of aggressive behavior in friend selection. Together, these results indicate that friend selection and attraction are influenced by characteristics of an individual as well as the potential friend, and that social values also shape the salience of those characteristics.

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