
Conceptualizing Cultural Influences on Socialization: Comparing Parent–Adolescent Relationships in the United States and Mexico

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Parent-Adolescent Relations and Culture

A caution commonly given in basic social science classes is to refrain from using the word “always” to describe, draw conclusions about, and explain patterns of human behavior. Deeply rooted in the social science enterprise is the idea that any observations or conclusions about the social world should be couched in the language of *degrees of probability* as opposed to that of causality, absolutes, or inevitability. This much revered proscription against universality might be challenged, however, particularly when addressing the issue of this paper: “Does the culture or ethnicity of a social community influence the structure, meaning, and processes within families and, more specifically, within parent–youth relationships?”

As an answer to this question, we propose that parent–adolescent relationships, the focus of this chapter, must *always* be examined from a culturally or ethnically informed perspective. Unfortunately, this is a viewpoint that much of the social science industry, including those concerned specifically with parent–youth relationships, routinely violates (Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2004, 2005a; Rogoff, 2003). Such errors become particularly

severe when research is first conducted on a single cultural/ethnic group, followed by culturally myopic interpretations that lead to overgeneralization across cultures about what was observed (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Hill & Tyson, 2008; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b).

This chapter, a review and conceptual analysis, challenges these tendencies toward excessive inferences across cultures by focusing on two closely related objectives concerned with parent–adolescent relationships in the United States and Mexico. Specifically, the first objective is to consider how cultural variation influences differences and similarities in the meaning of adolescent social competence in the United States and Mexico. In the broadest sense, social competence refers to a set of skills, traits, and behaviors that are reflective of adaptive individual and interpersonal functioning within a particular cultural context and perhaps, in some cases, across cultural contexts (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009). Social competence can be viewed as a form of social capital or socially adaptive benefits that the young gain from their relationships or connections with others (e.g., parents) during the process of socialization (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). The second objective of this chapter then considers how cultural variation across these two societies results in differences and similarities in the socialization strategies that parents use (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2008; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005a) to encourage or inhibit adolescent social competence. Such

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a conceptual analysis seeks to provide a theoretical basis for cross-cultural understanding about how adolescent social competence is either fostered or impaired by parents in ways consistent with their cultural context.

Before addressing our specific topic, however, we first consider how ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994, 2005) provides insight into how the general cultural values of a society have influence on such microlevels of the social environment as the parent–adolescent relationship. Subsequent sections then seek to explain why an understanding of the concepts *culture* and *socialization* is necessary for making statements about cross-cultural similarities and differences relevant to parent–adolescent relationships in the United States vs. Mexico. Following these initial sections, we define what is meant by the concepts *general systems of social values* (i.e., *individualism* and *collectivism*), *parental ethnotheories*, and *adolescent social competence*, particularly in reference to the mainstream or dominant culture of the United States. This is then followed by a review of the most common parental styles and behaviors that US parents use to either foster or hinder the development of adolescent social competence. Concluding sections of this chapter then conceptualize how these concepts apply to the mainstream or dominant cultural values, socialization goals, parenting approaches, and parent–adolescent relationships in Mexican society.

Ecological Perspective and Parent–Adolescent Socialization

An analysis of how cultural variation influences the meaning of adolescent social competence and how this complex of outcomes is socialized by parents requires an understanding of the interconnections among the social contexts that encompass parent–adolescent relationships. A theoretical perspective that can be used to address these issues is the ecological perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1994; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009),

which is particularly notable for conceptualizing levels of the social context, both immediate and remote, within which families with adolescents are situated. The ecological approach is most notable for its analysis of four ecosystemic levels, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, through which general social-cultural institutions and values can be conceptualized as connected to and influencing such intimate levels of society as parent–adolescent relationships. More recently, Bronfenbrenner (2005) has added the concepts of micro- and meso-time to ecological theory, which brings increased attention to the timing and patterning of events in the longitudinal development of individuals and families. The attention given to macro-time (or what he referred to earlier as the chronosystem) captures the importance of the changing socio-historical context and makes the fit between ecological theory and the life course perspective very effective. Recognizing the issue of time and the ontogenetic changes associated with different periods of the life course makes ecological theory increasingly attentive to unique developmental issues of specific family stages, such as those characteristic of families with adolescent members.

As conceptualized within ecological theory, the most intimate ecosystemic level of human development is the family, the primary aspect of the “microsystem” that stands alongside other face-to-face interaction settings having proximal processes (e.g., friendship relationships, daily leisure activities, and school classroom settings) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Inside the microsystem of families (part of which is the parent–adolescent relationship), for example, parental socialization values function to shape these proximal processes, or parenting strategies that are thought to have consequences for both the varied and common aspects of adolescent social competence across cultures. Proximal processes are progressively more complex reciprocal interactions that evolve over time between an active, evolving focal person (e.g., an adolescent) and another human (e.g., a parent or parents) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Consequently, not only are parents viewed as influencing the development of adolescent social

competence through “socialization strategies,” but parents’ strategies, in turn, also are influenced by an adolescent’s success or failure to develop social competence (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). These reciprocal and proximal processes may either promote or constrain the adolescent’s development of social competence or the extent to which a *goodness of fit* is accomplished within their social context.

The next largest level of the ecosystem, the mesosystem, refers to various connections between microsystems such as the linkages between families and schools or the connections between adolescents’ relationships with both their parents and peers. Here the focus is not on aspects of the adolescent’s experience that are unique to each social setting (i.e., the parent-adolescent relationship or the adolescent peer group considered separately), but on how the linkages between these settings are mutually influential in either supportive or incongruent ways. An example might be whether or not similar disciplinary approaches are used with adolescents both by their parents within families and by their school professionals within school classrooms to encourage adolescent social competence.

The next largest level is the “exosystem” which involves the influences of larger systems that encompass and provide an immediate context for families (or other microsystemic settings) such as the neighborhood and community. These environments often provide varying degrees of challenge or support for parent-adolescent relationships, depending upon the extent to which adaptive or dysfunctional circumstances are prevalent. Important circumstances include neighborhood/community poverty, community employment opportunities, recreational activities, neighborhood crime, the availability of illegal and/or dangerous substances, effective law enforcement, and other circumstances that either protect or place the young at risk. These immediate circumstances of the neighborhood/community will influence parents’ socialization values, the availability of physical and social resources, degrees of parental resiliency, and the kinds of

parenting strategies that are used to foster adolescent social competence. These variations in parents’ values, resources, resiliency, and socialization strategies are important factors in determining the extent to which adolescents are either protected from or are resilient in the face of challenges to adaptive development.

Finally, the general level is the “macrosystem,” which represents the largest social contexts at the national, societal, or general cultural level. The macrosystem is the outermost level of the ecosystem which contains general societal level institutions (political, religious, economic institutions, etc.), cultural values, customs, and laws (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1994). From the standpoint of the macrosystem, the organizational pattern is systemic and hierarchical from the largest environments, or the macrosystem, to the successively smaller social environments that are encompassed consisting of the exosystem, the mesosystem, and the microsystem, much like a series of “matryoshka,” or Russian nesting dolls. The social-cultural effects of these hierarchically organized systems and their interconnections, in turn, is a cascading influence progressing from the most general to all the subordinate levels of the ecosystem.

Of primary importance is the systemic idea that no one social context can be understood in isolation from the others and that interconnections between the family and surrounding social contexts must always be considered (Goodnow, 2006). Hence, it is likely that “spillover” will occur among the various ecosystemic levels and will influence a developmental period such as when families have adolescent members. For example, if the prevailing macrosystemic culture assigns priority to the general cultural values of self-interest and individuality over other possible cultural values emphasizing group or collective interests (e.g., family or societal obligations), then parents should be inclined to act (at least in part) upon these values within the parent-adolescent relationship. Specifically, the parents’ socialization strategies would be more likely to focus on granting autonomy to the young as a specific way of expressing the general cultural values of self-interest and individuality. These general cultural

values would also likely be reinforced by parents' and adolescents' memberships in such interconnected aspects of the macrosystem as their own family histories (the microsystem), coexisting memberships in the workplace (mesosystem), schools, peers, and neighborhood/community (exosystem) locations. The result is that general cultural values from the macrosystemic level are conveyed both directly and indirectly down to the microsystem (or the parent–adolescent relationship) through a variety of exosystemic and mesosystemic connections and pathways. Depending on the extent to which these general cultural values are accepted and sustained within a particular culture, therefore, the values of self-interest and individuality will permeate the subsequent levels of the ecosystem. The result of this flow of influence from more encompassing system levels down to the family microsystem is the guidance provided for the particular versions of adolescent social competence and parental socialization strategies implied by the larger social context.

Culture: The Substance of Socialization

A basic assumption of this paper is that socialization and human development occur in a cultural context (Rogoff, 2003). Consequently, adolescent social competence and the socialization processes that foster or undermine the development of such qualities are subject to cultural meanings that have both common patterns and variations across social communities (Markus & Hamedani, 2007; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). Most observers would agree, however, that *culture*, the *substance* or content of social meaning that permeates our daily lives, is one of the most difficult concepts for social scientists to describe and define clearly. Although characterized many ways, culture refers to the comprehensive heritage or human-made totality that distinguishes members of one group from another across and within societies (Herskovits, 1948; Hofstede, 1980). Included within this broad conception of culture, for example, are the ecological setting, the social structure, and the value orientations that provide the context for parent–adolescent relations.

Complex definitions of culture consist of the knowledge, norms, rules, practices, symbols, language, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, and motivations that members of a group share with each other (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003).

A culture includes both the beliefs that constitute a culture's symbolic inheritance as well as the norms and moral standards that arise from these beliefs and are intended to shape the behavior of group members. The content of a culture's symbolic inheritance provides (1) the basis for the roles that individuals should perform (e.g., the role of parents) (Grusec & Davidov, 2007), (2) the meaning of the social positions that individuals (e.g., parents and adolescents) occupy with respect to each other, (3) the qualities of the young (adolescents) that are valued and defined as being "competent," and (4) what social behaviors that adults (parents) use in a particular social community to encourage or discourage this competence (Grusec & Davidov; Peterson et al. 2004; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b).

Culture can be viewed as a shared symbolic system that develops through interaction processes (Boesch, 1991; Bruner, 1996) and is concurrently changing and functioning as a source of guidance and order (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). Despite providing continuity across generations, cultural influence does not bestow precise templates for behavior nor guarantee exact transmission of meaning and social patterns from parents to the young. Cultural life is patterned and repetitive, but this structure does not eliminate malleability and uncertainty, particularly because cultures are both changeable and subject to substantial intra-cultural variation and individual differences (Maccoby, 2007). Cultural patterns change over time, sometimes slowly, but other times quite rapidly due to major historic events, including wars, civil conflicts, or major socioeconomic forces that are part of modernization and globalization (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). Consequently, we can view parents and adolescents as being shaped by and as products of cultural parameters, but, at the same time, a particular culture owes its very existence and continuity to the dynamic ongoing

interactions of the interpersonal world, among which are parent–youth relationships.

Parents and the young not only maintain existing culture, but also are creators of culture during everyday socialization experiences. Culture is most accurately portrayed, therefore, as being a system of structure and meaning that is both patterned and “in process.” People (e.g., parents and adolescents) act together in relationships to perpetuate and create their cultural life-ways as they socialize each other (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Mead, 1934). Complete transmission of the existing culture at any one time, therefore, would not allow for novelty, change, and responses to new situations, whereas complete failure to transmit culture would not permit sufficient continuity across generations. Neither of these extremes (i.e., complete failure to transmit vs. complete continuity) characterizes how culture helps to define specific attributes of social competence and the socialization approaches (i.e., behaviors, styles, discipline strategies) that parents use to encourage these ends within a specific culture. Instead, a middle ground position is most accurate, with the attributes of social competence and the socialization strategies used to encourage these qualities being both patterned attributes that are constantly subject to change and individual variation.

Socialization: The Process of Conveying and Structuring Social Meaning

If a culture is the *content* of our interpersonal existence, then socialization refers to a set of *interpersonal processes* through which culturally defined meaning is passed on to or *enculturated* in the young (Gonzales, Knight, & Birman, 2004). During adolescence, therefore, the development of social competence occurs as a result of the *process* of socialization—or the interpersonal dynamics through which a society reproduces itself and encourages the young to become functioning members of society (Elkin & Handel, 1988; Grusec & Hastings, 2007; Maccoby, 2007). We become functioning members of society

through processes of socialization involving mostly the mundane dynamics of everyday social life. Many of these interactional experiences, which are often taken for granted in the moment, are truly remarkable processes through which we either foster or inhibit the development of social competence by the young.

Socialization is a complex array of multidirectional processes involving the family as perhaps the most important influence that enculturates the young within relationships having mutual and systemic qualities (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007). Beyond family boundaries, a variety of socialization venues are the major social institutions and interpersonal settings in which individuals (i.e., adolescents) have direct or indirect experiences, including religious organizations, the workplace, schools, the mass media, government, neighborhoods, and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Tudge et al., 2009). A pattern of dynamic interaction exists between developing adolescents and their social environments that include influential factors from different levels of social systems at the biophysical, psychological, and socio-cultural levels of the human experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994, 2005; Lerner, 2002; Tudge et al., 2009). Neither specific kinds of socialization experiences, such as those within the parent–youth relationship, nor specific biological factors, such as genetic influences, can be isolated as the sole factors that drive human development and shape social competence. Instead, a combination of youthful socialization, biogenetic, and maturational factors contribute to the overall structure of adolescent development (Corsaro, 1997; Harris, 1998; Kuczynski, 2003; Lerner, 2002; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Traditional conceptions of socialization within family relationships are dominated by the idea that the young are *influenced* by parents and other family members to internalize and become responsive to societal expectations (Inkeles, 1968; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Central components of this process of influence within families are socialization strategies (e.g., parental styles and behaviors) used by parents, either intentionally or habitually, to encourage (or discourage)

the young to function in adaptive ways. Acting in an adaptive manner consistent with cultural expectations or being “socially competent” designates the abilities of adolescents to adjust to their society’s major social contexts and expectations in a manner that avoids deviant or problem behavior.

Contrasting with this conception of socialization as a one-way process, numerous observers have countered with the idea that too much emphasis has been placed on how adolescents are shaped and guided by parents (and other social agents) to become members of society (Maccoby, 2007). According to this *deterministic* or *social mold* conception of socialization (Gavazzi, 2011; Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999), the young are viewed primarily as passive recipients of parental influence (and the influence of other social agents). The most frequent assumption in social mold conceptions is that efforts by parents to influence their young either shape the behaviors of adolescents or become internalized by the young as “inner qualities” that govern their beliefs, attitudes, motives, and behaviors.

For a variety of reasons, the social mold perspective of parent–youth socialization continues to dominate research concerned with studying adolescents within the context of family relationships. The persistence of deterministic models of socialization is based, to a large extent, on pragmatic or heuristic needs of scientific methodologies to focus on limited aspects of the social context within any particular study. Because of such conceptual compromises, in turn, most scholarship on parent–adolescent relationships should be read with a balanced awareness that socialization is substantially more complex than the representations conveyed by one-way shaping or internalization processes. Instead, the internalization of parental values and social expectations requires active construction on the part of adolescents through bidirectional, if not more complex processes (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Such complicating factors include the ideas that internalization of parental influence is achieved only in terms of several factors such as (1) the young person’s understanding of these

socialization efforts, (2) the beliefs, values, and expectations that parents and adolescents bring to a social context, (3) the degree to which the parent’s influence attempts are accepted by the young, (4) the kinds of behavioral responsiveness and temperament of the adolescent, (5) the adjustments in child-rearing strategies that parents make to accommodate the young person’s individuality, and (6) how the parent’s and adolescent’s beliefs, values, and expectations are reshaped through these interactions (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003).

Instead of the flow of influence in one direction, the internalization of parental goals or parental shaping is more accurately viewed as complex processes of continuity, negotiation, and change. This dynamic process of coconstructing cultural meanings occurs during socialization experiences as adolescents and their parents share meanings and constantly experience developmental change in their attributes with respect to each other. Consequently, parent–youth socialization is a dialectical or mutual process in which continuity, creativity, and change are complementary components of a larger whole (Kuczynski, 2003; Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007; Peterson, 1995). This complex bidirectional process helps to define both the core elements of social competence and the child-rearing approaches that parents use to foster such outcomes.

General Cultural Values and the Parent–Adolescent Relationship

An important aspect of understanding parent–adolescent relations is to clarify how general cultural values serve as the basis for developmental goals that shape the behavior of parents and adolescents (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009). Consistent with this view, the concepts *individualism* and *collectivism* are useful means of conceptualizing general societal value systems that have commonalities and differences across cultures (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Rothbaum & Trommsdorff, 2007; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Triandis, 1989,

1995, 2001). Macrolevel value systems of this kind play a key role in shaping parental belief systems or goals for socialization that specify what qualities are valued outcomes for the young within a specific culture. These parental *ethnotheories* about culturally specific definitions of adolescent social competence also provide guidance for defining the corresponding socialization strategies used to foster these outcomes in the young (Harkness & Super, 2002, 2006).

In many, if not all, societies, two general value systems, *individualism* and *collectivism*, are often proposed as important sources for beliefs and expectations for how relationships in families and other microsystemic contexts should be conducted. Both of these general value patterns, when conceptualized at the societal level of analysis, can be used to characterize societies as leaning approximately either toward individualistic or collectivistic value systems (Hofstede, 1980; Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Kim & Markus, 1999; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008; Triandis, 1995, 2001). The first of these, *individualistic* societies, can often be characterized as promoting the centrality of the *independent self* through commitment to beliefs in the private self, individual freedom, autonomous decision-making, and achievement values underscoring the importance of personal attainment based on self-interest. Though seldom characterized as a distinct “culture” as it should be, such beliefs or values are representative of the dominant majority within the United States, the middle-class European American mainstream (Perry, 2001; Rogoff, 2003).

In contrast, *collectivistic* societies promote the development of the *interdependent self* through commitment to conceptions of cooperation, mutual support, the maintenance of harmonious relations, and the primacy of group interests (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1995, 2001). Collectivistic values are supposed to be prominent in such societies as those of Asia (e.g., China, Japan) and Latino societies like Mexico, a focus of this chapter, in which cultural traditions emphasize stronger family bonds and greater respect for parental authority than is common within the dominant US culture.

Several points should be kept in mind before generalizing too much about the societal level values of individualism and collectivism within the United States and Mexico. First, most societal level values cannot be characterized as either *exclusively* individualistic or completely collectivistic, but probably coexist in varied degrees of balance across different cultures (Peterson, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1995, 2001). For example, although some evidence exists that the US leans significantly toward individualism (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Perry, 2001; Rogoff, 2003) and that Mexico tilts somewhat more toward collectivism (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002), other observers caution that these differences represent only *somewhat* distinct balances between *both* of these general complexes of values and beliefs (Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Instead, the practice of characterizing societies as either individualistic or collectivistic is a broad brush description of general tendency, within which more precise analysis reveals subcultural variations, individual differences, and continuing social changes within every societal group, all of which aptly describe the diverse circumstances of Mexico and the United States. For example, a society like the United States, which is generally characterized as individualistic, also demonstrates at least a moderate emphasis on collectivism and group interests at both general societal and subcultural levels (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; McDougall, 2004; Peterson, 2009). Correspondingly, Mexico, with stronger collectivistic traditions, also has notable patterns of individualism and pursuit of self-interest at both general and subcultural levels of society, particularly since social changes toward individualism are occurring with modernization (Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Both Mexico and the United States are complex societies characterized by substantial ethnic, regional, and socioeconomic diversity that manifest many distinctive combinations of individualistic and collectivistic orientations within each subculture. These general value systems also

coexist because the complex process of globalization has expanded rapidly. Consequently, individuals within a particular culture are influenced by differential degrees of individualistic and collectivistic values that apply to varied social circumstances (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Killen & Wainryb, 2000; Spiro, 1993). Individualism and collectivism, therefore, are not mutually exclusive, but coexist in varying degrees within societies, sub-cultures, and as culturally defined expectations for the behavior of adolescents, parents, and other members of society (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007).

A closely related issue is that ethnocentric judgments should not be made that individualism largely exists only within “modern” or “advanced” cultures and collectivism exists almost exclusively in “traditional” or “primitive” cultures. Moreover, there is no implication in the concepts individualism and collectivism that one of these value systems is “better” than the other. Instead, use of these two constructs simply takes note of the fact that healthy human existence at both the psychological and social levels of analysis involves balancing the interests of the autonomous self with powerful tendencies to be both connected and responsible to others. Each culture and ethnic group will find a particular balance between these general values that fits its ecological circumstances (Peterson, 2009, Chap. 1; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). In most cases, both individualism and collectivism are positive attributes that, most likely, are complementary rather than contradictory societal attributes (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009). If we remain cognizant of such complexities, the constructs individualism and collectivism are effective means of conceptualizing cultural similarities and differences in realistic rather than stereotypic ways, both at societal and family relationship levels.

Parental Ethnotheories and Adolescent Social Competence in the United States

The general cultural values of individualism and collectivism within a particular social commu-

nity provide the basis for more specific values and expectations that parents draw upon to determine the goals of socialization regarding what attributes and behaviors to encourage or discourage in adolescents (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Harkness, 2008; Harkness & Super, 2002; Keller, Borke, Yovsi, Lohaus, & Jensen, 2005; Peterson, 2009; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Sigel, McGillicuddy-De Lisi, & Goodnow, 1992; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). From parents’ perspectives, these *parental ethnotheories*, or beliefs and values about the goals of socialization, provide guidance for culturally specific conceptions of social competence or the outcomes of socialization that are valued (Eccles, 2007; Harkness, 2008; Harkness & Super, 2006; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). From the perspective of individualism, for example, such normative sources of guidance take the form of parental ethnotheories like “adolescents should be taught, as members of their culture, to be their own persons and to be responsible for themselves.” In contrast, a collectivistic parental ethnotheory would embody the belief that adolescents should be taught that “one’s personal welfare is largely determined by contributing to the overall well-being of their group.” Other closely related issues would be that the “interests of one’s family” should take priority over one’s “own personal ambitions (collectivism)?” or that “self-expression and individual demonstrations of emotion” should be encouraged over more “subdued expressions of the self” designed to communicate maturity, deference, harmony, and respect for authority (individualism).

Along these lines, parents of all societies have beliefs and goals (i.e., parental ethnotheories), based on general cultural values, which are aimed at instilling dimensions of *social competence* in their young and discouraging problem behavior as defined by specific cultural meanings (Bloom, 1990; Gavazzi, 2011; Gillespie, 2003; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). *A general definition of social competence, therefore, is a set of attributes and psychosocial resources that help adolescents adapt to their social circumstances and cope successfully with everyday life sufficiently to ward off problem*

behavior (i.e., externalizing and internalizing behavior) (Baumrind, 1991; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003). As such, social competence encompasses multiple attributes that provide the young with abilities to function effectively in everyday social life and are also sources of resilience for warding off negative consequences during times of crisis and extensive challenge (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 2005). Recent conceptions of social competence in the dominant culture of the USA and Western Europe identify some of its subdimensions as: (1) establishing a balance between autonomy and connectedness (or conformity) in reference to parents (and other adults), (2) developing an effective achievement orientation, (3) attaining psychological or cognitive resources (e.g., a positive self-esteem, identity achievement, and problem-solving skills), and (4) acquiring social skills with peers and other interpersonal relationships (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Leigh, 1990; Peterson & Rose, 2003).

These aspects of social competence are sources of social-psychological *resilience* and well-being. These attributes assist adolescents to successfully cope with challenges and prevent developments that can lead to risk behavior (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Gillespie, 2003; Hauser, 1999). Consequently, the inverse or flip-side of social competence is *risk* or *problem* behavior, conceptualized here as either *internalizing* or *externalizing* attributes (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009). Internalizing attributes are psychological disturbances of adolescents that focus on the self (e.g., depression, suicidal thoughts, and eating disorders). Externalizing attributes, in turn, are psychological difficulties that take the form of “acting out” against society (e.g., violent behavior, delinquent behavior, substance abuse, and conduct disorders in school) (Gavazzi, 2011; Meyer, 2003). Extensive involvements in externalizing and internalizing behavior, or the inverse of social competence, can be major obstacles to developmental progress during adolescence and early adulthood.

Most, if not all cultures, tend to emphasize the development of the same general dimensions of

social competence (i.e., balancing autonomy and connectedness, achievement, psychological resources, and social skills) to a considerable degree during the socialization process. However, substantial variation exists across cultures in the precise meaning and emphasis placed on each dimension of social competence. This is particularly true in the manner that socialization goals focus on fostering either individual interests (i.e., individualism) or those of the social group (i.e., collectivism) or some combination of both value complexes (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Kagitcibasi, 1996; Peterson, 2005, 2009; Peterson & Bush, in press; Raef, 2006; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007). European-American families in the United States with adolescent members, for example, tend to focus on the promotion of autonomy (i.e., as an expression of individualism) rather than conformity and obedience (i.e., an expression of collectivism) as a high priority goal of adolescence. Although the importance of families (i.e., familism or collectivism) is a continuing theme in the United States, compared to more collectivistic societies, greater emphasis is placed in the United States on individual social mobility, personal autonomy, egalitarian relationships among family members, and the nuclear family rather than the complexities of extended family relationships (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Related socialization goals in the United States include individualistic conceptions of the self (e.g., self-esteem) reflecting such ideals as the importance of the private self, personal uniqueness, self-interest, and individual liberty (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1989, 1995, 2001). The focus of achievement orientations (e.g., academic achievement) in the United States is commonly that of pursuing personal attainment goals as an expression of self-interest in competitive contexts. Achievement is viewed largely as an outgrowth of an individual’s commitment to self-constructed goals based on one’s personal identity achievement (Eccles, 2007). Finally, in reference to social skills, assertive interpersonal

skills tend to be valued as a means of facilitating personal advancement within one's social relationships. Adaptive forms of social skills are those that tolerate moderate levels of interpersonal conflict at some expense to harmonious human relationships and deference to authority (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Despite these general patterns in the dominant European American culture, it is also important to recognize that specific ethnic groups within the United States (e.g., Hispanic American and Asian American groups) place greater emphasis on collectivism. These islands of collectivistic diversity in the larger sea of individualism tend to emphasize close family connections over progress toward autonomy, personal achievement in the service of group interests, self-conceptions based on relationships with others, and social skills emphasizing the maintenance of harmonious relationships with others (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Grau, Azmitia, & Quattlebaum, 2009; Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007; Triandis, 1989, 1995, 2001; Wilson & Peterson, 2000). Despite these complexities, the dominant culture of the US places greater overall emphasis on individualistic rather than collectivistic definitions of social competence (Kagitcibasi, 1996, 1997; Peterson, 1995, 2009; Rothbaum & Trommsdorf, 2007).

Parental Ethnotheories, Parental Styles, and Parental Behavior

Parental ethnotheories that define social competence, or the desired goals of socialization for the young, also provide guidance for defining parenting strategies that are used to either foster or hinder cultural definitions of these outcomes (Grau et al., 2009; Keller et al., 2005; Peterson, 1995, 2009). Once there is considerable agreement about what constitutes the goals and expectations for social competence in a particular culture, these desired ends of the socialization process provide parameters for how parenting should be conducted to achieve these outcomes (Carlo &

De Guzman, 2009; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999). The socialization practices prescribed by such beliefs systems include expectations for such things as how warmth is expressed, whether physical punishment is tolerated, the degree to which school work is monitored by parents, how youthful autonomy is encouraged or restricted, and many more. The overall idea, of course, is that cultural beliefs shape (1) the attributes of the young that are valued in a culture, (2) the parental beliefs about how to foster or discourage these desired goals, and (3) the actual socialization approaches used by parents to foster valued attributes in the young (Bush & Peterson, 2008; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Bush, 2003; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Based on extensive research in the United States, the first means of conceptualizing these appropriate socialization strategies, *parenting styles*, refers to configurations or collections of several parental practices and attributes. Each configuration or style is composed of a somewhat different pattern of child-rearing behavior such as control, warmth (i.e., support), communication, and rule enforcement. Styles also include particular parental attitudes and values (e.g., values emphasizing obedience to authority vs. values emphasizing autonomy) that are rooted in individualistic or collectivistic orientations as well as some combination of both traditions (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). A second approach to conceptualizing parental socialization strategies is through *parental behavior*, which refers to specific or discrete dimensions of child-rearing actions that are often thought to be independent from or orthogonal to each other. These specific dimensions of parental behavior also convey social meanings that may, in part, originate in either collectivistic, individualistic, or some form of integrated value system (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

A continuing focus of research on parent-adolescent relations in the United States has been to identify how distinctive parental styles or behaviors contribute differentially to the development of social competence by the young as defined in terms of distinctly American values (Baumrind, 1978, 1991; Darling & Steinberg,

1993; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Steinberg, 2001). As specified previously, we will first conceptualize parental styles and behavior that either foster or hinder culturally specific forms of youthful social competence in the United States. Subsequently, these ideas are applied in later sections to the dominant patterns of parent-adolescent relationships in Mexico.

Parental Styles

The most widely known set of parental styles or configurations applied in the United States are those developed by Baumrind (1978, 1991, 2005) referred to as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive approaches. *Authoritarian parents*, for example, use very strict and harsh control attempts to strongly encourage obedience by the young. Harsh or punitive behavior is used regularly by authoritarian parents to impose their will, whereas communication, reasoning, and affection are either used sparingly or not applied at all. Distinguishing features of authoritarian parenting include the arbitrary, highly intrusive, and hostile manner of child-rearing efforts that fosters distance between parents and adolescents. Authoritarian parents are not inclined to temper their intrusive and harsh efforts to exercise control by being supportive or emotionally responsive to the young (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Gavazzi, 2011; Peterson, 2005).

A second child-rearing style, *permissive parenting*, identifies parents who make few demands upon and rarely seek to control adolescents, either through punitive or more moderate forms of control. Permissive parenting is composed, in turn, of two subtypes referred to as *indulgent* and *indifferent* child-rearing. Indulgent parents are supportive, emphasize democracy, foster trust, but manifest few if any control attempts directed at the young. Indifferent or neglectful parents fail to use either support or control attempts and are best described as disengaged from (or disinterested in) their young. Thus, although both indulgent and neglectful parents share a reluctance to assert control over adolescents, they differ in their inclinations to be affectionate. Indulgent parents are supportive and emotionally close to children and

adolescents, whereas indifferent parents are emotionally distant from their young (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Peterson, 2005).

The third blend of attributes, the *authoritative style*, identifies parents who use firm control to implement a consistent set of rules. Authoritative parents value both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity from their young. These parents use reason in an issue-oriented manner and apply rewards and punishments that are clearly related to the adolescent's behavior. Authoritative parents assert their positions as authority figures, but are responsive to efforts by the young to exercise influence and are open to changing their relationship over time in the direction of greater autonomy. These parents tend to encourage two-way communication, the gradual development of autonomy, and an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance that helps maintain their influence (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Holden, 2010; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Recent research in the United States tends to support Baumrind's view that authoritative parenting fosters a collection of prosocial qualities in adolescents, often referred to as social or instrumental competence (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Specific outcomes encouraged by authoritative parenting include autonomy, responsible compliance, self-assurance, creativity, and skill in social relationships (Baumrind, 1978, 1991, 2005; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). Compared to the general population of adolescents, youth who are raised in authoritative homes tend to perform more successfully in school and to relate more effectively to peers and adults (Steinberg; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Although authoritative parents do focus some of their efforts on collectivistic socialization goals by (e.g., by encouraging responsible conformity), the long-term objective is consistent with individualism by affirming the importance of the private self, the development of personal achievement, a positive self-esteem

based on individual success, and encouragement of greater autonomy (Baumrind, 2005; Peterson, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Much of the existing research in the United States on the other styles of parenting (i.e., authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful) indicates that negative adolescent outcomes are a more frequent result, though the specific outcomes vary with the particular style in question (Baumrind, 2005; Gavazzi, 2011; Peterson, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Adolescents from authoritarian homes, in particular, are more inclined to be dependent, passive, conforming, less self-assured, less creative, and less socially adept than other adolescents. Compared to their contemporaries, youth from homes with indulgent parents tend to be more immature, irresponsible, and to conform more readily to peers. Recent research also indicates that indifferent or neglectful parenting tends to foster higher rates of impulsivity, involvement in delinquency as well as early experimentation with sexual activity and substance use (Baumrind, 1991, 2005; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Gavazzi, 2011; Kurdek & Fine, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

A serious problem with parental styles is the complexity of their composition and the difficulty that researchers face in understanding the relevance of specific components (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). Because parental styles provide a general context consisting of many parental qualities (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), it is difficult to identify precisely which aspect of a parent's child-rearing approach is the primary factor that truly influences a specific aspect of adolescent social competence or problem behavior (Lim & Lim, 2003; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009). A related issue is that none of the parental styles incorporate either all the dimensions of parental behavior currently identified in the research literature or the full range of variation in each of these dimensions. Consequently, the existing typologies have failed to adequately represent the many parental styles that are

conceptually possible in the overall population of parents (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

Another concern has been some evidence pointing to a lack of cross-ethnic/cultural generality in the meaning, exact pattern, and consequences of the authoritative and authoritarian styles of parenting for such developmental areas of social competence as youthful academic achievement, respect for authority, and closely related outcomes. This "culture-specific" critique of parental styles is a response to findings indicating, for example, that authoritarian parenting has a greater negative effect on European American adolescents' academic functioning than it does for Asian American adolescents (Steinberg et al., 1994). From a culture-specific perspective, the greater emphasis in collectivistic Asian cultures on interdependence, harmony, and acceptance of authority may predispose the young of these cultural/ethnic groups to accept more intrusive or arbitrary forms of control. The use of authoritarian control may be more common in Asian than in the Western cultures and may be exerted by Asian parents more deliberately and more calmly with less negative effects than is true for European American parent-youth relationships. More dominating forms of control may carry different cultural meanings in Asian compared to Western societies and be viewed as normative for a responsible, even loving parent to demonstrate. In contrast, Western adolescents, from more individualistic cultures, are likely to take a more dim view of even less harsh (or less intrusive) forms of control than do Eastern youth from more collectivistic cultures. The consequence of these contrary meanings may be that Western adolescents will view themselves as "suffering" greater losses of autonomy (or individuality) than Eastern adolescents when parents use these forms of control (Chao, 1994, 2000, 2001; Dixon, Graber, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Fuligni, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Wang, Pomerantz, & Chen, 2007). As described later, similar differences may exist for European American vs. Mexican conceptions of authoritative and authoritarian parenting.

Other evidence, in contrast, indicates that there is a substantial degree of generalizability across ethnicities/cultures in support of negative consequences being evident for authoritarian parenting in reference to negative effects on adolescent social competence (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Sorkhabi, 2005; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Moreover, there is also a substantial degree of cross-cultural/ethnic evidence sustaining the positive effects of authoritative parenting for dimensions of social competence such as autonomy granting (Sorkhabi, 2005; Steinberg, 2001; Steinberg & Silk, 2002; Wang et al., 2007).

Parental Behaviors

The complexities and problems characteristic of parental styles have influenced many researchers to prefer the examination of specific dimensions of parental behavior in research on parent–adolescent relations (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Gavazzi, 2011; Lim & Lim, 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). The most frequently studied child-rearing behaviors in the United States are parental warmth or support, autonomy-granting behavior, intrusive psychological control, reasoning, monitoring, and punitiveness (Cox & Harter, 2003; Gavazzi, 2011; Holden, 2010; Peterson, 2005). Each of these behaviors conveys significant social meanings that, for the dominant cultural traditions of the United States, either encourage or inhibit the development of a conception of adolescent social competence that leans in an individualistic direction toward emphasizing autonomy (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999).

Most prominent among these dimensions of socializing behavior studied in the United States is supportive parental behavior. In fact, perhaps the closest thing to a general law of parenting is that warm, supportive, nurturant, or accepting behavior by mothers and fathers is associated with the development of virtually all aspects of social competence by children and adolescents (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Parental *support* consists of behaviors

like touching, hugging, kissing, praising, approving, encouraging, and spending positive time with adolescents (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Peterson, 2005; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Supportive behavior communicates that adolescents are valued, fosters close ties within the parent–youth relationship, and communicates confidence by parents in the adolescent's abilities. A large amount of research indicates that parental support is associated with several positive qualities of adolescents such as positive self-esteem, identity achievement, growing autonomy that coexists with sufficient conformity to parents, and long-term positive consequences for adult intimate interpersonal adjustment (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). Adolescents who receive support or nurturance from parents often report lower amounts of anxiety, depression, and behavior problems (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). A particularly important quality of parental support is its ability to foster an adaptive balance between seeking autonomy and remaining connected to parents by European American adolescents, a pattern that captures a key dimension of social competence (Peterson, 2005).

Another important behavioral strategy that many parents in the United States use to foster adolescent social competence is *reasoning* or induction. Parents use induction or reasoning for appealing to the adolescent's concern for others, their desire to be mature, and their abilities to understand and voluntarily accept the parent's point of view (Baumrind, 1991; Hoffman, 1980, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). The use of reasoning helps adolescents understand why rules are necessary, why their misbehavior is unacceptable, how their behavior affects others, and how their actions might become more acceptable. Parents who use reasoning do not impose arbitrary authority on adolescents, but communicate respect for adolescents, their confidence in the adolescent's abilities to make good decisions, their capacities to voluntarily comply, and their growing autonomous abilities to make their own decisions (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Reasoning is a moderate form of control that legitimizes parental authority, communicates respect for an adolescent's viewpoint, is unlikely to evoke hostile feelings by the young toward parents, and gradually allows more autonomy through parent and youth discourse. The use of reason may be particularly important for appealing to abstract thinking abilities that are developing during adolescence. Parental reasoning often has been found to foster adolescent outcomes like moral development, internalized responsiveness to parents' expectations, moderate conformity to parents, and positive self-esteem. Exposure to parental reasoning provides adolescents with confidence to think for themselves and develop an autonomous system of self-affirmed values and expectations (Hoffman, 1980, 1994; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson, 2005). Similar to supportiveness by parents, therefore, parental reasoning encourages European American adolescents to develop a key dimension of social competence, that of internalized responsiveness and connection to their parents, while simultaneously allowing for youthful autonomy from parents to emerge (Peterson, 2005; Bush & Peterson, Chap. 13).

A third socializing behavior, *Monitoring or supervision*, refers to efforts by parents to encourage social competence through becoming aware of and managing their teenager's schedules, peer associations, activities, and physical whereabouts. Parents in the U.S. monitor adolescents to supervise dating and discourage early sexual relationships, prevent antisocial behavior and deviant peer associations, check to see that homework is completed, watch for the symptoms of drug use, and oversee the popular media accessed by the young (e.g., movies, television, books, the internet, and social media) (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Crouter & Head, 2002; Fuligni & Eccles, 1993; Patterson, 1986; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991). Monitoring designates the extent to which parents actively supervise adolescents' behavior and activities as well as are involved with and interested in their welfare. This is an aspect of firm but moderate control that avoids the exercise of intrusive control and depends on the degree to which positive parent-adolescent relationships exist so the young will share infor-

mation with parents (Crouter & Head, 2002; Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Smetana, 2008; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Successful monitoring implies that parents must maintain a clear set of rules about the time that adolescents should be home, when they should return from peer activities, with whom they may associate, and places where the young are forbidden to go. The primary role of parental monitoring is to prevent the drift of teenagers toward problematic peer relationships, risk behavior, and deviant activities while not being intrusively restrictive. Consistent with a cultural emphasis on individualism, monitoring allows for the gradual development of autonomy and social competence within the context of continuing parental influence based on consistent rule enforcement and moderate control.

A clear outgrowth of individualism is *psychological autonomy granting*, or parental behaviors that designate the extent to which parents employ noncoercive behavior, democratic discipline, and encouragement for the young to express their individuality within families and beyond family boundaries (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Peterson, 2005). Fostering autonomy in this manner often encourages self-worth, feelings of self-efficacy, self-confidence, and emotional functioning (Barber, 1996; Quin, Pomerantz, & Wang, 2009), all of which are consistent with social competence. During adolescence, the process of gaining autonomy retains the theme of constantly expanding explorations through increasingly more complicated behaviors within expanding social networks. Adolescents use parents, friends, dating partners, and other adults as sources of security and springboards for increasingly more elaborate excursions into the social world (Peterson, 1995, 2009). For example, most teenagers do not simply reject positive relationships with parents as they gain greater freedom from parental connections. Instead, teenagers often expand the number and complexity of their peer relationships, while maintaining close ties with parents. Greater autonomy is not achieved, therefore, as a "zero sum game" in which gains in self-direction necessarily mean losses in connections with parents. Instead, most adolescents report that they value making more of their own lifestyle

choices and desire to spend more time with peers, but without suffering dramatic declines in the love and respect they feel for parents. The development of autonomy and connectedness are not in conflict but, indeed, are compatible and essential aspects of human relationships that develop together as components of social competence (Laursen & Collins, 2009; McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009). However, the balance between autonomy and connectedness in the European-American culture of the United States leans more toward the former than the latter.

The inverse of autonomy granting is *intrusive psychological control*, the prominent control dimension of overprotective parenting (Levy, 1943), or efforts made by parents that discourage individualism and the European American definition of social competence by intruding upon the psychological independence and emotional development of adolescents. Parents exercise intrusive control by invalidating adolescent's feelings, constraining verbal expression, withdrawing love, or attempting to induce guilt (Holmbeck et al., 2002; Levy, 1943; Parker, 1983). Frequent use of intrusive psychological control by parents has been linked primarily to internalized forms of youthful outcomes such as depression, withdrawal, loneliness, eating disorders, negative perceptions of the self, lower self-efficacy, and less effective identity development (Barber, 1996, 2002a, 2002b; Holmbeck et al., 2002; Parker, 1983). A logical consequence of intrusive psychological control is excessive adolescent dependence and inhibited autonomy, both of which are contrary to European American conceptions of social competence.

Parental punitiveness refers to arbitrary verbal or harsh physical attempts to influence the behavior and internal qualities of teenagers. Coercive control attempts of this kind are commonly viewed as a socialization strategy contrary to an individualistic conception of social competence by inhibiting autonomy and other adaptive outcomes. These actions involve the use of excessive force to impose the will of parents without the tempering influence of reason or more moderate forms of discipline (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1999; Strauss, 1994; Turner & Finkelhor,

1996). Punitiveness varies from arbitrary nagging, name-calling, and yelling in its verbal forms to corporal punishment (i.e., spanking) and/or violence (abuse) in its physical forms (Day, Peterson, & McCracken, 1998; Straus, 1994). Current evidence indicates that mainstream cultural norms in the USA are much less supportive of using physical punitiveness with teenagers compared to younger children and a number of countries, including Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom, have either banned or legally restricted its use (Ben-Arich & Haj-Yahia, 2008; Straus, 1994). Although normative change about punitiveness has occurred, an estimated 20–40 % of adolescents continue to receive physical punishment from parents with some regularity (Straus; Wissow, 2001). Physical or verbal punitiveness often leads to a variety of problematic outcomes, all of which are contrary to the development of the European American conception of social competence. Such problematic outcomes include hostile feelings, diminished internalization of parents' expectations, growing distance, and resistance to authority by adolescents (Buck, Vittrup, & Holden, 2006; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). The use of physical punishment by European American parents may have declined recently, in part, because a form of adolescent independence often results that is rooted in growing separation from parents. This type of independence contrasts with an adaptive form of autonomy that is consistent with social competence and involves balancing self-determination with continuing positive bonds with parents (Laursen & Collins, 2009; McElhaney et al., 2009; Peterson, 1995, 2009).

The use of harsh, punitive behavior by US parents often contributes to such problematic outcomes as lower self-esteem, depression, less advanced moral development, lower success in school, but higher rates of substance abuse and delinquent activities (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993; Eisenberg, 1989; Gavazzi, 2011; Straus, 1994). Problematic outcomes of punitiveness include excessive restrictions on autonomy and attempts to enforce excessive forms of conformity to parents' demands (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Rollins, 1999). A prominent

meta-analyses of 88 studies by Gershoff (2002), for example, indicated that physical punishment resulted in only one positive consequence (i.e., immediate compliance) and five unintended negative consequences by the young (i.e., more aggression, delinquent behavior, greater risk of child abuse, diminished moral internalization, and reduced mental health adjustment) (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). Although mild forms of punitiveness do not always lead to serious adolescent problems (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Cowan, 2002), these results may not occur because parents use other practices (e.g., support or reasoning) that offset or dilute the worst effects of punitiveness. A balanced assessment of using mild and occasional spanking, however, may be that most studies finding negative consequences do so only with correlational rather than experimental evidence and may give too much credence to effect sizes that are quite small. Another possibility, for example, may be that an adolescent's difficult behavior may elicit punitive responses from the parents, with spanking then being a reaction to youthful behavior (a child effect) rather than a cause of adolescent outcomes. A further weakness of the research on punitiveness is the failure to distinguish between mild and serious forms of punitiveness. This deficiency may exaggerate the adverse effects on dimensions of social competence by mild or moderate forms of punitiveness (Baumrind et al.; Larzelere & Baumrind, 2010).

A compelling reason against the use of punitiveness, however, is the inability of some parents to control their anger, with the result being that mild punitiveness used initially by an angry parent may escalate rapidly into more serious coercive attempts, including physical abuse (Day et al., 1998). Research supporting this view indicates that the young often respond to parents' punitive behavior by "counterattacking" with their own punitive behavior, which, in turn, may contribute to escalating cycles of abuse and violence (Patterson, 1986; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991). Rather than risk the danger of such escalation, the most effective course of action by U.S. parents is to use alternative forms of discipline and control that are less arbitrary and coercive (e.g., monitoring, reasoning, or consistent rule enforcement).

The most compelling reason to withhold final judgment about the use of occasional and mild forms of punitiveness is evidence suggesting that harsh discipline may not have the same degree of negative consequences (e.g., heightened aggression and academic achievement) within ethnic-minority families as it does within European American families (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005; Larzelere & Baumrind, 2010). Such findings suggest that the normative support for punitiveness may differ across cultures, convey varied meanings, and in turn, may have different consequences for adolescent social competence.

Mexican Culture, Families, and Social Competence in Mexico

The remaining goal of this chapter involves determining how well mainstream conceptions of general cultural values, parental ethnotheories, adolescent social competence, and socialization practices from the United States can be "translated" into the parent-youth relationships of Mexico. Initially, this will require some background information about the characteristics, changing patterns, and general values associated with Mexican family life.

An obvious issue is to acknowledge what a daunting task it is to conceptualize the dominant cultural values and social patterns of Mexico that define parent-youth relations in a society that is very complex and diverse. Mexican parents and adolescents live in a society characterized by extensive diversity in family structure, rural-urban differences, socioeconomic variation, varied ethnic identification, and a wide range of traditional vs. modern lifestyles (Esteinou, 2004, 2008). Similar to the approach used in the United States, therefore, the only reasonable strategy at this point is to characterize approximately the dominant cultural and parent-adolescent relationship patterns within Mexico, without contributing (hopefully) to excessive generalization and stereotypes.

Another obstacle is the limited research literature on Mexican families and parent-adolescent relationships. Much of the existing scholarship,

for example, addresses Mexican families and adolescents residing in the United States, rather than the native population of Mexico. A related problem is the failure of much of the existing scholarship to distinguish populations of Mexican origin from the more generic “Hispanic” or “Latino” identifications (i.e., composed of populations from greatly diverse cultures/societies in Mexico, Central America, and South America) (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Castro, Boyer, & Balcazar, 2000; Harwood et al., 2002; Quintana & Scull, 2009). Because we must rely, in part, on scholarship having some of these problems for our conclusions, it is important to acknowledge the limits of the information base from which we make our observations. In fact, we attempt to draw most of our conclusions about parent–adolescent patterns based on research examining families that are either native to Mexico or are first-generation immigrant families (i.e., Mexican American families) who are Mexican in origin or are the least acculturated to the dominant US culture.

Transition and Continuity in Mexican Families

The immediate context of Mexican parent–adolescent relationships is a diverse array of Mexican family forms that have experienced many of the same socioeconomic forces for social change that US families have faced historically. Comparatively speaking, although rapid social change has occurred, some of these transitions have become prominent more recently and continue to remain less proportionately evident in Mexico than in contemporary US society. However, similar to social circumstances in the United States, many changes in Mexican families are a product of the general social forces of globalization, urbanization, and rapid economic transition, all of which have contributed historically to declines in rural traditionalism (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). In terms of specific structural changes, these general social forces have contributed to declines in extended family relations, the growth of nuclear families,

reduced fertility rates, and rising divorce rates in contemporary Mexico (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002).

A recent demographic trend has been the growth of dual earner families as women (i.e., married women and mothers) increasingly have become employed outside the home. These structural transitions of Mexican families are matched by shifts in general social-cultural values toward greater emphasis on individualism (i.e., as opposed to collectivism and familism) and increased egalitarianism in the roles assigned to men and women (father and mothers) within families (i.e., as opposed to traditional gender-role divisions) (Castro et al., 2000; Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Particularly within urban areas of Mexico, a growing number of female adolescents no longer identify the roles of wife and mother as exclusively central to their identity development as in past times. Instead, much greater importance is placed on women’s educational and occupational attainment outside the home (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002).

Traditional gender differences appear to be diminishing within middle class, urban families, in the sense that Mexican men are now having to share authority, decision-making, and are less exclusively in charge of financial resources than in the past. Women are expanding into roles beyond those having primary responsibility for everyday child-rearing tasks, domestic activities, and the arrangement of family social activities. This has led to decreases in patriarchal authority and greater involvement of men in fatherhood roles, particularly by more educated men from urban areas (Esteinou, 2004; Welti, 2002). Thus, although gender inequalities continue to be prevalent in Mexican society, compared to 3 or more decades ago, these differences have become less pervasive (Esteinou, 1996, 2004, 2008; López, Salles, & Tuirán, 2001). Especially for Mexican women from rural areas and lower socioeconomic circumstances, however, traditional gender-role divisions remain quite prominent in family life and more evident than within the dominant culture of the United States (Esteinou, 1996, 2004, 2008; Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Cultural Values, Parental Ethnotheories, and Social Competence

Despite recent trends toward modernism and individualism, the dominant social values of Mexico reflect goals and beliefs about family relationships that lean more toward collectivism in a relative sense than is true within the United States. This continuing prevalence of collectivism is evident in the form of traditional Mexican values emphasizing deference of the self to family interests, respect for authority, the centrality of family connections, the pursuit of achievement for family interests, and harmonious interpersonal relations (Updegraff & Umana-Taylor, 2010; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Although these traditional values, referred to as *respeto*, *familismo*, and *personalismo/simpatía* (see below), have been diminishing in Mexican culture, their influence remains prominent today, and especially in contrast with the more individualistic traditions of mainstream US society. These cultural values provide the basis for distinctive parental ethnotheories that, in turn, are used to define the culturally distinctive attributes of adolescent social competence in Mexico. Culturally defined conceptions of adolescent social competence, in turn, serve as goals that provide guidance for the socialization strategies that are necessary either for fostering or hindering these qualities (German, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Familismo and Social Competence

The first of these collectivistic values, *familismo*, refers to a system of beliefs that includes feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, responsibility, and solidarity towards members of one's family. Compared to the dominant individualistic values of the United States, these collectivistic values place less emphasis on socialization for autonomy and greater focus on responsiveness to family interests, a pattern having important implications for Mexican parental ethnotheories and a conception of youthful social competence (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1996).

The high priority assigned to family connections in Mexico has been sustained by most

aspects of society, including religious institutions. The continued importance of familism in Mexico has been supported, in part, by long historic traditions of conservative religious values sustained by the Catholic Church. More recently, the rapid growth of Evangelical Protestantism among the Mexican populace has provided renewed institutional support for conservative family values that are rooted in a religious perspective (Esteinou, 2004; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Specific aspects of familism include the importance of love, cohesiveness, and mutual obligations among family members. Compared to the individualistic leanings of mainstream US culture, the collectivistic emphasis of Mexican familism suggests that the self has a stronger component of being an extension of *la familia*, or the idea that a person's identity is deeply rooted in parental ethnotheories that emphasize the importance of family connections (Raffaelli, Carlo, Carranza, & Gonzales, 2005). The centrality of family ties, a key component of Mexican parental ethnotheories, provides a conception of adolescent social competence that underscores the importance of socializing the young to acknowledge parental authority (Baca Zinn, 1994; Harwood et al., 2002).

Although declining somewhat in recent times (Esteinou, 2004, 2008), traditional family networks often extended beyond family boundaries to incorporate even special friends and associates in the larger community. These expanded versions of cohesive family relationships often fostered a sense of youthful identification with one's larger community as an extension of family life. The traditional socialization experiences of Mexican youth emphasized "togetherness" or *cohesiveness* within families (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000), with parents and other family elders expected to provide substantial supportiveness and to exercise considerable control over their young (Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Although extended family relations are declining in frequency in present-day Mexico, the values of *familismo* continue to be prominent in the general society, with particular strength being demonstrated in rural and lower-income populations. In general, Mexican adolescents continue to be raised in a broader array of family members

and within a more cohesive system of family relations than in the dominant U.S. culture. The continued centrality of *familismo* and closely related values have important implications for distinctive parental ethnotheories, conceptions of social competence, and the characteristic socialization approaches used by Mexican parents (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Grau et al., 2009).

Respeto and Social Competence

Closely associated with *familismo* is *respeto*, another collectivistic value that shapes parental ethnotheories, definitions of social competence, and socialization approaches. This general value designates the importance of showing respect, deference, special regard, and proper demeanor in reference to persons of higher status within their families and the larger community. Although substantial variation exists, compared to European American parents, the tradition of *respeto* indicates that Mexican parental ethnotheories are more likely to emphasize parental authority through demonstrations of respect and obedience from the young, while focusing less on fostering autonomy (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Bulcroft, Carmody, & Bulcroft, 1996; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Delgado & Ford, 1998; Fuligni, 1998).

Although conformity by the young to their parents is emphasized more extensively in Mexico than in the United States, one must also be attuned to particular nuances of the Mexican emphasis on respect for authority to get a complete understanding of this belief system. Specifically, closely associated with the idea of *respeto* is the value placed on *confianza*, which emphasizes that trust, comfort, and security are part of this greater focus on hierarchical relationships. Such an emphasis on intimacy and closeness with *a persona de confianza* in family relations mitigates the tendency to view *respeto* as having a stridently harsh edge (Harwood et al., 2002).

A combined use of the concepts *familismo* and *respeto*, therefore, is that both provide a specific basis for parental ethnotheories that, in turn, have consequence for the aspect of social competence concerned with “balancing autonomy and connectedness.” Specifically, greater emphasis is placed

by Mexican compared to US parents on the importance of maintaining ties with family members and maintaining respect for parents and other adults. Compared to the dominant US culture, greater emphasis is placed in Mexican parent–adolescent relationships on the maintenance of continuing bonds with parents and conformity to their elders’ expectations. Consequently, the Mexican conception of adolescent social competence is focused less centrally on gaining autonomy from parents, a major goal of the dominant socialization patterns within the United States (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Peterson et al., 1999; Steinberg, 1990). This is qualified perhaps by the fact that gender differences may exist, with more emphasis being placed on fostering autonomy by Mexican boys as opposed to girls (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004).

Several studies on socialization within Mexican and Mexican American families have identified conformity to norms, obedience to authority, and respect for parents as socialization outcomes having the greatest priority (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Buriel, 1993; Delgado & Ford, 1998; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998; Grau et al., 2009). Moreover, difficult economic circumstances in Mexico may have enhanced the traditional pattern of placing less emphasis on youthful autonomy and greater focus on the maintenance of parental authority. Specifically, Mexican youth appear to be expanding the traditional pattern of residing in their parents’ home until marriage combined with more recent tendencies to marry at a later age, two conditions that have lengthened the period of dependency by youth on parents. Faced with recent difficult employment markets, high living costs, and shortages of housing, Mexican youth have even less incentive to move toward greater economic and behavioral autonomy from parents (Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

The Interdependent Self and Social Competence

Closely associated with this diminished emphasis on autonomy is the somewhat distinctive conception of the self in Mexican culture, an additional

component of social competence. Compared to the individualistic or private self-conceptions of mainstream US culture, the Mexican concepts of the self and self-esteem (i.e., important aspects of social competence) are deeply rooted in the concept of *familismo*, a more collectivistic perspective on the social meaning of the person. Thus, Mexican cultural traditions and practices, which are more family-centered, provide adolescents with their cultural sense of self and personal worth, particularly through feelings of family belongingness. A person's conception and value for the self are rooted in an overall sense of *nosotros* (i.e., "we-ness") that results from having values, beliefs, purposes, and traditions held in common with family members (Castro et al., 2000; Harwood et al., 2002; Triandis, 1989, 2001). Consistent with this particular form of the *interdependent self*, Mexican youth are more likely to gain a clear sense of self and self-esteem in relationships characterized by cooperation, mutual support, harmonious relations, and the primacy of the group over individual interests.

Personalismo, Simpatía, and Social Competence

Closely related to strong familism are traditional Mexican values emphasizing the distinctive qualities of interpersonal relationships, or additional values that provide a collectivistic foundation to parental ethnotheories and adolescent social competence. These values provide the basis for distinctive conceptions of adolescent social competence and corresponding socialization patterns aimed at fostering these outcomes. Specifically, we refer to the companion values of (1) *personalismo*, the importance ascribed to interpersonal relationships and (2) *simpatía*, the commitment to maintain harmony and avoid conflict in social interactions (Castro et al., 2000; Keefe, Padilla, & Carlos, 1978).

Compared to the dominant culture of the United States, Mexican culture places greater emphasis on being sensitive to the social nuances of everyday life and the importance of minimizing interpersonal conflict. Individuals are socialized to be sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, an inclination that fosters the development of

cooperative social motives, while inhibiting extremes of competitive behaviors based in individualism rather than group interests (Flannagan, 1996; Knight, Cota, & Bernal, 1993; Knight, Dubro, & Chao, 1985). This emphasis on the social domain is underscored by the term *bieneducado*, which means literally to be "well-educated," a concept referring, not only to a person's formal education, but also to his/her demeanor and ability to engage social situations in a manner that is not rude and does not convey disrespect (Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009). The traditional definition of Mexican youth who are considered "intelligent" places as much emphasis on being accomplished at collectivistic social skills as it does on cognitive abilities. Although the US definition of social competence leans toward individual assertiveness, moderate interpersonal confrontation, and the affirmation of one's individuality, Mexican socialization places somewhat greater emphasis on fostering harmony, avoiding conflict, being cooperative, showing respect, and opposing substantial competitiveness as components of social competence (Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009). Relative to the dominant culture of the United States, social competence for Mexican adolescents is likely to be defined somewhat more in terms of social skills characterized by cooperation rather than assertiveness for individual objectives.

Achievement and Social Competence

A Mexican view of adolescent social competence, compared to that of the United States, also includes the idea that a somewhat different meaning exists for achievement orientations by the young. Conceptions of achievement for Mexican adolescents challenge individualistic conceptions typical of the United States by linking personal attainment orientations more extensively to collectivistic (i.e., familistic) rather than individualistic values. Contrasting with motives rooted primarily in self-interest, Mexican adolescents are more likely than their U.S. counterparts to view academic achievement as an outgrowth of being responsible to and providing assistance to their families. Mexican adolescents are less likely than American youth to see a clear distinction

between seeking achievement for one's own self-interest and doing so for the welfare of their families (Fulgini, 2001; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Similar to the United States, being socialized for achievement (e.g., educational or occupational attainment) is an important dimension of social competence, but one with more collectivistic connotations for Mexican youth than is common within US populations of adolescents.

Summarizing the Meaning of Mexican Social Competence

An overall result, therefore, is that both Mexican and US conceptions of adolescent social competence have a common focus on the same dimensions of youthful development: conformity (obedience) vs. autonomy, conceptions of the self and self-esteem, social skills, and achievement. The primary difference is that Mexican conceptions of social competence may be more extensively based in parental ethnotheories that lean in the direction of collectivism, whereas U.S. definitions are based somewhat more in terms of individualistic perspectives.

This link with collectivism does not mean, of course, that individualistic conceptions of social competence receive no emphasis in the socialization values of Mexican parents. Instead, only *in comparison* to the dominant U.S. cultural orientations, Mexican socialization values place *somewhat less emphasis* on autonomy, the private self, self-serving assertive social skills, and self-interested achievement. Mexican socialization beliefs tilt only *somewhat* more toward collectivistic conceptions of adolescent social competence by valuing obedience, the interdependent self, social skills that foster group (e.g., family) harmony, and achievement linked to strong family bonds (Baca Zinn, & Wells, 2000; Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Castro et al., 2000; Grau et al., 2009; Peterson, 2005, 2009). Contemporary scholars support this complex view by indicating that the social forces of individualism, egalitarianism, and globalization are having greater influence in today's Mexican family life than in past times. These forces are viewed as encouraging increased emphasis, both today and in the future, on individualistic attributes of social competence as

desired outcomes of the Mexican socialization process (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011).

Mexican Parental Styles, Behavior, and Authority That Foster Social Competence

Based on the idea that Mexican conceptions of adolescent social competence are rooted more extensively in collectivistic values than the United States, the next step is to identify patterns of parental styles and behaviors aimed at fostering the development of these qualities within Mexican families. This task is complicated by the great variability that exists in Mexican parent-adolescent relationships and the transitions that are occurring away from traditional patterns emphasizing the dominance of parents toward more democratic approaches of child-rearing that allow for greater autonomy (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996). These transitions in parenting are being driven extensively by the previously discussed influences of globalization, egalitarianism, and individualism that are growing sources of social change for Mexican families.

Despite substantial changes in parenting, however, the continuing prominence of collectivistic ethnotheories by Mexican parents may entail that the authoritarian child-rearing style and its featured parental behaviors (i.e., high punitiveness and low supportiveness) are more characteristic of Mexican parents than is true of U.S. parents. Based on the emphasis placed by Mexican parents on the importance of obedience and parental authority (i.e., through the importance of *respeto*), scholars have frequently concluded that Mexican parenting is more authoritarian than the dominant pattern in the United States, the authoritative style (Buriel, 1993; Busch-Rossnagel & Zaya, 1991; Diaz-Guerrero & Szalay, 1991; Esteinou, 2004, 2008). According to this view, the social position of Mexican parents is likely to command substantial authority in reference to the young, which would likely lead to the use of more direct forms of parental control. Moreover, such a hierarchical

authority structure may work against the use of moderate forms of control such as reasoning, monitoring, and nonpunitive forms of discipline (e.g., deprivation of privileges). Research supportive of this perspective indicates, for example, that Mexican parenting is characterized by greater emphasis on harsh, punitive behavior because of distinctive cultural beliefs about the positive consequences of these strategies for the development of children and adolescents (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998). Results from research on Mexican American samples are supportive of this pattern by concluding that Mexican-origin mothers tended to be more controlling, more nonverbal, and to use fewer verbal (reasoning) strategies than European American mothers (Grau et al., 2009). A frequent conclusion, therefore, is that authoritarian parenting (with higher levels of punitiveness), a style developed to describe a particular pattern of US child-rearing, would be an accurate way of characterizing Mexican parenting, particularly for those parents whose approaches remain consistent with traditional Mexican patterns (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Harwood et al., 2002; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996).

Other scholars, however, have questioned the application of the authoritarian parenting style to Latino child-rearing, a critique that may apply to the use of this concept in reference to collectivistic patterns of Mexican parenting (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002). Specifically, the fact that Mexican parents tend to use more highly restrictive control does not mean that additional criteria of the authoritarian style have been met sufficiently to warrant such a classification. Instead, other foundations of Mexican cultural beliefs, *familismo* and *confianza*, both emphasize aspects of Mexican family relationships such as feelings of love, trust, security, and mutual obligation that carry a different connotation than is conveyed by the authoritarian style (Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Harwood et al., 2002). Such attributes, it is important to recognize, do not convey the same sense of arbitrariness, distance, and growing hostility between parents and adolescents that is typical of authoritarian parenting in European American families

(Baumrind, 1991; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). Instead of such a hostile form of control, the values associated with family life in Mexico (i.e., *familismo* and *persona de confianza*) communicate a sense of supportiveness and cohesiveness that is absent from the original conception of the authoritarian style in the United States (Baumrind, 1978; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Such an expectation for a different pattern is supported in a study by Hill, Bush, and Roosa (2003) who found that low acculturated Mexican American mothers tended to use a combination of acceptance and hostile control rather than one without the other. Moreover, Bush et al. (2004) found that measures of parental support and parental induction created among European American samples did not fit well for Mexican adolescents, and that a combination of items assessing positive induction (reasoning) and support (theorized to represent a higher order construct-labeled connection) worked best among their sample of 534 youth living in Mexico. The importance of these findings lie in how they are contrary to the classic pattern of authoritarian parenting used by European American parents which consists of using high hostile control without the tempering influence of acceptance or firm control attempts (e.g., induction).

If Mexican parenting is characterized both by high degrees of forceful control as well as supportive or responsive behaviors, it is less likely that the authoritarian label can be generally useful as a label that characterizes the most prevalent pattern (Hill et al., 2003). Perhaps a better name for this style is *traditional parenting* characterized by a demanding form of control plus substantial supportiveness that fosters feelings of security and loyalty. This pattern of parenting is common in both industrial and nonindustrial societies, particularly outside the West (e.g., China), but may also apply to Latino cultures such as those of Mexico and other Latin American countries (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Whiting & Edwards, 1988). A traditional style of child-rearing is quite different from the authoritarian parent—that is, one who uses high control in a hostile manner and intensifies this harsh approach by failing to be responsive to or supportive of the young.

The common result of authoritarian parenting is that the young feel rejected, which is an outcome that makes them more vulnerable for the development of problem behavior (Rohner, 1986, 2004, 2008). In contrast, traditional parents may temper their relatively high usage of punitiveness or restrictive control by being supportive and accepting as a means of forging and maintaining positive bonds with the young. The use of high supportiveness in conjunction with high control by Mexican-origin parents also may ameliorate some of the adverse consequences of higher intrusive control in a manner experienced by European American adolescents (Gonzales, Pitts, Hill, & Roosa, 2000; Grau et al., 2009).

Baumrind (1999), the scholar who first conceptualized the authoritarian parenting style, has acknowledged this problem when attempts have been made to apply her authoritarian concept to other cultures in which traditional patterns of parenting have persisted. As a result, she proposed that the concept *traditional parenting style* be applied to parental approaches emphasizing high supportiveness coupled with a form of highly restrictive control that does not encourage discussion and debate with the young. The implication of these observations is that adolescent compliance or conformity to parents, a focal dimension of social competence in Mexico, may not result simply from the highly restrictive control of authoritarian parenting. Instead, compliance or conformity to parents' expectations may result from cultural beliefs emphasizing *both* the inherent authority of the parental role as well as the abilities of parents to provide support as a means of encouraging cohesiveness within family relationships.

Some scholars also propose that traditional parenting may involve a demanding form of control that differs in quality from the arbitrary, harsh control of authoritarian parenting and may convey distinctive meanings within Mexican parent-adolescent relationships than is true for the European American circumstance (Grau et al., 2009; Peterson et al., 2004; Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b). Such distinctions involve the idea that high restrictiveness or punishment used by traditional parents may not be the same form

of control as the arbitrary patterns and hostile attitudes conveyed by authoritarian parents. The hostile control of authoritarian parenting often is used arbitrarily, occurs when a parent is angry, conveys rejection, and fosters distance in a relationship. Instead, the forceful control used by Mexican parents may simply reflect their efforts to firmly foster dimensions of social competence associated with family cohesiveness. Recognition that a supportive dimension and a less aversive form of high restrictiveness (or punishment) may be components of a traditional parenting provides an effective rationale as to why collectivistic dimensions of Mexican social competence are fostered in the young. Specifically, dimensions of social competence such as obedience, the interdependent self, social skills that emphasize harmony, and achievement linked to strong family bonds are likely to result from parental behavior that reinforces relationship cohesiveness between parents and adolescents. Relationship bonds of this kind are more likely to be fostered by a restrictive form of parental control that does not alienate the young or encourage distance in the manner of authoritarian child-rearing. For example, Bush et al. (2004) reported that Mexican Adolescent's perceptions of their parents as legitimate sources of guidance and advice, as well as viewing their parents as facilitating connection, lead to higher levels of teen's sense of familism. Cohesiveness within the Mexican parent-adolescent relationship may be encouraged by the inclination of traditional parents to be responsive, supportive, and to encourage cooperative activities. In contrast, the harsh and nonsupportive aspects of the authoritarian style used by some European American parents tends to foster distance and separation rather than cohesiveness within parent-youth relationships (Peterson et al., 1999; Ripoll-Nunez & Rohner, 2006).

Regardless whether authoritarian or traditional styles are the best characterizations of Mexican parenting, substantial changes also appear to be occurring in the manner that children and adolescents in Mexico are being socialized by their parents. The nature of parent-child/adolescent relations is changing substantially as traditional values such as *familismo* and *respeto* decline

gradually and the influences of individualism and egalitarianism increase within Mexican family life (Welti, 2002; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). Corresponding changes in the parent–child relationship include diminished parental dominance, less inclination by parents to rely almost exclusively on giving orders to the young, and the greater involvement of fathers in the process of parenting. Greater emphasis is now being placed on communicating and reasoning with adolescents, or practices aimed at increasing relationship flexibility and fostering emotional closeness within parent–youth relationships (Bush et al., 2004). Obedience to parents is still an important goal of socialization, but greater emphasis is now being placed on negotiation, making requests, monitoring, and autonomy-granting than in earlier periods (Esteinou, 2004, 2008; Ingoldsby, Schvaneveldt, Supple, & Bush, 2004; Osorio Roman & Sánchez Mejía, 1996; Wilson & Esteinou, 2011). These changes in Mexican parenting also suggest that corresponding shifts in adolescent social competence may be occurring in the direction of more individualistic patterns similar to those found in the United States.

Before we can draw such conclusions about parent–adolescent relationships, however, more research is needed and care must be taken in proposing that parental styles, behaviors, or dimensions of social competence appear to be comparable across cultures. It is certainly possible that, despite the surface-level similarities, some qualities of the parent–adolescent relationship are not conceptually equivalent across cultures. Across different cultural communities, similar parenting behaviors or practices do not guarantee that exactly the same meaning is being conveyed and that the same consequences for youthful development will result (Peterson, Steinmetz, & Wilson, 2005b). Probably the best way of addressing such issues will be a multimethod approach involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies. This will be the most effective way for researchers to identify both generalizable patterns and explore more deeply for the nuances of similar or different meanings.

Beyond Parental Behavior Toward Parental Authority

Despite some declines, the continuing influence of collectivistic values in Mexican family traditions suggests that future research will be too limited if it focuses exclusively on parental styles and behavior as the sources of parental influence. Instead, parental styles and behaviors seem best suited for understanding why parents influence adolescents in short-term situations of the moment and do not effectively capture why the young are responsive to parents based on perceptions of their *parents' authority* or their legitimate roles in the society. Traditional family values of Mexico, such as *familismo* and *respeto*, are not restricted simply to the examination of situational attempts to influence the young through child-rearing behavior used in specific circumstances. Instead, much of parental influence also results simply from the cultural interpretations of the social roles occupied by parents and how the cultural meanings assigned to fathers and mothers become translated into parental authority that may or may not be acknowledged by the young.

Although a great deal has been learned by studying parental styles and behaviors as predictors of adolescent development, it is time to expand beyond being so disproportionately preoccupied with these situational aspects of the parent–adolescent relationship (Steinberg, 2001). Preoccupation with parental styles and behaviors in parent–adolescent research may lead to underestimating adolescents' abilities to perceive and respond to the nonbehavioral aspects of parental influence. Specifically, the sophisticated social cognitive abilities of adolescents and the cultural meaning of *parental authority* (i.e., the meaning of the parent's role in the social world) provide adolescents with either the inclination to be influenced or not to be influenced by parents (Bush et al., 2004; Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Both parental styles and behaviors seem best suited for examining parent–child relations with younger children and may have somewhat less utility with adolescents. Compared to younger children, adolescents have greater abstract

thinking capacities, more extensive memories of their relationships with parents, enhanced social perceptions of their parents' competence (or incompetence), and greater experience with the social meaning of parental roles that define motherhood and fatherhood. These sophisticated abilities allow adolescents to socially construct the *specific other* or assign complex meanings that define their parent's competencies, wisdom, authority, and trustworthiness. As a result, adolescents construct long-term interpretations of their relationships with parents in ways that are at least of equal importance to the behavioral influence attempts used by their elders in specific situations.

Adolescents, with growing acuity to perceive their parent's qualities, are increasingly capable of discerning whether or not parents are viewed as competent, wise, trustworthy, and reliable. These perceptions of parents are a product both of cultural meanings associated with parental roles in Mexican society and adolescents' long-term accumulated experiences with parents (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Hann, 1999). These *social constructions* of parents' authority provide adolescents with abstract and summarized assessments of their parents' long-term influence across situations. Adolescents increasingly develop abilities to "size up" their parents' worthiness or unworthiness as social agents (i.e., their perception of parents' competence) and decide in complex ways the degree to which they will recognize and respond to their authority.

An important issue for future investigators is to examine the possibility that socially constructed perceptions of parental authority may have greater consequences for youthful development in cultures that emphasize collectivistic values, family bonds, obligations, and respect for elders (i.e., *familismo and respeto*). In contrast, cultures that emphasize individualism may have greater tolerance for youthful efforts to challenge parental authority and seek to renegotiate the traditional meanings of social roles occupied by parents and children. Additional research is needed, therefore, on the distinct influence of

parental authority (i.e., independent of parental styles and behavior) within cultures characterized by socialization values reflecting varied levels of individualism and collectivism (Bush et al., 2004).

Summary and Conclusions

The most important idea of this paper is that a society's culture has substantial influence on the conceptions of adolescent social competence and the socialization practices that either foster or hinder the development of these valued qualities in the young. General cultural value systems referred to as individualism and collectivism provide the basis for normative patterns of parent–adolescent relationships within both the United States and Mexico. Based on each society's general cultural values, more specific systems of values and beliefs provide guidance for family life and parental ethnotheories. These child-rearing beliefs and values, in turn, provide guidance for conceptions of both common and distinctive patterns of adolescent social competence as well as the corresponding socialization strategies that either foster or hinder these outcomes.

The predominant patterns of parent–youth relationships in the United States and Mexico have a common focus on dimensions of adolescent social competence consisting of (1) structuring a balance between autonomy and conformity in reference to parents, (2) forming a positive conception of the self, (3) developing adaptive social skills, and (4) pursuing achievement effectively. These dimensions of social competence are not static qualities, but identify common socialization goals that most cultures address as part of the socialization process. It is important to understand that, although cultures tend to address common dimensions of social competence, the specifics about the meaning each culture assigns to these dimensions may vary widely, in part, according to the particular culture's balance of general value orientations (e.g., some degree of balance between aspects of individualism and collectivism).

Despite the prevalence of common forces for social change in the United States and Mexico, cultural differences persist in the relative emphasis placed on the general value constructs of individualism vs. collectivism. Although differences are of degree and not mutually exclusive, compared to mainstream European American patterns, conceptions of adolescent social competence in Mexico emphasize obedience more than autonomy, the interdependent self, social skills that foster group cohesiveness, and achievement orientations that support family cohesiveness and harmony. In contrast, greater emphasis is placed within the European American conception of social competence on fostering autonomy rather than obedience, the private or independent self, social skills for individual advancement, and achievement aimed at personal attainment.

Corresponding differences in parental styles appear to exist between the United States and Mexico, with some observers proposing that the authoritarian style is more characteristic of Mexican than U.S. parenting. Other observers disagree that the authoritarian style, a typology developed specifically to study parenting in the United States (as well as other parental styles), can be readily applied to Mexican culture. Instead, Mexican parenting may be characterized by a traditional style, a pattern that is rooted in unique aspects of Mexican cultural heritage. Thus, Mexican parenting may be more accurately characterized as emphasizing a restrictive form of control that differs in cultural meaning from the harsh, punitive behavior of the authoritarian style prevalent in the United States. In addition, the supportiveness of Mexican parents may be another feature that distinguishes traditional parenting from the authoritarian style.

Another pattern is that Mexican parenting may be characterized as being in transition from a traditional or authoritarian style toward greater emphasis on egalitarian parental roles, more moderate forms of control, and higher degrees of parental responsiveness. Thus, although similarities may exist between commonly used parenting styles in Mexico and the United States, caution must be exercised when attempting to apply child-rearing constructs developed for research

on U.S. parent–adolescent relationships to the child-rearing circumstances of Mexico.

Finally, the collectivistic traditions of Mexican beliefs and values also suggest that too much research attention might be devoted to parental styles and behaviors at the expense of more culturally relevant variables. Specifically, greater attention might be focused on *parental authority* as a central aspect of Mexican parent–adolescent relationships—a construct implied by such social values and beliefs as *familismo* and *respeto*. Parental authority refers to the extent to which adolescents view their parents as being competent, wise, reliable, and trustworthy as key cultural meanings of parental roles in Mexican and US society. The best way to examine these and other related theoretical conceptions is through future cross-cultural investigations of parent–adolescent relationships within Mexico and the United States.

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