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Abstract

Parents and siblings are critical sources of influence on adolescents' ideas about and experiences with romantic relationships and sex. Using focus group data from 44 Latinx adolescents in the U.S. Midwest, we explored how family relationships shaped how Latinx teens learned about cultural norms and expectations concerning their romantic relationships and involvement in sexual behaviors. Parents expressed more protective behaviors toward their daughters than their sons, seemingly a result of gender-role expectations and cultural perceptions of family honor and respect. Mothers and siblings were sources of sexual information. Older siblings were seen to play protective roles, dependent on the quality of the sibling relationship.

Keywords

Adolescence, communication, culture, gender socialization, Latinx families, romantic relationships, sexuality, siblings

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The role of the culture-specific mechanisms in shaping Latinx (i.e., gender inclusive term for individuals of Latino/Hispanic origin) parents' communication with their children and in forming adolescents' ideas about dating and sexuality, broadly defined as adolescents' sexual behaviors, sexual self-hood, and sexual socialization (Tolman & McClelland, 2011), cannot be ignored. Evidence points to their influences through traditional gender role attitudes and cultural values in parenting and Latinx adolescents' romantic relationship quality and sexual decision making (Milbrath et al., 2009). Similar to other ethnic and racial groups, in Latinx families, parents are crucial sources of socialization for adolescents' romantic relationship experiences and their involvement in sexual behaviors (Raffaelli, 2005; Romo & Hurtado, 2021; Velazquez et al., 2017). Latinx parents want their children to have healthy romantic relationships (e.g., setting appropriate boundaries; having respectful partners; Romo & Hurtado, 2021) and to make good choices about engaging in sexual behaviors (Bouris et al., 2012). Siblings are another significant socialization agent and including siblings in studies of family influence on adolescents' romantic relationships and involvement in sexual behaviors is important. Research shows that relationships with older siblings have implications for Latinx young adults' dating and sexual experiences (East et al., 1993; Wheeler et al., 2016; Whiteman et al., 2014).

Several reasons justify the study of Latinx adolescents' sexuality and romantic relationships including continued higher teen birth rates relative to White and Asian teens, lower rates of condom use, and greater likelihood of sexually transmitted infections relative to European American youth (e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; Velazquez et al., 2017). Another reason is to challenge the stereotypes that exist for Latinx teens (Carvajal & Zambrana, 2020). There are stereotypes regarding contraceptive use and childbearing assigned to Latinx teens, such as being uneducated and unable to plan ahead, and having fewer educational and career goals leading to less consistent use of contraception and greater desire to have children compared to White teens (Carvajal & Zambrana, 2020). Additionally, there are misconceptions about Latina adolescents' birth rates. While Latina teens had the highest rates of teen births in 2008, they have demonstrated steady declines in birth rates in recent years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). More specifically, for Latina teens, in 2008, there were 70.3 live births per 1000 females (compared to 40.2 for all teens) and in 2018, there were 26.8 live births per 1000 females (compared to 17.4 for all teens). In fact, they have the steepest declines compared to teens from all other ethnic and racial groups (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

In addition, importantly, sexual behaviors and romantic relationships are normative aspects of adolescents' development (Tyrell et al., 2014). However, for Latinx adolescents, there are unique cultural values and experiences that shape their ideas about dating and sex (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). These cultural values and experiences highlight the need to study sexual socialization in this population and to do so from a strengths-based perspective (Harden, 2014). The present study focuses on U.S. Latinx adolescents' perceptions of; (a) parents' expectations of adolescents' dating and sexual experiences; (b) parents' influences on adolescents' ideas about dating and sex; and (c) older siblings' influences on younger siblings' romantic relationships and sexuality. Previous literature includes retrospective reports of family influences on Latinx young women (Raffaelli,

2005), focuses on mother-daughter dyads (Romo et al., 2010), or includes samples of urban youth in areas of high Latinx populations (Bouris et al., 2012). However, the present study expands this literature by examining Latinx adolescents' own perspectives on family expectations and influences on dating and sexuality for both Latinx boys and girls in a U.S. Midwest sample.

Guided by Sexual-Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 2003), the primary aim of the present study is to understand U.S. Latinx adolescents' perspectives of parents' and siblings' influences on their romantic relationships and sexuality. Given that parents and siblings are sources of dating and sexual scripts (Christopher, 2001), we are interested in exploring adolescents' ideas about parents' differential expectations for their daughters and sons, parents' influences on adolescents' ideas about romantic relationships and sexuality, and older siblings' role in adolescents' romantic relationships.

Parents and cultural values as sources of sexual scripts

Although Latinx adolescents' ideas about romantic relationships and sexuality are informed by biology-based processes (e.g., hormonal changes and pubertal maturation) and their social and cultural contexts (Tolman & Diamond, 2001), we focus on the role of the sociocultural context by using Sexual-Script Theory as a framework. Sociocultural approaches recognize that adolescent sexuality develops in context; that is, the meaning of sexuality to adolescents is based on historical and cultural belief systems (Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Sexual-Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 2003) emphasizes context, yet also highlights the phenomenological experience of, and perceptions of gratifications from, sex. According to Sexual-Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 2003), persons' sexual desires or desires for sex (i.e., intrapsychic scripts) are informed from their interaction with the social and cultural context (i.e., interpersonal and cultural scripts). Thus, ideas about sexuality (i.e., sexual scripts) derive from intrapsychic, interpersonal, and cultural scripts. Adolescents' sexual decision-making, in turn, is informed by social expectations, gender ideologies, and familial and cultural values (Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Given that Latinx families emphasize family loyalty and interdependency (Knight et al., 2010), and that parents and siblings are key sources of sexual scripts (Christopher, 2001), Latinx parents and (especially) older siblings are influential in adolescents' ideas about sex and romantic relationships.

Previous findings, among Latinx families, have pointed to the influence parents' messages can have in shaping adolescents' ideas about sex and dating (Raffaelli, 2005; Romo & Hurtado, 2021; Velazquez et al., 2017). Latinx parents' messages about sex are tied to the importance of family honor and procreation (Raffaelli & Iturbide, 2009). Latinx parents, for example, instill the abstinence ideal, which is the idea that sex should only be conducted in the marital context or in the hopes to extend the family line (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). These messages also reflect traditional gender roles, namely *marianismo* and *machismo* (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). *Marianismo* is the idealization of female chastity and service to family, and *machismo* is the idealization of male virility and courageousness (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). However, Latinx adolescents' acceptance of these messages may not always be consistent with their behaviors. Although Latinx

adolescents may feel agency in protecting themselves during sexual experiences, they may also face discrimination from medical providers limiting their access to contraception and family planning counseling services (Carvajal & Zambrana, 2020).

In turn, Latinx parents have different expectations and use different treatment for their sons' and daughters' sexual and romantic behavior (Raffaelli, 2005). For example, Latinx parents use strategies (e.g., prohibit dating) to protect daughters' chastity (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). This results in Latina adolescents reporting more restrictive dating experiences than Latino adolescents (Raffaelli, 2005) whereas Latino adolescents report having more sex compared to Latina adolescents (Upchurch et al., 2001). Latina adolescents are also more likely to receive negative messages about dating and sex, such as the notion that dating leads to pregnancy (Sanchez et al., 2017). For instance, Latina females report more relational messages about sex from parents whereas Latino males report more recreational messages about sex from parents (Manago et al., 2015). Relational messages emphasize that sex is acceptable in a monogamous romantic relationship, whereas recreational messages emphasize that sex is a normative and pleasurable activity outside of relationships (Epstein & Ward, 2008). However, when Latinx parents are more acculturated, adolescents are less likely to adhere to traditional gender values (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2012) and the abstinence ideal (Afable-Munsuz & Brindis, 2006).

Similar to sexual scripts, dating scripts are informed by family members and cultural values. For example, Milbrath and colleagues (2009) found that some Mexican American teen boys believed that the purpose of dating was to create a family whereas some Mexican American teen girls believed that promiscuity dishonors the family. These findings illustrate how cultural values such as *familismo*, that is supporting family members, feeling obligated to help them when they are in need, and believing that one's own behaviors reflect on their families (Knight et al., 2010), and gender ideologies coincide with adolescents' ideas about dating and romantic relationships (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Similarly, recent findings have shown that in conversations with daughters about dating, Mexican-origin mothers typically emphasized the negative consequences from romantic relationships and sexual involvement (Romo & Hurtado, 2021). Mothers advised daughters to know a partner's positive traits, such as being trustworthy, because boys tend to be irresponsible, to guard against manipulative boyfriends because boys are likely to demand sex, to set boundaries because boys can be overly touchy, and to uphold their autonomy because boys tend to be controlling (Romo & Hurtado, 2021). These findings, like previous ones (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001), demonstrate that Mexican-origin mothers may be uncomfortable with their daughters' involvement in romantic relationships.

Other findings among Mexican-origin adolescents have underlined the importance of commitment in romantic relationships. For example, U.S. Mexican girls prioritized personal characteristics, such as being trustworthy, and relational characteristics, such as feeling support and being treated with respect (Dimmitt Champion et al., 2019). U.S. Mexican girls also believe cheating is a result of lack of commitment (Williams & Hickle, 2011). U.S. Mexican adolescents also emphasize that committed relationships are characterized with frequent acts of care, romance, and intense emotions (Milbrath et al.,

2009). Overall, Mexican-origin adolescents' ideas about romantic relationships highlight the importance of commitment in romantic relationships, which likely derive from familism values. In short, Latinx adolescents' ideas about sexuality and dating experiences may echo parents' messages about sex, which reflect familial and cultural values.

Sibling influences on adolescents' sexuality and romantic relationships

Siblings also shape adolescents' socialization about sex and dating. Previous findings have shown that younger siblings often seek support and advice from their older siblings about various topics (Tucker et al., 2001). Additionally, in a study with a diverse sample of adolescents and their older sisters (40% of adolescents and their sisters identified as Latina) older siblings act as confidants and mentors in the domains of dating and sexuality (Killoren & Roach, 2014). In fact, when sisters have conversations about sex and dating, their messages emphasized the importance of having healthy romantic relationships, the necessity of using protection during sex, the negative effects of romantic relationships on school performance, and the sexual pressure received from peers (Killoren et al., 2019). The content of these messages, in turn, were more reflective of older sisters' dating and sex experiences, intentions, and attitudes than younger sisters' dating and sex experiences, intentions, and attitudes. Similarly, previous findings have shown that younger siblings' sexual risk behaviors reflect their older siblings' sexual risk behaviors (East et al., 1993), consistent with social learning mechanisms (Bandura, 1977). For example, East and Khoo (2005) found that younger and older siblings have similar sexual risks and behaviors when siblings are gender-matched, when siblings have positive relationships, and when older siblings have greater power in the sibling relationship. These findings align with a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1977), which espouses the notion of greater social influence when these characteristics are present in relationships. Similarly, Whiteman and colleagues (2014) found that when younger siblings reported high modeling (that is, they wanted to be like their older siblings), older siblings' sexual risk behaviors predicted younger siblings' sexual risk behavior 2 years later. In brief, older siblings' advice and suggestions about dating and sex may directly influence younger siblings; however, older siblings may also indirectly influence younger siblings' ideas about sex and dating through social learning mechanisms.

Siblings may also inform adolescents' dating and romantic relationship scripts. For instance, Mexican-origin older siblings' romantic relationship status predicted younger siblings' romantic relationship status 2 years later (Wheeler et al., 2016). Accordingly, younger siblings are learning from observing older siblings' dating experiences and the benefits they reap from romantic relationships (Killoren & Roach, 2014). Interestingly, when younger siblings reported low *familismo*, they were more likely to mimic older siblings' cohabitation, but when younger siblings reported high *familismo*, they were less likely to model older siblings' cohabitation (Wheeler et al., 2016). These findings identify cultural values and sibling dynamics as relevant mechanisms of dating and romantic relationship scripts for Mexican-origin adolescents.

Present study

We examined U.S. Midwest Latinx adolescents' ideas about the roles of parents and older siblings on their sexuality and romantic relationships. Latinx adolescents described parents' expectations about sexuality and dating, and how their parents were influential in shaping adolescents' own ideas about sexuality and romantic relationships. Further, we explored the role of older siblings in Latinx adolescents' ideas about sexuality and dating. Based on previous literature and a sexual scripting perspective (Simon & Gagnon, 2003), we expected that Latinx families' unique cultural values and gender ideologies (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001) would be associated with adolescents' perceptions of the roles of parents and older siblings on their ideas about and experiences with sexuality and romantic relationships.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited to participate in focus groups about Latinx adolescent boys' and girls' media use, culture, and romantic relationships. Our sample included 44 Latinx adolescents, aged 14–18 years ($M = 16.39$). Of the participants, 43 of 44 filled out the demographic questionnaire. More participants identified as cisgender women 59% ($n = 26$) than cisgender men 39% ($n = 17$). A majority of participants ($n = 34$) reported their ethnicity as Mexican or Mexican American, with one identifying as Central American, and five as South American. Twenty four participants were born in the U.S., and for those born in a different country, the average age of moving to the U.S. was 5.42 years. Thirty-seven percent of mothers and 33 percent of fathers were born in the U.S. A total of 44% ($n = 18$) reported that their fathers had not completed high school and 42% ($n = 18$) said that their mothers had not completed high school. Sixty-three percent of the participants lived in households with their mothers and fathers. Sixty-five percent ($n = 29$) of participants said that their native language was Spanish, and 18% ($n = 8$) said they spoke only Spanish at home.

Procedures

In 2013, we conducted five focus groups. The focus groups were completed in English. Focus group participants were recruited in Missouri (USA) through community organizations, posting fliers on public bulletin boards, and through word-of-mouth snowball sampling. One female focus group ($n = 7$) was completed in a college-sized town. Focus group participants were part of a university-affiliated Latinx-oriented 4-H group. These focus group participants were compensated with a dinner of pizza and refreshments and the focus groups were held at a university office space. A Latinx research consultant was hired to recruit participants, aged 16–18 years, for two female focus groups ($n = 19$) and two male focus groups ($n = 18$) in a large midwestern city. Focus groups in the large midwestern city were conducted at a public library in a primarily Latinx community and

participants were paid \$40. Focus groups were conducted with trained same-sex moderators and note takers who were all graduate students. Facilitators used a focus group guide. All focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. Researchers obtained Institutional Review Board approval prior to initiating the research.

Focus group questions

These data were part of a larger study that looked at social media and its impact on romantic relationships (Len-Rios et al., 2016). A total of three focus group questions were used for the current study: “Do you think that Latino parents have different dating expectations for their sons or daughters?”; “How important do you think parents are in influencing what teens think about sex and romantic relationships?”; and “In Latino culture, what role do you think older siblings have in terms of younger siblings’ romantic relationships?”. The focus group in the college-sized town was not asked the second question, so data to answer that question are only from the four focus groups in the large Midwestern city.

Data coding and analysis

To analyze our focus group data, we conducted inductive thematic analysis using steps outlined by Braun and Clark (2006). The coders included the first author and three female undergraduate research assistants. The ethnicity of the coders was diverse and included women who were European American, U.S. Mexican, and African American. First, the coders read the focus group transcripts. Second, the coders developed initial codes and met with the first author to review those codes. If there was a disagreement about a code, the coders discussed their reasoning for selecting a particular code and the research team continued the discussion until a consensus was reached. Third, the research team met to discuss the codes and determine how they could be grouped into themes. All coders were in agreement about the identified themes. A codebook was created that defined and named the themes and codes relating to each theme. Each of the three research questions were coded separately, and there is overlap in codes between questions, but not within the same question. Rater consensus was established by discussing the coding among members of the research team until all team members agreed on the final codes (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

Results

Broadly, we were concerned with Latinx adolescents’ perspectives on parents’ and siblings’ influences on their romantic relationships and sexuality. We were specifically interested in exploring adolescents’ ideas about parents’ differential expectations for daughters and sons, parents’ influences on adolescents’ romantic relationships and sexuality, and older siblings’ role in adolescents’ romantic relationships. Importantly, adolescents discussed both their own “first-person” experiences as well as hypothetical

Table 1. Themes, codes, number of codes per theme, and number of focus groups representing themes and codes.

Themes	Codes	Number of codes	Focus groups
Expectations			
Girls versus Boys		25	5
	Stricter with girls	15	5
	Boys have freedom	8	3
	Differences between brothers and sisters	2	2
		29	5
Rules and expectations			
	Rules	11	3
	Expectations	18	4
Teen pregnancy			
	Teen pregnancy	11	4
Culture			
	Family values	1	1
	Latinx values	3	2
	Generational differences	4	2
	Importance of education	3	2
Influence ^a			
Communication		7	3
	Communication	7	3
Attitudes		32	4
	Attitudes toward sex	4	3
	Attitudes toward teen pregnancy	4	3
	Sexual knowledge	11	2
	Stricter with girls	3	1
	Sexual activity	4	2
Older siblings			
Roles		15	5
	Role model	5	2
	Responsibilities	6	2
	Protective	4	2
Differences		9	3
	Younger versus older	9	3
Relationship quality		5	2
	Relationship quality	5	2

^aOnly four focus groups were asked this question.

situations. See [Table 1](#) for themes, codes, number of codes per theme and code, and number of focus groups representing themes and subthemes.

Parental expectations

Coders identified four different themes from adolescents' discussions about their parents' dating expectations, including specific differences for girls versus boys, a general description of dating rules and expectations, the role of teen pregnancy, and the role of culture. Overwhelmingly, participants agreed that parents' expectations differed based on adolescents' gender. This was mentioned in all five focus groups and represented 33% of codes for this question. In both male and female focus groups, adolescents noted gender-based differential expectations, but it was discussed more frequently in the female focus groups. Overall, adolescents stated that parents were strict with girls, but not with boys. In a female focus group, one participant stated "They're just more strict. Like with guys I think, they can't do whatever, but they can do much more than girls can." Another female participant said "I have to have like a certain time and I have to text when I get there, and my parents are like super protective." A male participant said "they (girls) usually have to say like who you going with, where you going, what time are you coming back." When commenting on parents' expectations for boys, a participant in the female focus group said "They can do whatever they want, the boys. They can't do anything bad". The adolescents in the female focus groups described more general expectations for girls versus boys; whereas, adolescents in the male focus groups noted specific differences they observed between themselves and their other-gender siblings. One male participant said "I have sisters and like sometimes when I want to go out it's easier for me to leave the house and not to provide that much information...but for my sisters I guess it's different because...they can get pregnant. I can't".

The most common theme regarding parents' expectations was identifying the rules and expectations that parents had for their sons and daughters. This was mentioned in all five focus groups and represented 38% of codes for this question. Parents had rules about dating, including when they can start dating, as well as expectations about dating. One female participant said "My stepdad always says, can't date until he's dead". A male participant also said that a difference between boys and girls was, "For the girls, they have like a certain age for them to start dating and like sometimes they have to go and ask the parents first." Another male participant then said that for boys dating "is nothing big, just go to our parents, they don't care much." There was also a focus on protection during sex—parents were more likely to buy condoms for boys than girls. A male participant said, "I know like a boy's mama she'll buy him condoms, but a girl's dad will be like 'he better not' you know. He won't think they're doing anything. But the parents of the boy, they'll probably be like buying him condoms and making sure that they're safe. They're gonna do it if they want to whether they like it or not."

Adolescents in the female focus groups said that their parents expected manners and respect from their romantic partners. One female participant said "My dad expects the guy to come up and talk to them. I think manners are really important to my father." Another said that her mother had an opinion on her romantic partners' clothing style. She said "When I first started dating my boyfriend, he would come with his pants all sagging, and when my mom first saw she was like 'I'm gonna get you a belt.'" Other female adolescents mentioned that the most important expectations that parents had was that the romantic

partner was respectful. “They just care about respect. Like as long as he respects you, and he respects the relationship, then you guys are good.”

In the male focus groups, participants described some of the expectations that their romantic partner’s parents had for them. One male participant said, “You have to live up to the standards of the mom or dad if you want that girl.” Another noted “I’m not about to change for my girlfriend’s parents because they want me to change. If they want me to change and I don’t, then whatever happens, happens. I’m not about to change for that girl.”

Another theme that emerged when examining adolescents’ perspectives on parental expectations, was the role of teen pregnancy and parents’ expectation that their children should not become teen parents. Teen pregnancy was mentioned in four of the five focus groups and represented 14.5% of codes for this question. One male participant said, “Once a girl would get pregnant...their parents would get mad because that kind of ruins their family’s image because of their daughter getting pregnant at an early age.” Another participant in a male focus group discussed what his parents would do if his girlfriend was pregnant, “If I were to get a girl pregnant, I’m pretty sure that they’d yell at me first...and then get back on my feet and try everything I can to like support this child that I’m about to have.” Often, the expectation to not have a child as a teen came from parents’ own experiences with teen pregnancy. A female participant said, “My mom got pregnant at a young age so she is always like I don’t want you to end up like that.”

The final theme regarding parents’ expectations was the role of culture in explaining why parents had certain expectations. This theme was mentioned in four of the five focus groups and represented 14.5% of the codes for this question. Adolescents described the importance of Mexican cultural traditions, like a girl’s *Quinceañera*. One male participant described it as, “Basically a celebration for a Mexican Latino girl. When she turns 15 she is considered a woman.” A male participant said that there are stereotypes for Mexican and Latina girls, “Like after their *Quince*, they end up getting pregnant or something.” Culturally-based gender stereotypes also played a role in parents’ expectations. A female adolescent explained these gender stereotypes as, “The Mexican fathers basically think that men are above the women.” There was also an emphasis placed on education. Parents’ expected their children to value education and not dating. A male participant said, “Parents basically just don’t want you like just concentrating mainly on the girl most of the time. They also want you to stay in school, focus on your job and the rest of the work.” Further, some adolescents thought that these expectations were due to generational differences. A female participant noted, “My parents grew up over there [in Mexico] and like I guess they are stuck with the mindset of how it was back then and...they don’t know that things in Mexico have also changed.”

Our findings show that adolescents recognize gendered approaches to sexual scripts and parenting whereby boys are given more autonomy than girls. Adolescents are also aware of the reasons behind parents’ different expectations – differences are shaped by traditional gender role attitudes, parents’ own “mistakes”, and culturally-based values. Parents are not only concerned about teen pregnancy for their daughters, but also for their sons. Questions are raised as to how these normative scripts are protective factors and how they fit within the current cultural context.

Parents' influence

We wanted to learn from adolescents how important parents are in influencing what teens think about sex and romantic relationships. Based on adolescents' discussions, coders identified several themes, revolving around how parents talk to adolescents about sex and dating, as well as parents' attitudes toward sex and dating. Adolescents said that communication about sex with parents was very influential for their sexual and romantic beliefs and behaviors. Communication with parents was mentioned in three of the four focus groups and represented 18% of codes for this question. Some adolescents reported that their parents did talk to them about sex. One female participant disclosed, "My mom has always, like since I was 11, she started talking to me about sex and you know how it happens and stuff and she talked to me most when I was 15 and 16 because she knew that that's the time when girls get pregnant." Another stated "My mom, she's always like, every time, when she talked to me about my boyfriend or something, she's always like tell me when you guys are having sex so I can put you on birth control or something, but I honestly don't feel comfortable like oh yeah mom I'm having sex and just like telling her." Other adolescents said that their parents did not talk to them about sex. A female participant said, "I think they tend to want to cover it, Latino moms want to cover it up and not face it."

Adolescents also discussed their parents' attitudes and that their parents may not want them to have sex, but that they want to make sure that their children are safe if they do have sex. Parents' attitudes about sex were mentioned in all four focus groups and represented 82% of the codes for this question. A male participant said, "I don't think a parent just wants you to go out there and have sex like that but if they know you...gonna get any you might as well use protection." Another male participant noted, "Parents have already lived that life you know what I'm saying? They already know what to expect. They aren't stupid." A female participant said, "I'm 19 ... she knows that I am old enough to know what's right from wrong, but she always tells me your body, someday your body's gonna need it. Your body's gonna need sex, cause that's every human, but just whenever you're in that moment, just like think for a minute and just use protection and don't do it with some guy that just wants it. Do it with some guy that you really love, and you know that you're not gonna do it just to, do it you know because they really love you and you love them."

Overall, adolescents stated that their parents were influential in what teens thought about sex and romantic relationships. Communication (or lack of) was important for how influential parents were. Some adolescents noted that their parents talked to them about sex and others said that their parents did not talk to them about sex. Parents also may not want their children to have sex, but they realize it is a possibility, and so they want to make sure that adolescents are using protection. There were some gender differences noted, however, such that boys were more likely to be expected to have sex and to be given condoms than were girls.

Older siblings

In addition to the importance of parents for Latinx adolescents' sex and romantic relationship attitudes, we were interested in the role of older siblings. When asked about the

importance of older siblings in adolescents' sexual and romantic relationships, adolescents described specific roles of older siblings, such as role model and protector, but also that the influence of older siblings depended on the quality of the sibling relationship. Older siblings' roles were discussed in all five focus groups and represented 52% of codes for this question. Participants stated that in Latinx families, older siblings should serve as role models for their younger siblings. A female participant said, "Your brothers and sisters look up to you and they want to be like you. You can see how they look up to you and sometimes I feel the pressure...if I let them down. I feel like it gets hard, but you see like your brothers and sisters and it motivates you to do better." A male participant said "I guess, like if you're a flirt your younger brothers, your little brothers are going to copy you and be a flirt and not really focus on the relationship."

Adolescents also discussed how older siblings are protective of their younger siblings and do not want to see them hurt. A female participant stated, "Older siblings, they're more protective when they see their younger siblings in a relationship. When I first got with my boyfriend you know whatever asking me questions about him, and my sister was more of the strong one, she was more protective [than her brother] and she actually got him [the boyfriend] aside and talked to him and was like you better don't do this, don't do this, but you better protect her. My brother, he's more of the cool one and you know. He got to know my boyfriend more and they're both like cool and everything." Another participant said, "My brother's really protective over me, and when I first started bringing my boyfriend over, my brother would always like, he would always stare at him, like a death look like look at him and my boyfriend didn't feel comfortable so he was like can I just leave? So until my brother like started trying to talk to him, ask him questions...like after that like my brother even tried to hang out with him sometimes." A male participant who stated, "Older brothers are more protective over their younger sisters", echoed this sentiment.

Other adolescents discussed how their parents treated them differently compared to their older sibling. These differences were described in three of the five focus groups and represented 31% of codes for this question. Adolescent girls, in particular, described how they have more privileges than their older sisters had at their age. One female adolescent said, "I think once the older ones go through that first stage with their dad it makes it easier on the younger one. Cause they already know, oh yeah, my daughter's gonna have a boyfriend." Another female participant said, "It's a lot like easier because they were like super strict with my older sisters, and they're a lot more lenient with me, you know, but still strict." A female participant who is an older sister agreed with these comments, saying, "No they're really strict with me. I was the first girl and then it goes my brother, and then my other brother, and then my other brother and my sister, so I'm guessing my sister is going to have it easier compared to me." Another said, "If a sister has a boyfriend when she is fifteen ... I was allowed to have boyfriends younger."

Although not frequently mentioned, participants said that the roles of older siblings depended upon the quality of the sibling relationship. This theme was mentioned in two out of the five focus groups and represented 17% of the codes for this question. If the relationship was not a positive one, then older siblings did not play a role in their younger

siblings' relationships. For instance, a male participant said, "I guess me and my brother don't get along and that's why".

In sum, questions are raised concerning generation and how siblings may provide learning experiences that more closely resemble similar-lived realities compared to the experiences of their parents. Contrasting parental influences with sibling influences provides insights into familial relationships and their effects on adolescent wellbeing. Lastly, adolescents reported that older siblings are role models and play a protective role, but the importance of older siblings depends on relationship quality.

Discussion

Family members, including parents (Raffaelli, 2005; Romo & Hurtado, 2021; Velazquez et al., 2017) and older siblings (Wheeler et al., 2016; Whiteman et al., 2014), are important socialization agents of Latinx adolescents' ideas about and experiences with sexuality and romantic relationships. An important contribution of our study was our use of a strengths-based framework to examine parents' expectations and influence on Latinx adolescents' sexuality and romantic relationship development. Additionally, our study contributed by focusing on sibling relationships and the influence older siblings have on Latinx adolescents' involvement in sexuality and dating relationships. Our main findings, including differential treatment of boys and girls, the role of cultural values, the messages regarding teen pregnancy, communication with parents, and the influence of older siblings, were aligned well with Sexual-Script Theory and a cultural-strengths developmental perspective.

Gender socialization and cultural strengths

Consistent with socialization of gender roles in Latinx families, such as *marianismo* (Espinosa-Hernández et al., 2016), adolescents believed that parents had more rules about dating and were more restrictive of girls' sexual and romantic experiences compared to boys (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001; Villarruel, 1998), evidenced by participants comparing their experiences to those of their other-gender sibling(s). Gender-based cultural traditions may explain parents' differential expectations, such as *La Quinceañera*, a celebration for a Latina turning 15 years of age that recognizes a Latina's transition to becoming a woman. A study of Latina mothers' and daughters' expectations after *La Quinceañera* does show that both expect daughters to have more autonomy, for instance, ability to go on group dates, but daughters' expectations of their own autonomy were much greater compared to mothers' expectations of their daughters' autonomy (Romo et al., 2014). Although not as strongly as once suggested, gender plays an important role in Latinx family dynamics (Cauce & Domenech-Rodríguez, 2002; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004), and parents often communicate sexual double standard messages to their children (Manago et al., 2015).

From a cultural strengths perspective, parents' expectations were based on several important cultural values, including *respeto* (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994) and *bien educado* (Valdés, 1996). Adolescents emphasized parents' messages about the importance of

respect for girls' dating partners. Parents wanted their daughters' dating partners to be respectful of them, by following their rules and by presenting oneself (Romo & Hurtado, 2021). The Latinx cultural values of *respeto* (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994) and *bien educado* (Valdés, 1996), which emphasize the importance of being respectful towards others and having good manners, guide parenting in Latinx families (Calzada et al., 2010) and are qualities that parents desire in their daughters' dating partners. Our work is consistent with other research that has found that relaying messages about a boyfriend's respect for their daughter was important for mothers (Romo & Hurtado, 2021). The emphasis on traditional Latinx values of *respeto* and *bien educado* are cultural strengths socialized by parents that can protect Latinx adolescents from harmful sexual and dating experiences.

The role of teen pregnancy

In addition, participants discussed teen pregnancy frequently and how their parents did not want their children to become teen parents. Adolescents said concerns over improving on their parents' circumstances, particularly for those who had had children at young ages, and ruining the family image, were cited by their parents. Our findings show that Latinx parents may be openly discouraging teen pregnancy and using their own lives as examples of the hardship associated with teen parenthood and the desire for their children to have different experiences. Further, the work on *familismo* and teen pregnancy has speculated that familism values may reduce adolescents' involvement in sexual behaviors and risk of teen pregnancy (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001; Villarruel, 1998). However, in a study of Mexican-origin youth in the U.S., *familismo* was not associated with youth's intentions to have sex within the next year (Killoren et al., 2011). Moreover, in a study of adolescents in Mexico, *familismo* was negatively associated with oral sex, but *familismo* was not associated with making out or vaginal sex (Espinosa-Hernández et al., 2016). Thus, although these messages might have the intention of preventing teenage pregnancy and early sexual activity, the mixed findings suggest the need for more work to determine under what circumstances *familismo* might impact Latinx youth's sexuality and sexual decision-making.

Communication with parents

Latinx adolescents in the present study emphasized that parents' influence depended upon communication with parents about sex and parents' attitudes about sex. Both boys and girls in our study spoke primarily of communication with mothers. Adolescents noted that their mothers talked to them about consequences of sex – teen pregnancy was a frequent issue discussed – as well as the importance of condoms. However, there were some gender differences noted in our study regarding parents' communication about sex such that adolescents said that discussing condoms was more likely to happen for Latinx boys than for Latinx girls. These findings suggest the central role of mothers in sexual socialization and the presence of some strong gender-specific conversations with their adolescents regarding sexuality.

Some adolescents said that their parents did not talk to them about sex and suggested that Latina mothers wanted to ignore that their children may be having sex. The present findings are consistent with other research that parents are a common source of sexual information though only 34% of Latinx adolescents reported parents to be the primary source suggesting that 66% of adolescents are getting information about sex from other sources (Eversole et al., 2017). Perhaps these findings are due to an acculturation gap between mothers and their children. It could be that acculturated adolescents are going to other sources, including peers, for information about sex. Additionally, as seen in other racial and ethnic groups, Latinx parents may feel reluctant to have conversations with their children about sex (Flores & Barroso, 2017). Taken together, the findings suggest the need to provide support for Latinx parents to feel comfortable to talk with their youth.

Older siblings' influence

As expected, we found that older siblings played important roles in adolescents' romantic relationships. Older siblings, in particular, pointed out their responsibility to serve as role models for their younger siblings, especially when their relationships were close and supportive. Within Latinx families, the emphasis on the importance of family and responsibility to help family members (*familismo*) may highlight the salience of older siblings' role and older siblings may feel pride in their ability to help their younger siblings (Hernández & Bámaca-Colbert, 2016). Further, our findings were consistent with social learning tenets that individuals are most likely to imitate the behaviors of those who are more powerful and with whom they have close relationships (Bandura, 1977).

Additionally, younger siblings discussed how their older siblings were protective of them. This was especially true for female adolescents. Younger sisters said that their older brothers would get to know their boyfriends and often tried to intimidate their boyfriends before developing a friendship with them. Much of the literature on sibling influence points out that adolescent girls may be at risk for involvement in risky sexual behaviors when they have an older brother given that the older brothers' friends are potential dating and sexual partners (East, 2009; Killoren et al., 2017). Our study shows that older brothers of Latinx adolescent girls may also play a positive role by being protective and taking the time to get to know their younger sisters' boyfriends. Latinx cultural values of *familismo* (Hernández & Bámaca-Colbert, 2016) and *caballerismo*, that is the positive aspects of masculinity defined as characteristics such as nurturance, hard work, responsibility, protection of the family (Arciniega et al., 2008), may play a role, leading to older siblings' desire to protect their younger sisters.

For adolescent girls and their sisters, both older and younger sisters reported that parents gave the fewest privileges to girls who were older sisters and the most privileges to girls who were younger sisters. Parents allowed girls who were younger sisters to have boyfriends earlier than girls who were older sisters, showing that parents gave autonomy to younger sisters at earlier ages than older sisters. Examining adolescents' perceptions of privileges in terms of romantic relationships, such as when they are allowed to date, when siblings are the same chronological age may reveal differences in privileges between older and younger siblings and this may have implications for adolescents' involvement in

sexual behaviors and romantic relationships. For instance, on average, younger siblings engage in sexual activities at a younger age than do older siblings (Wheeler et al., 2016). Further, if siblings are perceiving differential treatment in terms of dating privileges, this may have implications for sibling relationship quality as well as each siblings' adjustment, with the sibling receiving "worse" treatment doing more poorly compared to the sibling receiving preferential treatment (Padilla et al., 2016).

Limitations and future directions

Our study had several limitations and these limitations should be improved upon in future studies. First, although we gained valuable information from our focus group participants, our sample size was small, which limited the generalizability of our findings in terms of country of origin, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Further, the Latinx community is not homogenous and there is great variability in values and beliefs across and within different Latinx subgroups (Ramirez, 2004). Examining associations among parenting, cultural values, and adolescents' romantic relationships and sexuality in Latinx families from different countries of origin is important. Second, only heteronormative messages were discussed and future work should examine how parents and siblings are influential on sexual minority Latinx adolescents' romantic relationship and sexuality development. Third, it is possible that other factors, such as family conflict, may influence adolescents' interpretations of parents' and siblings' influence (Tyrell et al., 2014). Gaining perspectives from parents, siblings, and adolescents, along with media behaviors and measures of conservatism, as well as utilizing other data collection methods, such as observations, may increase our understanding of family dynamics and how they are related to adolescents' ideas about dating and sexuality. And fourth, adolescents gave both first-person and hypothetical examples during focus group discussions. While both provide important information, having information about adolescents' lived experiences may be most relevant when examining how parents and siblings are important socialization agents. Finally, we did not collect data on sexual orientation or disability status, and it is important for future studies to do so.

There are many important future research directions. Future work should examine how Latinx adolescents' sexual and romantic relationship socialization is influenced by the interplay of biological and sociocultural factors (Cherkasskaya & Rosario, 2018; Tolman & Diamond, 2001), as well as other social factors such as family members, including multiple siblings, and extended family, such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. Additionally, exploring adolescent engagement with media on sexual attitudes may also be informative, particularly if the media ingrains messages about cultural norms of behavior in romantic relationships (Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005). For instance, examining what Latinx adolescents learn about romantic relationships and *machismo*, honor, and who is in charge in relationships, research on the influence of telenovelas, music, and social media are all likely important areas.

Conclusion

Sexuality and romantic relationships are normative aspects of Latinx adolescents' lives (Tyrell et al., 2014). We found that traditional gender role attitudes shaped parents' expectations and the influence they have on their adolescents' sexual and romantic relationship involvement. Additionally, several Latinx cultural values, including *familismo*, *marianismo*, *machismo*, *respeto* and *bien educado*, guided parents' expectations and influence Latinx adolescents' sexual and romantic relationship decision making and behaviors. Moreover, adolescents said that they wanted parents, primarily mothers, to talk to them about sex. Importantly, we also found that older siblings were important role models and were protective of their younger siblings, demonstrating *caballerismo*. These findings inform and expand existing theories and extend our understanding of the various influences on Latinx adolescents' sexuality and romantic relationships.

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