Title of Paper/Presentation (2): The Influence of Family Contexts on Youth Violence across Race/Ethnicity: An Analysis Among Latino, Black, and White Adolescents

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Background:
The evidence examining violence among Latino youth is limited by the homogenization of all groups under a pan-ethnic label, which obscures the possible differential effects of risk and protective factors across subgroups. Recent evidence suggests that differences in violence may exist within the Latino population by ethnicity (Felson et al., 2009; Sampson et al., 2005), which may be due, in part, to experiencing different environments.

Methods:
Addressing limitations of previous work, this study examines racial/ethnic differences in the risk for and family influences on violent behaviors among Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Black, and White youths using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Specifically, this study examines whether factors related to familism, an important cultural value among Latinos, are protective against youth violence, and how they operate across racial/ethnic subgroups.

Results:
Results indicate that ethnic minority youth differed from White adolescents, but not from each other in their risk for violent behaviors. Family cohesion was associated with decreases in odds for violence for most groups. Parental engagement was associated with increased odds for Whites and Blacks, but had no effect among any of the Latino subgroups. Adolescent autonomy was associated with increased odds among Puerto Ricans. Household composition was only significant among Cubans and Whites. Findings regarding immigrant generation were mixed.

Conclusion:
The family environment showed a complex pattern of influence across the different groups of adolescents, suggesting that it is not universally protective against violence. None of the factors assessed reduced the disparity in violent behaviors between Whites and ethnic minority adolescents, despite being significant predictors of the risk of violence. A socio-ecological framework will be used to explain these and other findings.