

Abstract

Understanding the potential role of cultural value endorsement in promoting positive parenting is important for studies on Mexican-origin fathers who are at risk for exposure to psychological stress. Studies have yet to account for specific cultural values that are particularly pertinent to Mexican-origin fathers. Using a community sample of Mexican-origin fathers ($N=85$) of 3 to 6-year-old children, this study aimed to test the linkages between psychological distress and parenting practices, and consider whether three cultural values (*familismo*, *respeto* and *caballerismo*) moderate these associations. Findings from hierarchical linear regression analyses indicated an inverse relationship between psychological distress and supportive coparenting quality when fathers endorsed low levels of *familismo*. An inverse link between psychological distress and father accessibility and engagement were also observed when fathers reported low levels of *respeto*. The findings point to the implications of considering culturally-specific factors that foster positive parenting to inform fatherhood intervention work among Mexican-origin families.

Keywords: Cultural values, familismo, fathers, Mexican Americans, parenting, psychological distress.

Familismo, Respeto, and Caballerismo: Cultural Values as Buffers Against the Effects of Psychological Distress on Mexican-origin Fathers' Positive Parenting Practices

A burgeoning body of stress-transmission research asserts that psychological distress is a primary mechanism disrupting positive parenting behaviors (Emmen et al., 2013; Goodman, 2008; Riley et al., 2014). According to the Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 2010), psychological distress is linked to parenting quality, specifically undermining parents' ability to be positively engaged and accessible to their children (Helms et al., 2014; Masarik & Conger, 2017). Family Stress Model research has only recently been extended to study racially diverse groups of parents (i.e., Simons et al., 2016), including Mexican-origin parents (i.e., Derlan et al., 2019), but most of this research is based on data from mothers. Research guided by a family stress model approach is particularly pertinent to fathers of Mexican-origin due to their disproportionate exposure to sources of psychological distress (Cabrera et al., 2021; Park et al., 2018), and therefore, necessitate further research on mechanisms that build resilient family processes.

Mexican-origin families, which encompass families who reside in the U.S. with either one parent born in Mexico or one parent born in the U.S. with Mexican heritage extending back to one or more generations, are an important and interesting group in which to study the linkages between psychological distress and parenting. For one, Mexican-origin families are the largest and fastest growing Hispanic group in the U.S., and therefore, represent a large segment of ethnic minority families (Krogstad & Noe-Bustamante, 2021). Also, nearly one-third of Mexican origin families live in low-income households (Gennetian et al., 2019a) and are disproportionately at risk for exposure to sociocultural contextual stressors, including economic hardship (Gennetian et al., 2019b; White et al., 2009). At the same time, however, Mexican-

origin fathers often parent within two-parent, stable households (Murphey et al., 2014). These demographic trends make Mexican-origin parents, especially under-studied fathers, a highly relevant group in which to study normative behaviors that may serve as adaptive strategies that protect against psychological distress and disrupt family stress model processes.

Mexican American Cultural Values and Fathers' Positive Parenting Practices

For Mexican-origin families, parenting is shaped by interactions among traditional beliefs and practices and U.S. cultural and contextual demands (e.g., Fuller & Garcia Coll, 2010). As explained through an ecodevelopmental perspective, individuals and families are embedded within a cultural context, and how individuals interact with their environment depends on culture (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). As such, parenting behaviors and beliefs are influenced by and a reflection of context and culture (Raj & Raval, 2013). In fact, there is a burgeoning literature documenting how father involvement varies by fathers' characteristics, including cultural beliefs about the importance of families and the roles of fathers in children's lives (Cabrera et al., 2013).

Cultural values are key elements that help shape parenting practices across multiple domains of parenting. In particular, cultural values such as *familismo*, *respeto*, and *caballerismo*, are salient for Latino fathers (Arciniega et al., 2008; Coltrane et al., 2004; Fuller, & Garcia Coll, 2010). Specifically, *familismo* is a set of normative beliefs that emphasize the centrality of the family and obligations to meet the needs of the family first before one's own (Knight et al., 2009a). The central aspects of *respeto* emphasize reverence, dignity, and consideration of others as essential for maintaining healthy relationships with family and others (Knight et al., 2009a). Lastly, *caballerismo*, often described as a positive derivative of *machismo*, is conceptualized as affiliation, emotional connectedness, and psychological well-being as related to values and beliefs about fathers' roles and responsibilities in the family (Arciniega et al., 2008). Traditional

machismo is often conceptualized as encompassing violent and aggressive qualities, and scholars who operationalize machismo commonly represent it as linked to positive relatedness to the family. Arciniega and colleagues (2008), however, have extrapolated *caballerismo* as a dimension of machismo to represent the interpersonal and affiliation dimensions of machismo. Thus, *caballerismo* is closely related with family relationships regarding responsibilities as a father, such as believing that “men should be affectionate with their children” (Arciniega et al., 2008).

A growing body of work indicates these cultural values are linked to behaviors that encourage the fulfillment of family roles (Cahill et al., 2021; Cruz et al., 2011; Glass, & Owen, 2010). For instance, research linking the cultural value of *familismo* and parenting shows that endorsement of attitudinal *familismo* beliefs may encourage parents to take active, child-centered approaches to parenting, and to approach parenting as a collaborative process, that is parenting with co-parents to meet mutually agreed upon goals for child socialization (Calzada et al., 2012; Fuller & Garcia Coll, 2012). In the few studies that have considered links between *familismo* beliefs and coparenting quality, endorsement of *familismo* beliefs has been positively linked to coparenting cooperation (Caldera et al., 2002; Sotomayor-Peterson et al., 2011). However, the two other cultural value constructs of *respeto* and *caballerismo* have rarely been considered in the context of Mexican-origin fathers' parenting practices (Calzada et al., 2012; Glass & Owen, 2010), particularly with young children (Cruz et al., 2011).

Using culturally-informed constructs to empirically test factors that mitigate psychological distress will help advance the field's understanding of how cultural and psychological processes intertwine to shape parenting.

Fathers' Positive Parenting Practices and Psychological Distress

Father involvement is a multidimensional construct. In the present study, we consider three separate aspects of positive parenting among Mexican-origin fathers, specifically two domains of fathers' parenting and one aspect of fathers' coparenting. Accessibility and engagement are two important and well-documented forms of involvement among fathers (Pleck, 2010). As conceptualized in the tripartite model of father involvement (see Lamb et al., 1985), *accessibility*, that is parental accessibility to the child, is a domain of involvement that signifies the quantity of physical involvement in the care of the child, such as being at home to put the child to bed. *Engagement* involves the quality of one-on-one interaction with the child, including playing or helping the child with homework. Both engagement and accessibility are affected by psychological distress (e.g., Shannon et al., 2009; Wilson & Durbin, 2010). Further, given that Mexican-origin fathers often parent within two-parent households, it is also important to account for their roles as co-parents by measuring the ways in which fathers support and work with mothers to raise their children, typically referred to as supportive coparenting (e.g., Feinberg, 2003). Burgeoning research elucidates the importance of fathers as supportive coparents in promoting child and family functioning (Frosch et al., 2021; McHale et al., 2012).

Along with the substantial growth in the study of fathers' accessibility, engagement, and supportive co-parenting, researchers have also investigated factors that undermine positive parenting behaviors. One important and growing area of this research is work that links parental psychopathology (e.g., parenting distress) to impairments in positive parenting behaviors (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010; Connell & Goodman, 2002; Goodman, 2008; Kane & Garber, 2004). Most notably, research guided by the Family Stress Model (Conger et al., 2010) documents the undermining effects of economic hardship on parents' psychological functioning, and consequently their parenting. This model has been expanded beyond economic hardship to

include other sources of stress for parents with origins that are external to the family (e.g., acculturative stress; Miller & Csizmadia, 2022) to support pathways linking psychological distress to parenting processes. Still, there is a scarcity of family stress model research that aims to identify and study culturally relevant factors that may buffer the effects of psychological distress on positive parenting practices, particularly among groups of parents at risk of experiencing stress such as Mexican-origin fathers.

Cultural Values as Buffers of Psychological Distress on Positive Parenting Practices

Although the body of research on cultural values among Mexican-origin fathers finds endorsement of these values is related to, and at times, promotes positive parenting (Cruz et al., 2011; Glass & Owen, 2010), it is still less well-understood if and how cultural value endorsement fosters fathers' positive parenting practices in the context of psychological distress. Although researchers have utilized cultural-contextual frameworks to show that familial and economic stressors undermine parenting via psychological distress among Mexican-origin fathers (White et al, 2009; Taylor et al., 2012), we are not aware of a study that accounts for the saliency of cultural values among Mexican-origin fathers and its role in buffering against the effects of psychological distress on positive parenting. Recent work linking greater cultural value endorsement with psychological functioning among Mexican-origin fathers (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2014), points to the need for accounting for cultural value endorsement as a potential moderator of the association between psychological distress and positive parenting, particularly among socioeconomically disadvantaged, Mexican-origin fathers. That is, cultural value endorsement may disrupt the associations central to the family stress model that link fathers' psychological distress to their parenting behaviors.

Present Study

The aim of this study is to advance research on Mexican origin fathers by moving beyond main effect designs to study the complexity of the conditions under which core cultural values represent a source of strength that promotes family resilience. Therefore, the goals of this study are to apply an adapted family stress model to: (1) extend our current understanding of the independent influences of psychological distress and cultural values (*familismo*, *respeto*, *caballerismo*) on fathers' positive parenting practices (engagement, accessibility, supportive coparenting), and (2) examine the role of these cultural values as moderators of the influence of psychological distress on positive parenting practices. We hypothesize that

Hypothesis 1: Psychological distress will be inversely related to engagement, accessibility, and supportive coparenting;

Hypothesis 2: All three cultural values will be positively related to the three parenting outcomes; and

Hypothesis 3: Endorsement of each of the three cultural values will moderate associations between psychological distress and the three parenting outcomes, such that greater levels of psychological distress will only be associated with unfavorable parenting outcomes among fathers reporting low endorsement of cultural values.

Method

Participants

Participants were from a community sample of 85 biological fathers self-identified as Mexican or Mexican American residing in a medium-sized city in Arizona (see Table 1).

Slightly over half (51%) of all fathers reported being born in Mexico. Fathers born in Mexico had lived on average for 16 years in the U.S. A little less than half (41%) of all fathers chose to

be interviewed in Spanish, while 59% completed the interview in English. Fathers were on average 35.83 years old ($SD = 7.30$). The majority of fathers were blue-collar workers.

Procedures

Data were collected from 2015 to 2016. Fathers were recruited primarily through distribution of English and Spanish flyers and announcements at local community events, online community ads, and multiple community locations, including libraries, laundromats, barber shops, churches, autobody shops, community college campuses, community centers, and child care centers. Eligibility criteria included self-identification by the fathers as Mexican or Mexican American, being the biological father of a typically developing 3 to 6-year-old child, living with and in a committed romantic relationship with the mother of the target child, and residing in the U.S.

All study materials were translated into Mexican Spanish unless a Spanish version previously validated with Mexican Americans was available. Translations were made by professional translators from a local university translation services center. One native Spanish speaker who is bilingual reviewed the English and Spanish versions and resolved any inconsistencies. Fathers were given the option of responding in English or Spanish. Spanish interviews were conducted by bilingual interviewers of the research team who are native Spanish speakers. Fathers were compensated \$30 in cash for participation in a one-time, 60- to 90-minute in-person interview consisting of a questionnaire and a semi-structured audiotaped interview. All interviews were conducted by trained, male interviewers of the research team who marked down the participants' responses and read each survey question and possible responses aloud to reduce problems associated with variations in literacy levels. Participants followed along with their own copy of the questionnaire. Fathers had the option of selecting the location of the interview.

Interviews took place primarily at a library, a community center, the study's lab office, or at the participant's home or work office. If an interview took place at the participant's home, interviewers were trained to conduct the interview in separate rooms and/or out of the hearing of other family members. All procedures were approved by, and in compliance with, the sponsoring institution's Institutional Review Board.

Measures

Key Variables

Psychological Dysfunction

Psychological distress. Fathers responded to two commonly used self-report symptoms checklists to assess depressive and anxious symptoms. First, fathers completed the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977). This is a 20-item self-report scale designed to measure depressive symptomatology in the general population. The scale consists of four subscales, including depressive affect, lack of well-being, interpersonal difficulties, and somatic symptoms. Fathers indicated how frequently they had experienced various feelings or symptoms of depression (e.g., "You were bothered by things that usually don't bother you") during the last week on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*Rarely or None of the Time*) to 4 (*Most or All of the Time*). All four subscales were summed to create a measure of total depressive symptoms (overall: $\alpha = .89$; English: $\alpha = .81$; Spanish: $\alpha = .92$), with greater scores reflecting more depressive symptoms. Second, fathers completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI; Beck et al., 1988) that required rating how much they have been bothered by 21 symptoms (e.g., "unable to relax") during the past week on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*a lot*). Items were summed to create a measure of total anxiety symptoms (overall: $\alpha = .88$; English: $\alpha = .77$; Spanish: $\alpha = .92$). Depressive and anxiety symptoms were highly correlated (r

= .54, $p < .001$), and therefore the standardized scores from the two scales were summed to create a composite measure of psychological distress (overall: $\alpha = .91$; English: $\alpha = .87$; Spanish: $\alpha = .93$), with higher scores indicating greater levels of psychological distress. Both the CES-D and BAI have demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity with Spanish- and English-speaking Mexican-origin fathers (White et al., 2009), including Mexican-origin fathers living near the U.S.-Mexican border (Vaeth et al., 2015).

Fathers' Positive Parenting Practices

Father accessibility. A 12-item measure of quantity of involvement (Reichman et al., 2001) was used to measure father accessibility. Fathers indicated how many days per week they participated in a series of different activities with their child ("Put child to bed"; "Let child help you with simple household chores") during a typical week on an 8-point scale ranging from 0 to 7 days per week. Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater levels of accessibility; possible scores ranged from 0 to 7. This scale has good internal reliability (overall $\alpha = .82$; English: $\alpha = .85$; Spanish: $\alpha = .76$).

Father engagement. The positive parenting subscale of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Frick, 1991) was used to measure father engagement. This subscale consists of 6 items ("You let your child know when he/she is doing a good job with something"; "You reward or give something extra to your child for obeying you or behaving well") on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*Always*). Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater levels of engagement; possible scores ranged from 1 to 5. This scale has demonstrated construct validity in prior work with Mexican-origin parents (Donovick & Rodriguez, 2008) and has moderately acceptable internal reliability (overall: $\alpha = .65$; English: $\alpha = .65$; Spanish: $\alpha = .66$) in the current study.

Father supportive coparenting. The coparenting support subscale of the Coparenting Questionnaire (Margolin et al., 2000) was used to examine supportive coparenting. This subscale consists of 8 items (“Support mother’s discipline decisions”) on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*Always*). Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater levels of supportive coparenting; possible scores ranged from 0 to 4. This scale has demonstrated construct validity in prior work with Spanish speaking Latino families (Haack et al., 2011) and has good internal reliability (overall $\alpha = .84$; English: $\alpha = .84$; Spanish: $\alpha = .86$) in the current study.

Cultural Values

Familismo. The three *familismo* subscales (*familismo* – support, obligation, and referent) from the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (Knight et al., 2009a) were used to examine fathers’ adherence to *Familismo* attitudes. These three subscales consist of a total of 16 items (*Familismo* support: “Parents should teach their children that the family always comes first”; *Familismo* obligation: “If a relative is having a hard time financially, one should help them out if possible; *Familismo* referent: “A person should always think about their family when making important decisions”) on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*completely*). Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater endorsement of *familismo* values; possible scores ranged from 0 to 4. This scale demonstrated good internal reliability (overall: $\alpha = .86$; English: $\alpha = .85$; Spanish: $\alpha = .86$).

Respeto. The respect subscale from the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (Knight et al., 2009a) was used to examine fathers’ adherence to *respeto* attitudes. This scale consists of 8 items (“Children should always honor their parents and never say bad things about them”) on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*completely*). Items were averaged so that higher

scores reflected greater endorsement of *respeto* values; possible scores ranged from 0 to 4. This scale demonstrated good internal reliability (overall: $\alpha = .74$; English: $\alpha = .78$; Spanish: $\alpha = .69$) in the current study.

Caballerismo. The *Caballerismo* subscale of the Traditional Machismo and Caballerismo Scale (Arciniega et al., 2008) was used to examine fathers' adherence to *caballerismo* attitudes. *Caballerismo* is a cultural value construct described as nurturing, family centered, and chivalrous. The *caballerismo* scale consists of 10 items ("Men should be affectionate with their children") on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very strongly agree*). Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater endorsement of *caballerismo* values; possible scores ranged from 1 to 7. This scale has demonstrated construct validity in prior work with U.S.-born and foreign-born Mexican-origin fathers (Arciniega et al., 2008; Glass & Owen, 2010) and has acceptable internal reliability (overall: $\alpha = .71$; English: $\alpha = .76$; Spanish: $\alpha = .68$).

Covariates

Maternal involvement. Fathers reported on the quantity of involvement of target child's mother using a 12-item measure (Reichman et al., 2001). Fathers indicated how many days per week mothers participated in a series of different activities with their child ("Put child to bed") during a typical week on an 8-point scale ranging from 0 to 7 days per week. Items were averaged so that higher scores reflected greater levels of involvement; possible scores ranged from 0 to 7. This scale has good internal reliability (overall $\alpha = .74$; English: $\alpha = .72$; Spanish: $\alpha = .75$).

Economic hardship. Items from the Basic Needs – Ability to Meet Expenses section of the Survey of Income and Program Participation and the Social Indicators Survey (SIPP, 1998) were used to examine economic hardship. This adapted scale as used by other researchers (e.g.,

White et al., 2009) consists of 13 items (e.g., “was child ever hungry, but you just couldn’t afford more food?”). Fathers responded with either a *yes* (1) or *no* (0) if they had faced any problems making ends meet because there was not enough money in the past twelve months. Items were averaged so that higher scores correspond to greater levels of economic hardship; possible scores ranged from 0 to 1. This adapted scale has established construct validity in prior work with Mexican-origin fathers (White et al., 2009) and demonstrated good internal reliability in the current study (overall $\alpha = .78$; English: $\alpha = .81$; Spanish: $\alpha = .75$).

Analytic Strategy

First, preliminary analyses were performed by examining the descriptive statistics and correlations among all variables. Second, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine mean-level differences in key study variables by paternal nativity status and language of interview. Third, data screening procedures were used to test for outliers and normality in the dependent variables. Fourth, all continuous independent variables were mean centered. Lastly, neither the independent nor dependent variables had any missing data. Three identical hierarchical linear regression models were computed with fathers’ accessibility, engagement, and supportive coparenting as the dependent variables. Each model included Step 1 (nativity, language of interview, economic hardship, target child’s age and sex, maternal involvement, psychological distress), Step 2 (*familismo*, *respeto*, *caballerismo*), and Step 3 (*familismo* x psychological distress, *respeto* x psychological distress, *caballerismo* x psychological distress). Statistically significant interaction terms were evaluated by plotting simple slopes of the lines defining the association between independent and dependent variables at -1 SD, mean and $+1$ SD of the moderator variables (Aiken & West, 1991).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Correlations, means, standard deviations, and skewness and kurtosis values of all variables used in the current study are presented in Table 2. Interestingly, no cultural value statistically significantly correlated with psychological distress. The parenting practices were positively correlated with one another. Consistent with prior work, psychological distress was inversely associated with both accessibility and supportive coparenting (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). Interestingly, psychological distress was not correlated with engagement. Economic hardship was statistically significantly positively correlated with psychological distress, supporting Family Stress Model links between socioeconomic disadvantage and psychological distress. Maternal involvement as perceived by fathers was positively correlated with endorsement of *respeto* and *caballerismo* values and their supportive co-parenting to mothers. Mexican-born fathers (51%) reported less accessibility than U.S.-born fathers. No other key study variables differed by nativity status or language of interview.

Tests for normality and symmetry were conducted. Specifically, the values of asymmetry and kurtosis for psychological distress and parenting outcomes were within the acceptable ± 2.0 range; meeting the assumption of normality. Accordingly, the normal distribution of psychological distress scores suggests that this is a non-clinical sample. The distribution of mean scores for cultural values, specifically *respeto* (overall mean = 3.37 out of 4) and *caballerismo* (overall mean = 6.46 out of 7), likely exhibited a ceiling effect, wherein these traditional cultural values likely appealed to the majority of fathers in this sample, with few diverting from these high mean scores for *respeto* (range: 1.63 – 4; *SD* = .52) and *caballerismo* (range: 5.10 – 7; *SD* = .49). Interestingly, among the attitudes and beliefs listed on the *caballerismo* scale, the most frequently endorsed items, that is, reporting a 7 on a 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*very*

strongly agree) scale, were related to fathers' roles and responsibilities in the family, such as "Men want their children to have better lives than themselves" (88%), "Men should be willing to fight to defend their family" (75%), and "Men should be affectionate with their children" (73%). Checks for multicollinearity of key study variables were conducted by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values. The VIF and Tolerance values of the study variables across all hierarchical linear regression models were within the suggested limits (i.e., VIF range 1.06 –2.96, Tolerance range .34 – .94), which suggest that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated (Cohen et al., 2003).

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Main Effects on Fathers' Parenting Practices

To examine the effects of psychological distress on fathers' accessibility, engagement, and supportive coparenting, three identical hierarchical linear regression equations were computed (see Table 3). Economic hardship was controlled for given its statistically significant correlation with psychological distress. Also, nativity, language of interview, child's age and sex, and maternal involvement were controlled for at the first step of each of the three models given some of the significant group differences and correlations observed with these covariates. Cultural values were then entered in the second step of each model.

Father accessibility. The direct association between psychological distress and accessibility was examined in Step 1. Psychological distress ($\beta = -.26, p < .05$) significantly negatively predicted accessibility. The main effects of maternal involvement ($\beta = .41, p < .001$) also emerged as statistically significant, such that fathers who perceived mothers of the target child to be involved in child rearing tasks also reported being more accessible to their children than in cases where mothers were perceived as less involved. The findings in this step show the considerable amount of variation in accessibility contributed by all of the independent variables

(*Adj. R*² = .37, *F* (7, 77) = 7.97, *p* < .001). Next, the direct associations between cultural values and accessibility, while controlling for Step 1 variables, were examined in Step 2; *familismo* was positively related to accessibility ($\beta = .36, p < .01$), while psychological distress ($\beta = -.21, p < .05$) and maternal involvement ($\beta = .34, p = .001$) maintained statistical significance in this step. This step contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .09, F(10, 74) = 7.61, p < .001$).

Father supportive coparenting. The direct association between psychological distress and supportive coparenting was examined in Step 1. While psychological distress ($\beta = -.24, p = .06$) did not significantly predict supportive coparenting, maternal involvement ($\beta = .39, p < .001$) emerged as the only statistically significant predictor of supportive coparenting in this first step of the model (*Adj. R*² = .17, *F* (7, 77) = 3.43, *p* < .01). Next, the direct associations between cultural values and supportive coparenting, while controlling for Step 1 predictors, were examined in Step 2. *Caballerismo* was positively related to supportive coparenting ($\beta = .55, p < .001$); however, maternal involvement did not retain statistical significance in this step. This step in the model contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .22, F(10, 74) = 6.20, p < .001$).

Father engagement. The direct association between psychological distress and father engagement was examined in Step 1. Maternal involvement ($\beta = .41, p < .001$) statistically significantly predicted engagement. No other variables in Step 1, including psychological distress, independently predicted engagement (*Adj. R*² = .17, *F* (7, 77) = 3.46, *p* < .01). The direct associations between cultural values and engagement, while controlling for Step 1 variables, were examined in Step 2; no cultural value significantly contributed to engagement. Maternal involvement ($\beta = .31, p < .05$) retained statistical significance in this step. This step in the model

contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .041$, $F(10, 74) = 2.90$, $p < .01$).

Hypothesis 3: Moderating Effects of Cultural Values on Parenting Practices

The hypothesized moderating role of cultural values on the associations between psychological distress and accessibility, engagement, and supportive coparenting were tested by including interaction terms for a single cultural value and psychological distress for the three parenting outcomes, while continuing to control for the main effects of psychological distress and each cultural value.

Moderation model predicting father accessibility. The results of the moderation analyses predicting accessibility showed that this step in the model contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .04$, $F(13, 71) = 6.63$, $p < .001$). Interaction terms representing *respeto* by psychological distress ($\beta = .35$, $p < .05$) emerged as statistically significant. Simple slopes of the lines were plotted for the association between psychological distress and accessibility with conditional values of *respeto* set at the mean, and 1 *SD* below and above the mean. Results as shown in figure 1 indicate an inverse association between psychological distress and accessibility when fathers reported endorsing lower levels of *respeto*, $\beta = -0.79$, $t = -3.11$, $p < .001$; however, this relationship was null when fathers endorsed higher levels of *respeto* (see Figure 1). The two interaction terms representing *familismo* ($\beta = -.12$, $p = .33$) and *caballerismo* ($\beta = -.19$, $p = .10$) by psychological distress did not emerge as statistically significant. Interestingly, *familismo* remained a statistically significant positive predictor of accessibility. Specifically, when fathers endorsed greater levels of *familismo* ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$), they also reported higher levels of accessibility. Also, the main effects of maternal

involvement ($\beta = .32, p < .01$) and economic hardship ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) were statistically significant in this step.

Moderation model predicting fathers' supportive coparenting. This step in the model contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .07, F(3, 74) = 3.70, p < .05$). Interaction terms representing *familismo* by psychological distress ($\beta = .28, p < .05$) emerged as statistically significant. As shown in Figure 2, when fathers reported lower levels of *familismo*, an inverse association between psychological distress and supportive coparenting was observed, $\beta = -0.28, t = -2.47, p < .05$; however, this relationship was null when fathers reported higher levels of *familismo*. Tests of moderation for interaction terms representing respeto ($\beta = -.21, p = .14$) and caballerismo ($\beta = -.16, p = .18$) by psychological distress did not emerge as statistically significant. Notably, when fathers endorsed greater levels of *caballerismo* ($\beta = .63, p < .001$), they also reported higher levels of supportive coparenting independent of psychological distress. No other independent predictors were of statistical significance in this step of the model.

Moderation model predicting father engagement. A statistically significant interaction effect between psychological distress and respeto ($\beta = .31, p < .05$) emerged predicting engagement. As shown in Figure 3, when fathers reported lower levels of *respeto*, an inverse association between psychological distress and engagement was observed, $\beta = -0.29, t = -2.27, p < .05$. This step in the model contributed to a statistically significant increase in the variance explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .05, F(13, 71) = 2.66, p < .01$). Interaction terms representing *familismo* ($\beta = -.26, p = .09$) and *caballerismo* ($\beta = -.02, p = .88$) by psychological distress were not statistically significant. Maternal involvement ($\beta = .32, p < .05$) was the only statistically

significant predictor in the model, as in previous steps of this model predicting father engagement.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to extend our understanding of mechanisms that build resilient family processes among Mexican-origin fathers by studying culturally-specific protective factors. Although much work has been done in testing pathways in which fathers influence families, more knowledge is needed on factors promoting positive parenting among low-income, ethnic minority fathers (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Examining the potential protective effects of cultural values on parenting is particularly important in studies with Mexican-origin fathers who are disproportionately exposed to multiple contextual stressors, including poverty (White et al., 2009). Rarely have studies on fathers examined the joint contributions traditional cultural values can make to disrupt family stress model processes. The results from this study revealed a complex set of findings regarding how cultural values serve to promote multiple domains of positive parenting among Mexican-origin fathers in the face of psychological distress.

Psychological Distress, Cultural Values, and Positive Parenting Practices

In support of our hypotheses and in line with predictions from the family stress model, symptoms of psychological distress were inversely related with all three measures of positive parenting practices. This finding is consistent with prior family stress research suggesting that fathers experiencing elevated levels of psychological distress are particularly at-risk of exhibiting poor quantity of involvement (Shannon et al., 2009), supportive coparenting (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010) and engagement (Wilson & Durbin, 2010). It is also important to note that in line with other studies (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2019), the present findings indicate that fathers self-reported

being more accessible and engaged when fathers also perceived mothers as being highly involved in child rearing tasks. This may mean that while fathers and mothers have distinct opportunities to take part in child rearing duties, their involvement is interdependent.

Interestingly, fathers who perceived high economic hardship also reported being more accessible. Previous research has shown that while Mexican-origin fathers are traditionally viewed as the main providers, they are highly involved in parenting their young children (Cabrera et al., 2013; 2021). Perhaps Mexican-origin fathers who are experiencing economic pressures and unable to provide may compensate by spending more time with their children.

In regard to the protective effects of cultural values, it was expected that the independent associations between psychological distress and the three domains of positive parenting would be attenuated among Mexican-origin fathers who endorsed high levels of *familismo*, *respeto*, and *caballerismo*. The results provided partial support for the study hypotheses regarding the role of cultural values in the following ways. It appears that the influence of psychological distress on accessibility and engagement is more salient for fathers with low levels of *respeto*. Thus, it may be the case that fathers who are experiencing psychological distress may be less accessible to their children and engaged as parents if they do not function under value systems like *respeto* that emphasizes dignity and positive modes of communication as essential for maintaining healthy relationships with family. Previous studies have shown Latino families having a more tight-knit orientation towards one another and proper comportment and displays of good manners by children and parents when values of *respeto* are upheld (Calzada et al., 2010). A lack of adherence to *respeto* values may mean fathers enduring psychological distress in the face of family stress may jeopardize fathers' disposition to be present and positively engaged with their children. A similar pattern of findings predicting accessibility and engagement were not found

for moderation tests of familismo and caballerismo values. Statistically significant findings did emerge for supportive coparenting that are in line with previous studies showing that endorsing *familismo* values confer benefits to Mexican-origin parents by encouraging the fulfillment of parenting roles (e.g., Calzada et al., 2012). Specifically, the results here suggest that fathers may be less disposed to or capable of enacting supportive coparenting behaviors in the face of psychological distress when they place little regard in values that emphasize the importance of behaviors that meet family expectations and preserve family unity. This finding is consistent with family stress model tenets which suggest psychological distress can undermine positive parenting through its impact on the family climate. While no interaction effects between psychological distress and caballerismo emerged as statistically significant, caballerismo had a statistically significant main effect on supportive coparenting. It is possible fathers perceived to be more supportive coparents because these behaviors are focal to positive male identity. There was a small minority of fathers in this study who held little regard for *familismo*, *respeto*, and *caballerismo* values; as the findings here show, it was these fathers whose parenting faced the greatest threat from psychological distress.

Overall, the findings suggest that lower endorsement of these cultural values and higher psychological distress disrupt positive parenting, specifically reducing levels of accessibility, engagement and supportive coparenting.

Limitations, Strengths, and Suggestions for Future Directions

This study has some important limitations that must be considered when interpreting these results. The data were cross-sectional, which limits the ability to infer the directionality of the findings. Also, future studies should collect data from multiple reporters, including mothers, and utilize multi-method approaches to measure parenting (e.g., observational assessments). A

major strength of this study is the examination of within group differences in an ethnic minority group, which has been considered an important and rigorous approach to understanding family processes (Knight et al., 2009b). More specifically, all of the fathers in this study self-identified as Mexican origin, yet there was variability in immigration history. Importantly, fathers' reports on endorsement of cultural values did not vary by country of birth or language of interview, pointing to the saliency of these values across Mexican-origin fathers, at least for fathers living in a long-standing destination for Mexican-origin families where maintaining biculturalism is common. Given the overall high endorsement of these values in this sample, it will be important to replicate these findings in samples of Mexican-origin fathers with greater variability in endorsement of cultural values to truly capture the potentially protective role of high cultural value endorsement in comparison to those fathers who report low cultural value endorsement. At the same time, Mexican-origin fathers may also take into consideration cultural values associated with the American culture given that many are living in a bicultural context. Another noteworthy strength of this study is that data were collected directly from fathers; much research on fathers consists of studies that relied on mothers' reports as a proxy measure for fathers' parenting (Schoppe-Sullivan & Fagan, 2020). Therefore, this study has taken an important step in achieving precision in measuring fathers' parenting. Additional strengths include the simultaneous consideration of multiple cultural values, including the relatively understudied value of *caballerismo*. A strength of this study is also its inclusion of three distinct dimensions of father involvement, thus capturing some of the richness and complexity shaping the lives of Mexican-origin fathers and their families.

Implications for Parenting Programs Serving Mexican-Origin Fathers

Key findings of this study provide further knowledge on the role cultural values play in the underlying processes in which parenting is compromised by psychological distress. In light of the study findings, practitioners should strongly consider factoring in cultural values in the design and implementation phases of their intervention programs. These cultural values, particularly *respeto* and *caballerismo*, were strongly endorsed by the majority of the fathers in this sample, which reaffirms the relevance of these values to Mexican-origin fathers. While continuing to recognize the psychological distress Mexican-origin fathers face in and outside the home, parenting intervention programs may require practitioners to include cultural values in their lesson plans to expose fathers to these normative sets of beliefs that emphasize the importance of family unity and respectful relationships at home. For instance, practitioners may design culturally-specific program activities whereby fathers can practice parenting skills that are grounded in developing an appreciation for their duties and obligations within their families and a positive orientation toward maintaining family cohesion and respectful family relationships. It should be noted that fathers in this study did not differ in their levels of endorsement of cultural values by nativity status. Therefore, Mexican-origin fathers, whether born in the U.S. or Mexico, can be encouraged to endorse these cultural values by identifying the benefits they can bring to their relationships with their families.

The independent positive linkage between *caballerismo* values and supportive co-parenting, and its correlation with each parenting practice, should be further noted. *Caballerismo* is a relatively new construct that has remained under-studied in fatherhood research (Cruz et al., 2011; Glass & Owen, 2010), and under-utilized in programs targeting Mexican-origin fathers. The novelty of *caballerismo* comes from its emphasis on gender normativity, particularly as it pertains to culturally acceptable and expected patterns of behavior associated with manhood

within Mexican-origin groups. In fact, the *caballerismo* scale used in this study calibrates endorsement of prosocial and family-oriented behaviors that fathers believe a man is expected to follow (e.g., “Men should be willing to fight to defend their family”). This gendered dimension of *caballerismo* distinguishes this construct from other more commonly measured cultural values in Latino family research, such as *familismo*. This calls for further attention to *caballerismo* when working closely with fathers to encourage further participation in parenting roles. In fact, *caballerismo* may be an important social construct that fatherhood practitioners can target to encourage Mexican-origin fathers to participate in their parenting programs. Low-income, Mexican-origin fathers are often considered hard-to-reach populations in both research and practice (Roosa et al., 2008). Therefore, practitioners working with Mexican-origin fathers are encouraged to work closely with community leaders and local fatherhood organizations to raise awareness about the importance of fathers in the lives of children and families.

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Appendix

Table 1*Descriptives of Mexican-Origin Fathers and Child and Mother Characteristics (N = 85)*

Characteristic	N (%)	M (SD)	Min	Max
Participant's age		35.83 (7.43)	23	54
Married				
Yes	53 (62)			
No	32 (38)			
Time lived in the U.S. (years)		16.46 (9.45)	1	40
Participant's father U.S. born				
Yes	20 (23)			
No	65 (77)			
Participant's mother U.S. born				
Yes	22 (26)			
No	63 (74)			
Graduated from high school				
Yes	55 (65)			
No	30 (35)			
Employed				
Full-time	50 (59)			
Part-time/Temporary	25 (29)			
Not working for pay	10 (12)			
Annual income				
<\$15,000	29 (34)			
\$15,000 – \$30,000	27 (32)			
\$30,000 – \$45,000	17 (20)			
\$45,000 – \$60,000	4 (5)			
>\$60,000	6 (7)			
Target child sex				
Male	56 (66)			
Female	29 (34)			
Target child's age		4.61 (1.13)	3	6
Target child U.S. born				
Yes	78 (92)			
No	7 (8)			
Number of biological children		2.59 (1.37)	1	8
Target child's mother is Mexican-origin				
Yes	74 (87)			
No	11 (13)			

Table 2*Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Skewness and Kurtosis of Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Economic hardship	–								
2. Psychological distress	.42**	–							
3. Engagement	.05	-.20	–						
4. Accessibility	.14	-.28**	.55**	–					
5. Supportive coparenting	.06	-.24*	.28**	.36**	–				
6. Maternal involvement	.13	.07	.05	.21	.31*	–			
7. Familismo	.11	.06	.18	.27*	.34**	.26	–		
8. Respeto	.16	.12	.22*	.15	.32**	.31*	.62**	–	
9. Caballerismo	.02	-.18	.34**	.29**	.63**	.37**	.47**	.57**	–
<i>M</i>	.24	19.67	4.36	4.32	3.41	4.98	3.30	3.37	6.46
<i>SD</i>	.19	15.02	.49	1.17	.59	1.39	.49	.52	.49
Range	0-1	0-78	2.67-5	1.50-6.67	1.25-4	1.17-7	2.19-4	1.63-4	5.10-7
Skewness	.92	.68	-1.03	-.07	-1.19	-.53	-.48	-.90	-.90
Kurtosis	1.43	-.39	1.07	-.45	1.28	.66	-.66	.75	.07

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3*Final Regression Models Predicting Mexican-origin Fathers Positive Parenting Practices (N=85)*

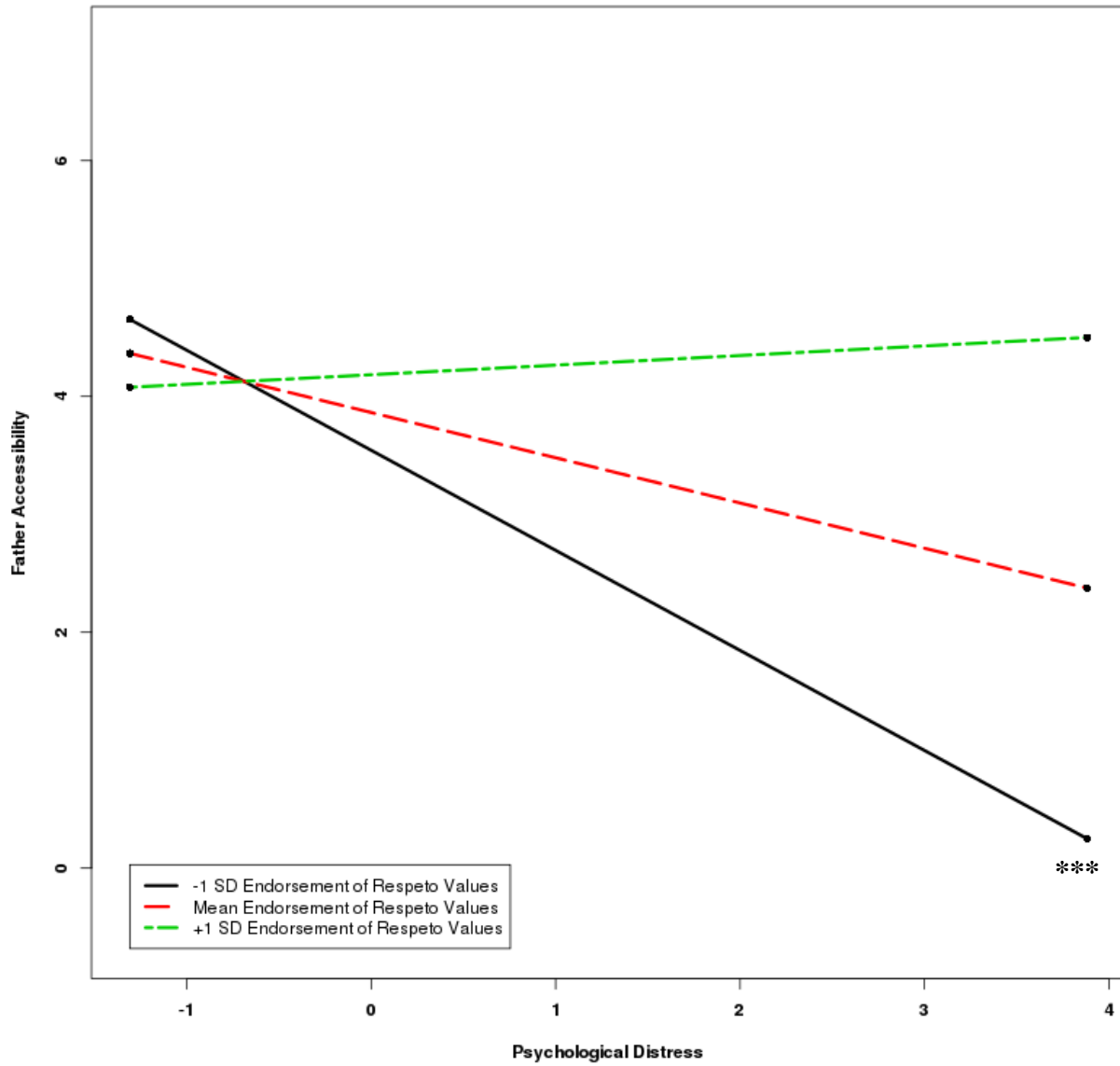
Variable	Accessibility			Supportive Coparenting			Engagement		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
U.S. born	.39	.26	.17	-.07	.13	-.06	-.02	.13	-.20
Language of interview	-.46	.27	-.19	-.06	.14	-.05	-.21	.14	-.21
Economic hardship	.24	.14	.21*	.05	.06	.09	.01	.06	.03
Target child's age	-.16	.09	-.15	.01	.04	.01	-.02	.04	-.04
Target child's sex	.35	.21	.14	.04	.11	.03	-.10	.11	-.09
Maternal involvement	.38	.12	.32**	.05	.06	.09	.15	.06	.32*
Psychological distress	-.35	.15	-.29*	-.11	.08	-.18	-.03	.08	-.06
Familismo	.40	.13	.34**	.05	.07	.09	.05	.07	.09
Respeto	-.25	.14	-.19	-.08	.07	-.14	.03	.07	.06
Caballerismo	.18	.14	.15	.37	.07	.63***	.07	.07	.14
Familismo x psychological distress	-.14	.15	-.12	.16	.08	.28*	-.13	.08	-.26
Respeto x psychological distress	.45	.18	.35*	-.14	.09	-.21	.16	.09	.31*
Caballerismo x psychological distress	-.22	.13	-.19	-.09	.07	-.16	-.01	.07	-.02
Constant		4.73***			3.40***			4.58***	
R^2		.55			.52			.24	
Adjusted R^2		.46			.43			.17	
ΔR^2		.04*			.07*			.05*	

Note. U.S. born: 0 = No; 1 = Yes. Language of interview: 0 = English; 1 = Spanish. Child sex: 0 = Female; 1 = Male.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1

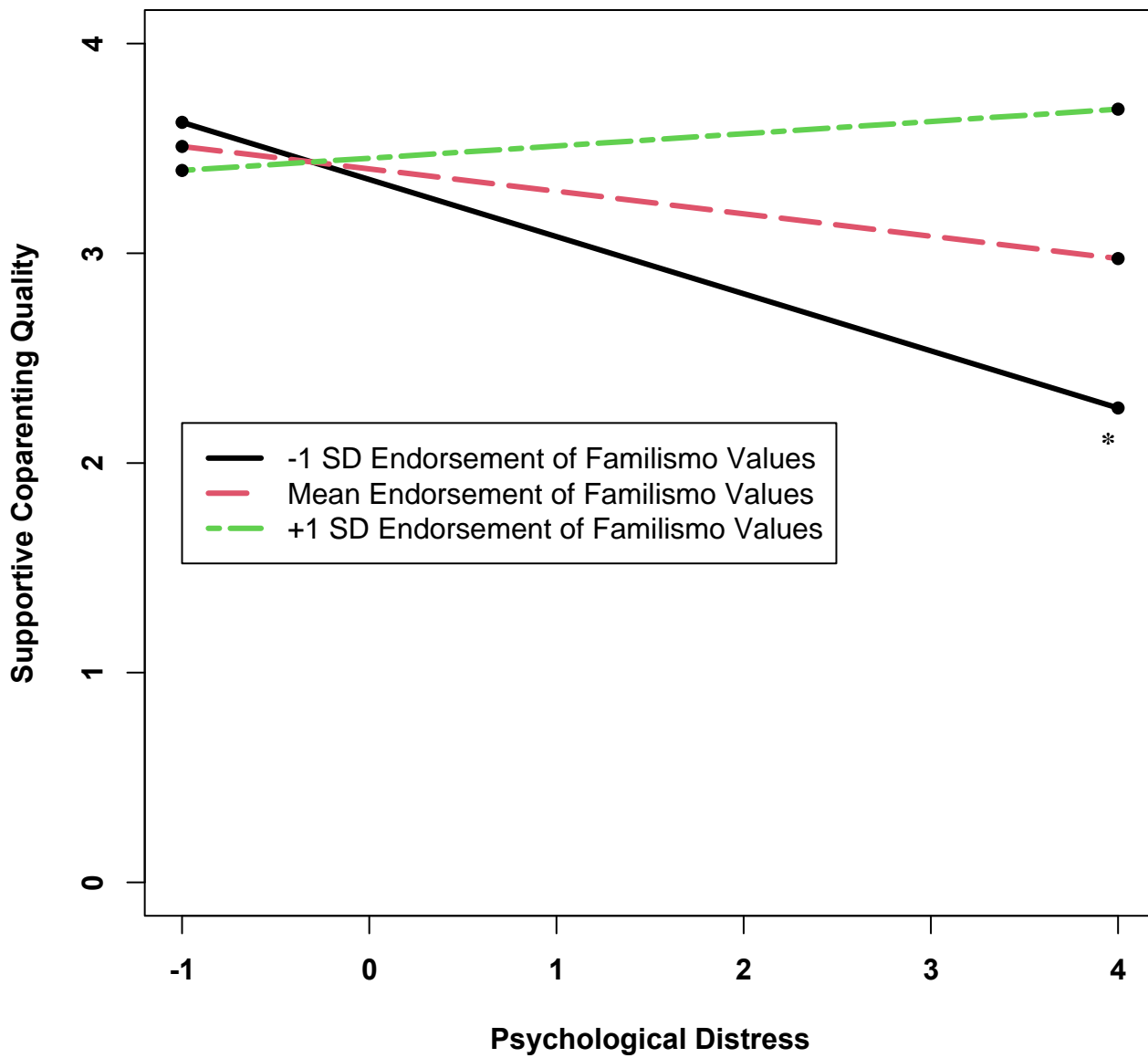
Respeto as a Moderator of the Association Between Psychological Distress and Father Accessibility



*** $p < .001$.

Figure 2

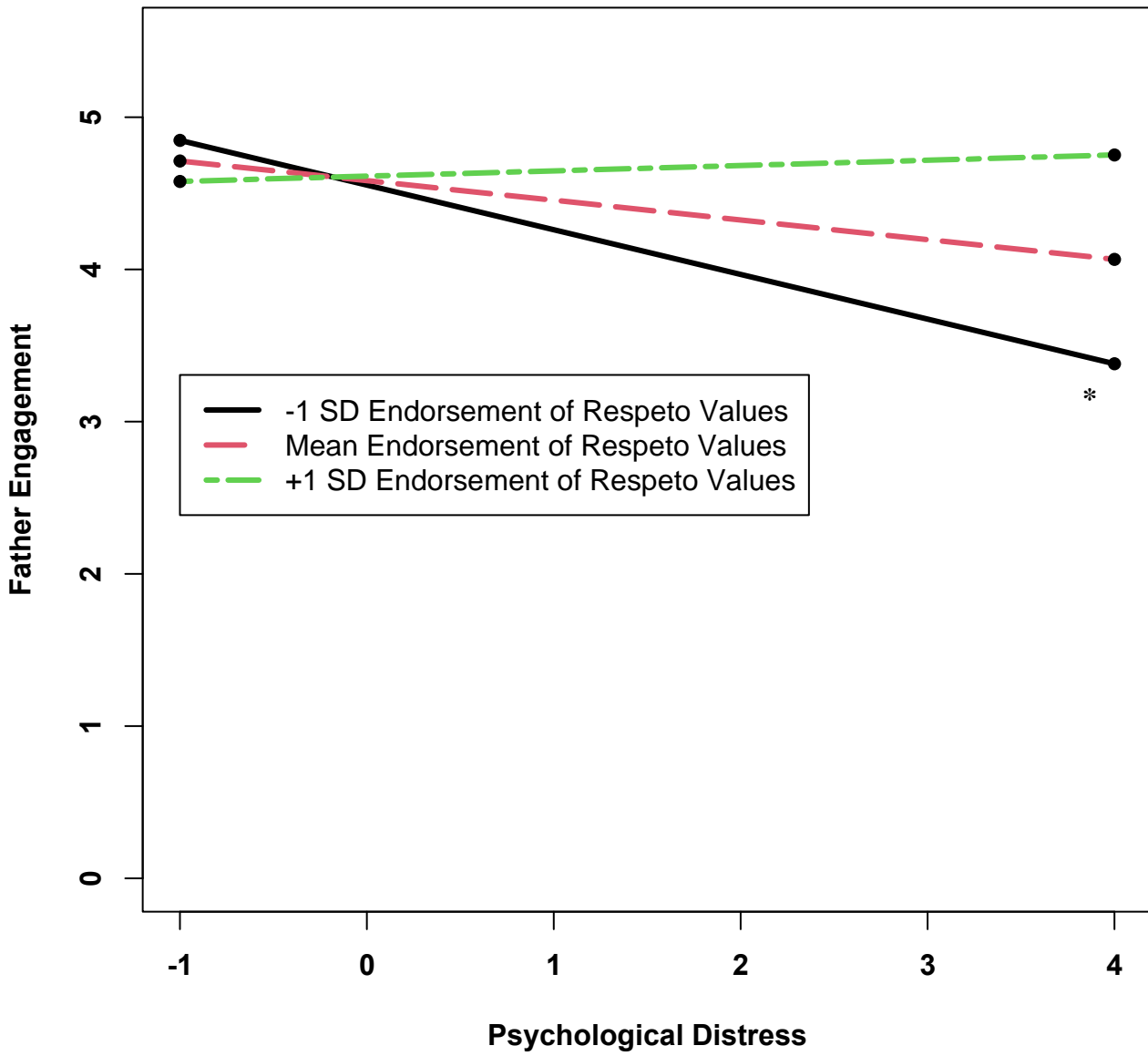
Familismo as a Moderator of the Association Between Psychological Distress and Supportive Coparenting



* $p < .05$.

Figure 3

Respeto as a Moderator of the Association Between Psychological Distress and Father Engagement



* $p < .05$