

Disparate Cultural Values and Modes of Conflict Resolution in Peer Relations: The Experience of Latino First-Generation College Students

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Abstract

We explored whether Latino first-generation college students would experience cross-cultural value conflicts as a result of the mismatch between more collectivistic values learned at home and more individualistic practices of their peers in a multiethnic college setting. Culturally structured conflict resolution styles were also explored. Participants completed a survey and thereafter engaged in a structured group discussion. Group discussions indicated that 57% of students experienced cross-cultural peer-peer value conflicts in which they had a more collectivistic approach to peer relations, while their roommates had a more individualistic approach. More positive peer relationships resulted from confrontational styles of conflict resolution (a facet of individualistic culture) than from implicit forms of communication (a facet of collectivistic culture). Peer-peer interactions are important because, upon transitioning to college, Latino students are exposed to

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diverse cultures that can impact their social life in higher education and therefore their college adjustment.

Keywords

Latinos, first-generation college students, peer relations, collectivism, individualism, conflict resolution, cultural values, value conflict

Although Latinos are gaining access to higher education, college graduation rates for Latinos are lower than those of their other ethnic counterparts (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013). With Latino students lacking college degree attainment, many researchers have focused on individual differences that influence Latino/a college success (e.g., quality of student-teacher interactions [Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996], students' values concerning education, parental expectations of children going to college, peer plans to attend college, and high school academic achievement [Arbona & Nora, 2007]).

However, few researchers have focused on the cultural barriers that Latino students may encounter upon their transition to college. Cross-cultural value conflicts may arise due to differing value systems between the individualism of U.S. educational institutions and the collectivism of Latino families; the family collectivity is central to these values (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, 2000; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2000; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Latino first-generation college students experience home-school value conflicts—conflict between the individualistic demands of college and collectivistic behavioral demands of family—upon their transition to college. These conflicts negatively impact students' subjective sense of academic achievement and well-being (Vasquez-Salgado, Greenfield, & Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015).

In the current article, we focus on *peer-peer value conflicts*—conflict between the collectivistic ideologies or practices of one person and the individualistic ideologies or practices of another—experienced by Latino first-generation college students with their more individualistic peers. Just as Latino first-generation college students experience home-school value conflicts, they may also experience peer-peer value conflicts in college, where independence and individualistic orientations are emphasized (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Most important, Latino college students may try to resolve such conflicts by engaging in conflict resolution styles aligned with their collectivistic values (Markus & Lin,

1999), a practice that may be a cross-cultural conflict in itself. This issue is elaborated later in the introduction.

Theory of Social Change and Human Development

Our theoretical foundation was Greenfield's (2009) Theory of Social Change and Human Development. According to the theory, collectivistic values are an adaptation to *Gemeinschaft* environments—homogeneous rural village communities in which education is predominantly informal and at home, and family relationships are close and at the center of social life; a developmental goal is the interdependent individual. In contrast, individualistic values are an adaptation to *Gesellschaft* environments—diverse urban ecologies in which opportunities for formal education are great and social relationships are frequently both extrafamilial and relatively impermanent. A developmental goal in *Gesellschaft* environments is the independent individual.

Immigrant Latino parents in California have lacked educational opportunity in their countries of origin (Fuligni, 2001). Many immigrate from rural villages in Mexico and Central America (Greenfield, Espinoza, Ruedas-Gracia, Monterroza, & Manago, in preparation; Chavira, Cooper & Vasquez-Salgado, in press), where permanent family relationships are central to social life. Values are therefore generally collectivistic (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; Raeff et al., 2000). In contrast, during college, evaluation focuses on individual academic achievement; social relationships are with non-family members and often impermanent, for example, classroom teachers and fellow students in a class. Therefore, values are generally individualistic. Because the parents of Latino first-generation college students at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), the participants in our study, generally come from more *Gemeinschaft* environments (as indexed by lower levels of formal education) compared with those of other ethnicities (Guan, Greenfield, & Orellana, 2014), we would expect their values to be more collectivistic than those of their peers from other ethnic groups.

As predicted by the theory and confirmed by our recent work, when transitioning to college, Latino first-generation college students experience cross-cultural value conflict between home expectations for family obligation behaviors and school expectations for academic achievement (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). Various forms of family obligation contrast with the expectation at an elite college that academics come first. Students experience these conflicts as having a negative impact on their academic achievement and well-being. Here, we expand support for the theory by exploring the occurrence of a different form of cross-cultural value conflict during the transition to college, that is, peer-peer value conflict.

Given that the college environment itself is individualistic and the values of other ethnic peers may be more individualistic, we expected Latino first-generation college students to experience conflicts between their ideologies and practices and those of their other-ethnic peers.

Cross-Cultural Value Conflicts Among Peers

A cross-cultural value conflict is a conflict that arises when different cultural values collide. In social interactions, such as with peers, *value conflict* can occur when the practices or ideologies that reflect the collectivistic values of one person conflict with the practices or ideologies that reflect the more individualistic values of another. That is, peers with different cultural values can engage in behavior and/or cognitively interpret each other's behaviors in ways that align with their own respective cultural values. These conflicts may create misunderstandings between individuals or social groups who subscribe to different cultural value systems (Greenfield, Davis, Suzuki, & Boutakidis, 2002; Raeff et al., 2000), especially in a diverse multiethnic setting.

Differences between individualistic and collectivistic values were salient sources of conflict for multiethnic high school sports teams (Greenfield et al., 2002; Kernan & Greenfield, 2005). Here is an example of such a conflict between two players on a basketball team (Greenfield et al., 2002). Jay, a Latino player, perceived that Stewart, an African American player, was overly aggressive on the court during practice and that he was not supportive of the team. Stewart, the more individualistic player, stated that he did not care how anyone felt about his behavior during practice, and that it was how he "pumped himself up." While Stewart values his own achievement, Jay, the more collectivistic player prefers to subordinate individual achievement to supporting others in the group. These cultural differences in behaviors and ideologies created conflict and misunderstanding between the two boys.

Upon transitioning to college, Latino students are exposed to diverse cultures that can impact their social life in higher education and therefore their college adjustment. Quintana, Vogel, and Ybarra (1991) suggest that "Latino students who are familiar and comfortable with [the] Anglo culture experience less stress in universities that are dominated by Anglos" (p. 164). Yet, this view does not take into account the nature of the climate for intergroup relations. For example, higher contact among different racial/ethnic groups can sometimes result in increased opportunity for conflict (Blalock, 1967). However, Blalock did not describe the nature of such conflicts. Our study fills this gap by providing a detailed account of the types of cultural value conflicts that may occur with peers, when Latino students transition into an individualistic college environment.

Culturally Structured Styles of Conflict Resolution

Individuals from different cultures differ in their acceptance of explicit conflict and have different methods for resolving conflict with others (Bond, 2004; Leung, 1988; Markus & Lin, 1999; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991). Most relevant to our study is one that examined cultural differences in preferences for conflict resolution in a Mexican and U.S. university. College students from a state-funded university in Mexico were compared with college students from a state-funded university in the Southwestern United States. Students in a collectivistic cultural environment (Mexico) preferred conflict resolution styles that emphasized concern for the outcomes of others (accommodation and collaboration) to a greater degree than did students from an individualistic cultural environment (the United States; Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson, & Villareal, 1997). Although fruitful, Gabrielidis et al. do not depict the conflict resolution styles used by Latino students attending a university in the United States, an individualistic cultural environment; they also do not describe the consequences of such resolution styles for social relationships. Our study seeks to fill these gaps.

The current study explores the conflict resolution styles that Latino first-generation college students engage in to resolve the peer-peer value conflicts that they encounter. We also explore whether certain types of resolution styles are related to the quality of peer relationships. Because of their Latino background, we expected Latino first-generation college students from immigrant families to engage in conflict resolution styles that are aligned with collectivistic qualities.

Cross-Cultural Value Conflict, Peer Relations, and Well-Being

Research suggests that individuals with a collectivistic orientation experience negative effects on their well-being when in an individualistic setting (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği, 2006; Stephens, Townsend, Markus, & Phillips, 2012). Most pertinent to our study, this pattern has been observed at the college level among Latino (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015) and first-generation college students (Stephens, Townsend, et al., 2012). However, these studies have not examined the role of peers.

The relationship between peer relations and well-being suggests that peer relations may be an integral part of Latino first-generation college students' adjustment during the transition to college. On the one hand, conflicts with peers or dormitory roommates are related to increases in psychological distress (Lepore, 1992). On the other hand, social support from peers may lead

to more positive outcomes for Latino college students' well-being (Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003), as well as their academic achievement (Solberg & Viliarreal, 1997) and overall adjustment (Kopperman, 2007). It is therefore imperative to further study Latino college students' peer relationships.

We extend this work by exploring the relationship between peer conflict and well-being when conflict occurs due to a mismatch between cultural values.

Current Study

The current study explored peer-peer value conflict and the conflict resolution styles used to resolve the conflicts. We also sought to understand how these conflicts and styles of resolution impact students' development.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Do Latino college students experience peer-peer value conflicts—conflict between their collectivistic ideologies or practices and those of their more individualistic peers—during the transition to college?

Research Question 2: What is the nature of peer-peer value conflicts, how are they resolved, and how does conflict resolution style relate to relationship outcomes?

Research Question 3: Do these conflicts have implications for students' well-being?

Method

Participants

During the Spring quarter of their first year of college at UCLA, Latino college students were recruited via the psychology subject pool, flyers posted throughout campus, and friend recommendations. Participants had to (1) have two parents who migrated from a Latin American country, (2) be a first-generation college student (i.e., have parents with no form of postsecondary education), and (3) be in their first year of college. We included Requirements 1 and 2 because, following the research and theory described in the introduction, we thought that they would come to college with the most collectivistic values and therefore would be the most vulnerable, of all groups, to cross-cultural value conflict with their peers. Requirement 3 made possible to explore peer-peer value conflicts during the transition to college.

Because the students were primed by the scenario to talk about conflicts with roommates, we also collected information on roommate ethnicity. In the total sample, there were 13 Asian or Asian American roommates, 5 Latino/a roommates, and 2 European American roommates. Table 1 presents the ethnicity of roommates for each individual participant. The ethnic labels in the table are the terms used by each participant to describe their roommate or roommates. While we do not have sociodemographic information on the roommates, we know from prior research that Latino students from immigrant families have parents who have had the least opportunity for formal education in their home countries (e.g., Manago, 2014) and therefore have lower levels of formal education than Asian or European immigrants (Guan et al., 2014) or European Americans (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013).

Four group interviews were conducted. Each group was composed of 3 to 7 students. Fourteen of the 18 students who participated met all criteria; the other 4 students were not used in any data analysis (see Table 1 for sample details). According to reports from the eligible participants, 36% of mothers and 29% of fathers had attained a “high school” education, 21% of mothers and 14% of fathers had an education level that is considered middle school in Mexico (Grades 7-9), and 36% of mothers and 43% of fathers had an education that was considered elementary school or lower in Mexico (ranged from 0 years of education to Grade 6). Education levels were not reported for one mother (7%) and two fathers (14%).

Presentation of a Peer-Peer Conflict Scenario

Students in each group were asked to react individually, in writing, to the following peer-peer conflict scenario. The scenario depicted a situation in which they had to choose between engaging in collectivistic values, hypothesized to be learned at home, and adopting values of their peer from a more individualistic culture:

Jessica is a first-year student at UCLA and lives in the dorms with two other first-year students. She is studying in her dorm room on Thursday night. She suddenly feels so tired so she decides to go to Starbucks to grab a cup of coffee. Prior to leaving her dorm, she asks her roommates if they want anything from Starbucks. They gladly say “yes” and each says that they want a tall coffee. The very next day, the same roommates go for a quick coffee run at Starbucks without her and never ask her if she wants anything. This event happened several times (she consistently offers to bring them coffee and they never seem to offer).

How would you feel if you were in this situation? What would you do? Why?

Table I. Gender, Number, Age, Living Situation, Parent Demographics, and Roommates' Ethnic Background.

Group	Gender	N	Age	Living situation	Parent education (mother/father)	Parent place of birth	Students' answers to roommate ethnic background	Did student report a peer conflict?
I.	Female	2	19 years old	Dorms	Elementary	Mexico	Asian	N
	Male		19 years old		9th/3rd	Mexico	Japanese and Korean	Y
II.	Female 1	6	19-years old	Dorms	9th/4th	Mexico	Mexican American and Asian	N
	Female 2		18-years old	Dorms	4th/6th	Mexico	Filipino	Y
	Female 3		18-years old	Dorms	Unknown	Mexico	Latina and European	Y
	Female 4		18-years old	Dorms	2nd/unknown	Guatemala	Filipino	Y
	Female 5		18-years old	Dorms	Elementary/0	Mexico	Latino/a and Chinese	N
	Female 6		18 years old	Dorms	MS/HS	Mexico	Indian	Y
III.	Male	3	18 years old	Dorms	HS/MS	Mexico	Mexican	Y
	Female 1		18 years old	Dorms	HS/HS	Mexico	Indian	Y
	Female 2		18 years old	Dorms	HS/HS	Mexico	Taiwanese and Vietnamese	Y
IV.	Female	3	18 years old	Parents	HS/MS	Mexico		N
	Male 1		19 years old	Dorms	3rd/6th	Mexico	Asian and Hispanic	N
	Male 2		18 years old	Dorms	HS/HS	Mexico	Indian, Caucasian	N

Analysis of Scenario Data

We developed codes and reliability for responses to the first two questions, which turned out to be most relevant for our purposes. For “How would you feel if you were in this situation?” we coded the emotional valence of the response: positive, negative, or neutral. For the second question, “What would you do?” we coded modes of conflict resolution: implicit and explicit. If no conflict resolution was attempted, that was also coded. Implicit conflict resolution was operationally defined in the following way: Communicating through hints or nonverbal means that he or she was bothered by the situation. Explicit conflict resolution was operationally defined as verbally telling the person what was bothering them. When there were two modes of conflict resolution mentioned, the code was the dominant mode (when there was one) or the final mode (when no mode was dominant in the discourse as a whole).

The first two authors did reliability by each coding all of the data. Reliability coding yielded perfect agreement on emotional valence. Reliability coding of mode of conflict resolution yielded a kappa of .74, which is considered in the substantial range (Landis & Koch, 1977). Disagreements were resolved through discussion among the first two and fourth authors.

When quotes from the students’ written responses are presented in the “Results and Discussion” section, misspellings and other errors are preserved.

Group-Interview Data Collection

This individually administered written scenario was used as a prime for the group discussion; it furnished the starting point for group discussion. The group leader provided a set of probes tailored toward answering our research questions. The questions relevant for the present article were, “Have you ever experienced these types of situations in college?” “Can you share some of your experiences?” “How did you feel?” “How did you resolve the situation?” “Do you feel as though these peer-peer conflict situations have impacted you in any way?” “Have these peer-peer conflict situations impacted your well-being?” Beyond the probes, the conversation was open-ended. Whereas the scenario was designed to elicit responses to hypothetical conflicts, the group-interview discussion was designed to elicit lived experience. The group interview provided the main data for this study.

Each group interview was fully transcribed verbatim. Where necessary to make its meaning clearer, commas are used to segment an utterance. Discourse material between brackets means that it was added by a researcher when something seemed to be missing.

Analysis

The theory-driven analysis identified three component elements: individualism-collectivism value conflicts, resolution styles, and outcomes. The guiding framework was the theoretical idea that moving from a home environment that emphasizes a collectivistic approach to social relations to living (and interacting with) more individualistic peers could cause conflict and misunderstanding in these relationships (Greenfield et al., 2002; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Categories were identified in the discourse in order to specify the types of conflict experienced by students, the styles of resolution utilized to resolve these conflicts, and the way in which these conflicts impacted students' development—namely, their peer relationships (see Table 2 for a full list of peer conflict types, conflict resolution styles, and relationship outcomes). We present four cases that illustrate different combinations of conflict types, resolution styles, and relationship outcomes. The appendix presents all the conflicts, along with their type of resolution style and outcome, where known.

In reporting the discourse, the gender (female or male) of the participant is labeled (and numbered if more than one person of their same gender participated in the discussion in a particular group). Roman numerals, shown in Table 1, label groups at the end of each conversational extract. "L" labels the leader of the group interview (the second author). In order to make a certain conflict component or category clear to the reader, irrelevant information was eliminated from a participant's response; these omissions were denoted by three dots (i.e., . . .). If a line of four dots appears within a conversation, this convention denotes that an intervening person's remarks were eliminated. If a student paused during his or her response during discussion, two dots were utilized (i.e., . .). When several students spoke at once, the label "All" notes this.

Interrater reliability. After the first author had identified group-interview themes, interrater reliability was assessed. In order to assess reliability of identifying peer-peer conflict, the first author extracted 25% of data that she had identified as a peer-peer conflict and, thereafter, randomly selected discourse that did not consist of a previously identified peer-peer conflict. A randomly ordered list was compiled so that 50% would consist of instances of peer-peer conflict and 50% would not. The second author was then given the list as well as a definition of all of the themes and told to code "1" when a section of the transcript signified a peer-peer conflict and a "0" when it did not. The Cohen's kappa for identifying peer-peer conflicts was 1.0, "excellent" reliability (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 2. Qualitative Analysis: Themes and Subthemes.

Theme	Subthemes
Peer-Peer Conflicts	Lack of reciprocation Not being considerate to the other person
Conflict Resolution Styles	Implicit: Student indirectly addresses the conflict through hints or nonverbal behavior Explicit: Student directly confronts roommate through verbal behavior
Impact on Relationship With Roommate	Positive Negative

Note: We use the term “roommate” rather than “peer” in this table because all but one reported conflict was with a roommate.

Because this study is based on a small, qualitative database of conversational discourse, not enough data were available to establish reliability of other themes and subthemes, which could, in a larger data set, be used to reduce the data. Therefore, we have eschewed data reduction and presented all of the data with their categorization, so that readers can see all category examples for themselves: The appendix presents all examples of conflicts, including, for completeness, ones that are presented in the “Results and Discussion” section.

Procedure

After signing consent forms, students were told a set of group-interview rules that were meant to foster a psychologically safe environment. In an effort to build an open and comfortable environment, the researcher (the second author) told all students that she had a similar background to them and that it was a personal topic for her. Participants in each group interview were then given the above scenario and responded individually in writing. A different scenario exploring possible home-school value conflict between family and school obligations was also administered and discussed; findings are reported in Vasquez-Salgado et al. (2015). Group discussion followed individual written responses to each scenario.

Following the group interview, students were given a short demographic survey containing questions about their living situation, immigration history, and parents’ education. Each student was given either two movie tickets or two research credits for their participation. An audio recording of each group

interview was made. On average, data collection took 1 hour 20 minutes for discussion of both home-school conflict (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015) and peer-peer conflict, the topic of the present article.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: Do Latino College Students Experience Peer-Peer Value Conflicts—Conflict Between Their Collectivistic Ideologies or Practices and Those of Their More Individualistic Peers—During the Transition to College?

Group-interview results indicate that 57% (8 of 14) of students in the study, all in their first year of college, experienced peer-peer value conflicts in which they had a collectivistic perspective and their peer behaved more individualistically. Across the entire sample, there were a total of 10 conflicts that were described during group discussion; the peer they had a conflict with was a roommate in 9 out of the 10 incidents (two students had 2 conflicts). All conflicts that emerged in the group interviews are presented in the appendix. In all but one case, the peer either was or may have been of a different ethnicity (Table 1).

Research Question 2: What Is the Nature of These Peer-Peer Value Conflicts, How Are They Resolved, and How Does Conflict Resolution Style Relate to Relationship Outcome?

The types of peer-peer conflicts mentioned by students in the group discussion fall under two main types, lack of reciprocation and not thinking about the other person. Both of these types could be considered a conflict between the individualism of the roommate or friend who does not reciprocate or think about the other person and the collectivistic expectations of the student who expects the other to do so.

Modes of conflict resolution in response to the scenario were primarily implicit ($n = 9$) rather than explicit ($n = 3$). Two students said that they would not react at all. According to a binomial test, the predominance of implicit modes of conflict resolution is statistically significant ($p = .016$). (With three possible alternatives, the chance value of any one is .33.) Here are some examples:

Implicit: “I would just stop offering them” (Female 1, Group II).

Explicit: “I would probably talk to them about it, especially if it makes me feel depressed that I’m not appreciated” (Female 1, Group III).

No response: “I would continue to do what I do and offer them coffee.”

Among the students who reported peer-peer conflicts in the subsequent discussion, some engaged in implicit styles of conflict resolution, whereas others engaged in explicit styles of conflict resolution. A complete description of every instance of attempts to resolve value conflicts is found in the appendix. The reader will see, in the case studies below and in the appendix, that more positive consequences resulted when students utilized explicit styles of conflict resolution than when they engaged in implicit forms of communication to resolve the conflict. Examples of how students experienced these types of conflicts, how they resolved the conflict (if it was resolved), and the outcome of the situation (when known) follow.

Lack of reciprocation. Lack of reciprocation meant that students gave or offered a material item or a service to their roommates but did not receive anything in return.

Case 1: Lack of reciprocation, implicit style of conflict resolution, negative relationship outcome (Female 3, Group II). Some students experienced a conflict with their peer roommate due to lack of reciprocation regarding mutual support. That is, students felt that they were supportive of a peer, but that they were not getting the same support in return. The following student expresses how upset she is when she does not get the same support back:

[L]: *Ok, now that you have read the scenario how would you feel if you were in this situation?*

[F3]: *. . . I volunteer to do things for you because I understand we all need that helping hand you know, so I do that but then when I don't get it back it's just like . . . I'm gonna stop I'm not going to do it anymore . . . try to give someone else something but they don't . . . We had math and we're both taking that and it's like . . . I'll push you and you'll push me, but I thought it was gonna be different but it's not, she had one resource that I needed and she heard me . . . struggling for it and she didn't do anything about it . . .* (Female 3, Group II)

This student [F3] expected her roommate to reciprocate her support. While she felt that she was providing her roommate with support, she later found out that her roommate had other resources that would benefit her; yet she did not share anything with her. Furthermore, in attempts to resolve the conflict, this student engages in an implicit style of conflict resolution.

Implicit style of conflict resolution

[F3]: *[I was thinking] I'm not gonna [do] anything else for you, you can deal with it on your own then, I asked calmly and then I said "okay how do you want it to be from now on?" . . . And then something distracted her, and then I was like "you know what?—we need to go," and we were late for class and I was like "you know what I need to go and I left" . . . (Female 3, Group II)*

Although it appears that she directly confronted her roommate, the conversation never continued, and the issue was never addressed. This student decides to walk away from the conversation. She engages in an implicit style of conflict resolution, in which she indirectly confronts her peer about the conflict. This results in a negative impact on the relationship between her and her roommate.

Negative relationship outcome

[F3]: *It's just not [a] comfortable setting, especially when it's just you and her in one room; it's not comfortable to have that tension, it's not comfortable, it doesn't help me and I don't know. . . I can't freaking focus. . . How would you deal with that, if you're living with that person how do you stop talking to someone? (Female 3, Group II)*

The student talks about the discomfort she finds in the room, which makes it hard for her to focus. It is clear that the relationship with her roommate was negatively impacted, as the student asks, "How do you stop talking to someone?" This type of conflict was also experienced by another student.

Case 2: Lack of reciprocation, implicit style of conflict resolution, negative relationship outcome (Male, Group I). In the following example, the student always asks his roommates if they need anything when he goes to the store; however, his roommates never ask him if he needs anything when they go to the store:

[L]: *So lets go ahead and continue . . . um so now you read that scenario . . . just a little different . . . um . . . how would you feel if . . . you were in this situation?*

[M]: *I've actually been in similar situations*

[All]: *Laughs*

[M]: *So I can relate to it really . . . well*

. . . .

[M]: *(laughs) . . . umm like it's happened to . . . like to me . . . pretty much every week . . . or something . . . like so awkward . . . like sometimes when I go to the store . . . like for example Target . . . cuz thats the only store I can pretty much go to and um . . . I ask my roommates if they need anything; sometimes they say yes sometimes they say no . . . Most of the time they say yes . . . and I bring them something . . . but then they go to Target and they don't tell me anything . . . and like they don't bring me anything either; so it's just like ok . . . (laughs) so . . . I just kinda feel (laughs) bad, but I mean I just deal with it . . . yea (Male 1, Group I)*

In this case, this student feels that he is offering something to his roommates, but he does not get anything offered in return. He offers to bring something back from the store, but when his roommates go to the store, they do not ask him if he needs anything. This student engages in an implicit style of conflict resolution. He does not confront his roommate, either directly or indirectly, and instead avoids the situation altogether.

Implicit style of conflict resolution/negative relationship outcome

[L]: *. . . and what would you do?*

[M]: *Um . . . I know I'll still keep asking them . . . like you know do you guys want something and [if] they keep doing [it] like . . . I don't know . . . I try not to go to the store that much or that often*

[All]: *laughs*

[M]: *just because . . . they might over abuse the courtesy . . . but I do definitely feel bad . . . like um . . . I feel excluded more than anything um sometimes . . . but it also has to do with the dynamic that we have in the room . . . which is very interesting (laughs). (Male, Group I, Asian roommate)*

In this case, the student resolves the situation by not going to the store at all and avoiding the situation. This conflict results in the student feeling bad and excluded.

Case 3: Lack of reciprocation, explicit style of conflict resolution, positive relationship outcome (Female 2, Group III). The following is another example of a student who buys candy that she shares with her roommate; however, her roommate does not do anything to reciprocate her gesture:

F2]: *At the beginning of the year I bought candy, like a whole bunch of candy . . . and she ate all my Twizzlers . . . and I was like, "oh like it's all right . . . like I told you guys to get whatever you want" but then . . . I would keep buying stuff and . . . they would just go away, so after a while I just got really . . . frustrated because . . . I'm buying them and I expect you to at least say thank . . . but rather . . . you just keep eating them . . .* (Female 2, Group III)

Explicit style of conflict resolution

[F2]: *So I just stopped buying candy but I mean (laughs) . . . I told her, and . . . now I have . . . treats all over the room again*

...after we got really close like, I was able to just be like, "you know what, like . . . sometimes I feel like . . . I get stuff and you just take it all . . . and like . . . I don't know I don't really like that" . . . (Female 2, Group III)

Positive relationship outcome

[L]: *Okay . . . um . . . so . . . when dealing with these conflicts after you resolve the conflict . . . do you ever find yourself reflecting on the decision that you made to resolve it?*
 [F2]: *. . . Talking to my roommate . . . made us closer . . . like she understood like if I ever had a problem with her . . . like I'll tell her or if I ever had like . . . just a little like oh this kind of bothers me like . . . I'd just tell her . . . So it made us closer (laughs).* (Female 2, Group III)

In this example, there is clearly a conflict due to lack of reciprocation on the part of the roommate. This student [F2] felt that she was the only one buying candy, and her roommate was just taking it without giving her anything in return. This student expected her roommate to give something back in return, at least a "Thank you"; however, when that did not happen, she was upset. Her mode of conflict resolution was to confront her roommate and explain to her how she felt. She engaged in an explicit rather than implicit style of communication. This student now has a satisfactory relationship with her roommate, as she says that talking to her roommate made them closer.

Not thinking about the other. Not thinking about the other meant that students' roommates were not considerate of their feelings or schedule.

Case 4: Not thinking about the other, implicit style of conflict resolution, negative relationship outcome (Female 1, Group III). The following example illustrates this type of conflict, where a student perceives her roommate as not being considerate of her. The student is upset because her roommates do not clean and do not respect her sleep hours:

[F1]: *My roommate one of them . . . actually both of them now (laughs) . . . are extremely messy . . . so um . . . uh I don't know I . . . I just try to avoid . . . like . . . confronting them . . . um I just try to be out of the room as much as possible like . . . the way my room is it's just really . . . it stresses me out . . . they're really inconsiderate about noise level . . . sometimes especially like for the first two quarters when they'd go out to party like every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, so they'd come back drunk and really loud and I'd already be asleep . . . The lights would be turned off and everything . . . and like um yea like they turn on the lights and I just wake up and then like the noise level was so loud and stuff like that and . . . so it really . . . affects my sleep cycle I guess . . . and I feel like if I don't have enough sleep I can't focus enough . . . in my work* (Female 1, Group III).

Implicit style of conflict resolution/negative impact on relationship

[F1] *I couldn't really express how I felt um so that just made things a little bit more tense in the room and more awkward . . . and . . . until like right now . . . I don't go in my room as much unless I need something . . . um just because of all the tense like there is . . . there is in that environment and I just uh . . . I try to avoid it as much as possible . . .* (Female 1, Group III)

In the example above, the student clearly does not confront her roommates about how she is feeling. Instead, she takes an implicit route, avoiding being in the room and avoiding the situation overall. This approach results in her feeling tense in her own room and not getting enough sleep. Clearly, avoiding one's dorm room as much as possible indicates a negative relationship with roommates.

Research Question 3: Do These Conflicts Have Implications for Students' Well-Being?

Responding to the question concerning how they would feel in the peer-peer value conflict situation presented in the scenario, 13 out of 14 students described a negative emotion in their written responses. Examples of these negative emotions are the following:

“I would feel left out and unappreciated because here I’m trying to be nice but they don’t care” (Female 1, Group II).

“I would be feel[ing] somewhat upset if I always offered something and they didn’t ever” (Female 4, Group II).

“I would feel like I’m not really being appreciated or considered about” (Female 1, Group III).

As noted in the prior section, negative effects on well-being were also mentioned during group discussion: One female student, Case 4, said that her roommate’s lack of considerate behavior, specifically, keeping the room a mess, stressed her out, and that her roommates late noisy behavior “affects my sleep cycle . . . and I feel like if I don’t have enough sleep I can’t focus in my work” (Female 1, Group III). Another female student, not included in the case studies, stated that her peer’s lack of support led her to ruminate about the situation, “It takes a lot of my thinking time, because you think and you think and you wonder . . . you just get off track” (Female 2, Group II). Because rumination is closely linked with psychological distress (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008), this example provides evidence for a negative impact on well-being. Although students denied that these conflicts impacted their academics, poor peer relationships and subpar well-being can undermine student adjustment, as the quotes show. Many students within the group interviews supported each other with ideas on how to solve peer conflicts, as many of them shared similar experiences.

Conclusion and Implications

Our data reveal the cross-cultural value conflicts that Latino first-generation college students encounter with their peers upon their transition to a more diverse and individualistic environment. As described in a prior publication, the students in the current study also reported experiencing home-school value conflicts between family obligations and academic obligations (Vasquez-Salgado, Greenfield, & Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015). While more than half of the 14 students experienced both kinds of value conflict, they were very clear that family relations were much more important to them than peers. One student said, “In my case family . . . has more effect in me” (M, Group I). As another example, the leader asked Group II, “Which ones are more impactful for you overall, would you say it’s the home conflicts or the peer conflicts?” Everyone answered “home.”

The results of our study align with the theory of social change and human development (Greenfield, 2009), which states that conflict can occur when one transitions from an environment that encompasses collectivistic values to one that encompasses individualistic values. Our research provides new

evidence for the theory by documenting cross-cultural value conflict with peers during the transition to college. Also, in line with the idea that informal (contrasted with formal) education develops the value of interdependence (Greenfield, 2009), these students' parents had education levels that ranged from little or no formal education to high school.

Cross-cultural peer-peer interactions are important to study because, upon transitioning to college, Latino students are exposed to diverse cultures that can impact their social life and therefore their college adjustment. In the ethnically and culturally diverse environments of colleges in Southern California, multiethnic and multicultural interactions are the rule. Misunderstandings can occur when participants in these interactions bring different cultural assumptions into their relationships. Conflict resolution is difficult enough in a homogeneous society where people subscribe to the same cultural norms. When Latino students transition from a collectivistic environment to a more individualistic setting with multiethnic peers, they may encounter conflicts with peers and attempt to solve such conflicts in line with their values. This study illustrates that when different participants make different value assumptions, it seems necessary to make the differences explicit in order to resolve conflicts in a positive way.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although we were able to understand some of the experiences of Latino college students' cross-cultural peer conflicts, our study included little data about the peers—only that most were from a different ethnic background. In line with Greenfield's theory, the other major ethnic groups at UCLA (European American and Asian American) generally come from families of higher SES and educational level than do Latinos (Guan et al., 2014). One would want to know the sociodemographic characteristics of the roommates in order to use Greenfield's theory to predict in which specific cases the Latino students would be more collectivistic than their roommates.

In order to determine whether students from more *Gemeinschaft* ecologies and familistic/collectivistic cultures experience peer value conflicts more often than students from more *Gesellschaft* ecologies and individualistic cultural backgrounds, we are now examining this relationship quantitatively with a diverse sample and with research designs that allow both roommates to be assessed. This current research will allow both perspectives on a given conflict to be explored. The results also suggest the development of interventions to teach Latino first-generation college students to deal with value conflict by verbally explicit means, thereby improving the social integration of Latino first-generation students as they transition to college. Furthermore, the results also encourage an intervention that will aim to teach students about diverse cultural values and practices when they enter an environment with multiethnic peers.

Appendix

List and Description of All Conflicts, Resolution Style, and Relationship Outcome.

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
Lack of Reciprocation	Implicit	Negative
[L-]: <i>Ok, now that you have read the scenario how would you feel if you were in this situation?</i>	[F3]: <i>I was thinking I'm not gonna [do] anything else for you, you can deal with it on your own then, I asked calmly and then I said "okay how do you want it to be from now on?" . . . And then something distracted her, and then I was like "you know what?—we need to go," and we were late for class and I was like "you know what I need to go and I left . . . [Discourse continues in the next column]</i>	[F3]: <i>It's just not [a] comfortable setting, especially when it's just you and her in one room . . . it's not comfortable to have that tension, it's not comfortable, it doesn't help me and I don't know . . . I can't freaking focus . . . How would you deal with that, if you're living with that person how do you stop talking to someone?</i>
[F3]: . . . <i>I volunteer to do things for you because I understand we all need that helping hand you know, so I do that but then when I don't get it back it's just like . . . I'm gonna stop I'm not going to do it anymore . . . try to give someone else something but they don't . . . We had math and we're both taking that and . . . She had one resource that I needed and she heard me . . . struggling for it and she didn't do anything about it and I was like . . . [Discourse continues in the next column]</i>	(Female 3, Group II)	(Female 3, Group II)

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
<p>Lack of Reciprocation</p> <p>[F2]: . . . I just felt really put down and like you need to understand I am already struggling trying to figure out a major and this is not helping because I finally made a decision cuz you know neuroscience is really interesting to me and I want to pursue it and you're making me doubt myself. . .</p> <p>[L]: . . . and are you always supportive of that person?</p> <p>[F2]: I mean yeah I haven't put him down . . . it makes me feel like I'm giving kinda like the person in this scenario um about the coffee like I'm giving something up, my kindness and stuff and not really getting anything in return . . .</p> <p>(Female 2, Group II)</p>	<p>Not Mentioned in Discourse (Female 2, Group II)</p>	<p>Not Mentioned in Discourse (Female 2, Group II)</p>

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style and outcome
Lack of Reciprocation	Implicit style/Negative outcome
<p>[M]: Um . . . well . . . kind of like I feel like sometimes I'm the only one that takes out the trash . . .</p> <p>[L]: But did you ever tell him about the trash or . . . like he kind of noticed it cuz it was still there?</p>	<p>[M]: Um . . . I don't think I do things differently . . . but like . . . me and my roommate are not super close . . . but . . . um not . . . not really I . . . I'd probably still do the same thing and have him like . . . okay the room is gonna smell cuz you don't take out the trash like you have to take it out</p>
<p>[M]: I think yea like . . . I . . . I didn't tell him but the . . . what I . . . by not taking out I guess he kind of figured . . . cuz he he's kind of messy like . . . messier than me . . . and . . . so sometimes he leaves his things . . . like once I was . . . I forgot something was on the floor like . . . some rapper I don't know and I just leave it there like whatever . . . I'll have him pick it up and . . . I guess he kind of noticed and now he's like . . . he tries to be clean or something</p>	<p>[L]: Umm . . . what about um do you feel as though these peer-peer situations impact your relationships?</p> <p>[M]: Um . . . I think mine situation like . . . I just want to like improve like my relationship with my roommate . . . it's not . . . a great relationship where you like . . . keep in touch like maybe like after college</p>
(Male, Group III)	(Male, Group III)

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
Lack of Reciprocation	Explicit	Positive
[F2]: At the beginning of the year I bought candy, like a whole bunch of candy . . . and she ate all my Twizzlers . . . and I was like, "oh like it's all right . . . like I told you guys to get whatever you want" but then . . . I would keep buying stuff and . . . they would just go away, so after a while I just got really . . . frustrated because . . . I'm buying them and I expect you to at least say thank . . . but rather . . . you just keep eating them. . . (Female 2, Group III)	[F2]: So I just stopped buying candy but I mean (laughs) . . . I told her, and . . . now I have . . . treats all over the room againafter we got really close like, I was able to just be like, "you know what, like . . . sometimes I feel like . . . I get stuff and you just take it all . . . and like . . . I don't know I don't really like that" . . . (Female 2, Group III)	[F2]: . . . Talking to my roommate . . . made us closer . . . like she understood like if I ever had a problem with her . . . like I'll tell her or if I ever had like . . . just a little like oh this kind of bothers me like . . . I'd just tell her . . . So it made us closer (laughs). (Female 2, Group III)

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
Lack of Reciprocation	Explicit/Implicit	Negative
[F1]: Yea (laughs) um so... I know were not suppose to have... any in the dorms but I have a coffee machine (laughs)... um so yea I mean like... first quarter I was like... you know... being friendly towards my roommates you know... I... I was trying to get to know... to know them and so I was like you know so here's the coffee machine if you guys and like I put coffee in there too if you guys ever you know want some or you know just feel free to get any... so after a while my roommate... one of my roommates got like um... really comfortable um... like without asking me I mean I was okay with that um but then... it got to the point where she um would leave the coffee machine really um unclear... (Female I, Group III) [Discourse continues in the next column]	[L]: Okay... and you feel you know the relationship that you have right now with her is [F1]: Bad [L]: It's bad [F1]: Yea [L]: Okay... um... so... when dealing with these conflicts after you resolve the conflict... do you ever find yourself reflecting on the decision that you made to resolve it? [F1]: Yea... (laughs) well I feel like me taking away the coffee machine was the turning point um... I mean before we were... pretty nice to each other but now it was just like... like after taking away the coffee machine um... she started acting a little bit... different... towards me um so offer... offer seeing that I reflected I was... like was that a good idea like should I have done that like or should have... should I have like um talked to her... talk to her more about the... coffee machine like being clean um... but I always come to the conclusion like... you know if... if that were... like if I were to go back I would probably do the same (Female I, Group III)	

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
Lack of Reciprocation	Explicit/Implicit	Negative
[M]: (laughs) . . . umm like it's happened to . . . like to me . . . pretty much every week . . . or something . . . like so awkward . . . like sometimes when I go to the store . . . like for example Target . . . cuz that's the only store I can pretty much go to and um . . . I ask my roommates if they need anything: sometimes they say yes sometimes they say no . . . Most of the time they say yes . . . and I bring them something . . . but then they go to Target and they don't tell me anything . . . and like they don't bring me anything either, so it's just like ok . . . (laughs) so . . . I just kinda feel (laughs) bad, but I mean I just deal with it . . . yea (Male, Group I)	<p>[M]: Um . . . I know I'll still keep asking them . . . like you know do you guys want something and they keep doing like . . . I don't know . . . They keep doing that . . . I try not to go to the store that much or that often</p> <p>(Male, Group I)</p> <p>[Discourse continues in the next column]</p>	<p>[M]: just because . . . they might over abuse the courtesy . . . but I do definitely feel bad . . . like um . . . I feel excluded more than anything um sometimes . . . but it also has to do with the dynamic that we have in the room . . . which is very interesting (laughs) (Male, Group I)</p>

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style and relationship outcome
<p>Not Thinking About the Other</p> <p>[F1]: My roommate one of them . . . actually both of them now (laughs) . . . are extremely messy . . . so um . . . uh I don't know I..I just try to avoid confronting them . . . um I just try to be out of the room as much as possible like . . . the way my room is it's just really . . . it stresses me out . . . they're really inconsiderate about noise level . . . um sometimes especially like for the first two quarters when they'd go out to party like every Thursday, Friday, Saturday so they'd come back drunk and really loud and I'd already be asleep . . . the lights would be turned off and everything . . . and like um yea like they turn on the lights and I just wake up and then like the noise level was so loud and stuff like that and . . . so it really um . . . affects my sleep cycle I guess . . . and I feel like if I don't have enough sleep I can't focus enough . . . in my work (Female I, Group II)</p>	<p>Implicit Style/Negative Outcome</p> <p>[F1] I couldn't really express how I felt um so that just made things a little bit more tense in the room and more awkward . . . and . . . until like right now . . . I don't go in my room as much unless I need something . . . um just because of all the tense like there is . . . there is in that environment and I just uh . . . I try to avoid it as much as possible . . . (Female I, Group III)</p>

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
<p>Not Thinking About the Other</p> <p>[F6]: <i>The issue with me was I think cuz her boyfriend goes to Cal State LA and I've known him since I was like really little we grew up and went to the same church together and stuff like that she got too comfortable he would be there over half the week, he would be there they would stay up and watch movies while I was trying to study. . .</i> (Female 6, Group II)</p> <p>[Discourse continues in the next column]</p>	<p>Implicit</p> <p>[F6]: <i>. . . and like I'm not really open and like I've never told him that it bothers me but it's just like it's little things like they would leave a mess in the bathroom they would leave a soap they would use all my shampoo like my body wash like are you kidding me, like I just got tired of it, like I still haven't told her anything</i> (Female 6, Group II)</p>	<p>Not Mentioned in Discourse (Female 6, Group II)</p>

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict, resolution style & relationship outcome

Indeterminate Type of Conflict, Explicit Resolution Style, Positive Resolution

[F4] *We're really close now and like we are really comfortable with each other but like if she doesn't like something she like tells me if I don't like something I tell her and like we, we've only argued once and it was like over a stupid thing and like our relationship is pretty awesome and like we take turns vacuuming and like she'll do my bed sometimes and I'll do her bed I don't know it's cute (laughter)*
(Female 4, Group II)

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Type of conflict	Resolution style	Relationship outcome
<p>Not Thinking About the Other</p> <p>[F3]: Um . . . maybe just some . . . sometimes like um . . . like my roommate (Incomprehensible) sometimes she does yell . . . I guess one time she yelled at me over the phone because her boyfriend was mad at her so she yelled at me because she was trying to put him on speaker and she couldn't put him on speaker . . . and um I . . . I walked into the closet . . . and closed the door because I was . . . I get really mad like fast so that just got me really mad and then like once it was . . . everything was done I cooled down I came and I was already out of the closet by that time . . .</p> <p>(Female 2, Group III)</p> <p>[Discourse continues in the next column]</p>	<p>Explicit</p> <p>[F3]: . . . and I . . . I jus told her like um "I really didn't appreciate you yelling at me and . . . um it wasn't something I guess grown up to do" . . . and she apologized and everything . . .</p> <p>(Female 2, Group III)</p> <p>[Discourse continues in the next column]</p>	<p>Positive</p> <p>[F3]: . . . just our relationship after that was um . . . kind of weird . . . and then it went back to normal but like . . . it's just that she felt really bad and I felt really bad for telling her but at the same time like it was a balancing view on the table . . . so I guess like these situations sometimes like..it breaks us apart for a little bit of time and then gets a b . . . back together and then by dealing with her like you're . . . we're able to da . . . deal with other friends that might be like that too so yea</p> <p>(Female 2, Group III)</p>

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