

Marital Processes Linking Gender Role Attitudes and Marital Satisfaction Among Mexican-Origin Couples: Application of an Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model

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Abstract:

Informed by dyadic approaches and culturally informed, ecological perspectives of marriage, we applied an actor-partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM) in a sample of 120 Mexican-origin couples to examine (a) the associations linking Mexican immigrant husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction directly and indirectly through marital processes (i.e., warmth and negativity) and (b) whether the associations between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital processes were moderated by wives' employment. Although previous research has identified spouses' gender role attitudes as potential predictors of spouses' marital satisfaction, no study has examined these links in a dyadic model that elucidates how gender role attitudes may operate through *processes* to shape marital satisfaction and conditions under which associations may differ. We found that when spouses reported less sex-typed attitudes, their partners reported feeling more connected to them and more satisfied with the marriage, regardless of whether wives were employed. Our results suggest that marital satisfaction was highest for those Mexican-origin couples in which marital partners were less sex-typed in their attitudes about marital roles to the extent that partners' attitudinal role flexibility promoted spouses' feelings of warmth and connection to their partner.

Keywords: Gender role attitudes | Marriage | Marital processes | Latinos

Article:

The link between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction has long been of interest to family scholars, particularly for those studying Latino families. In their comprehensive review spanning two decades of research on gender roles and family processes, Davis and Greenstein (2009) documented direct associations between husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction. However, the nature of these associations across studies was inconsistent. Although several of the studies reviewed found associations suggesting that more sex-typed gender role attitudes were linked with lower marital satisfaction, other studies found no significant direct associations, and others showed effects in opposite directions for husbands and wives. The atheoretical nature of this body of research likely contributed to the mixed findings on the gender role attitudes–marital satisfaction link (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Further, this research was limited due to its reliance on dated statistical techniques applied to predominantly White, middle-class samples of married individuals that have not attended to the role of marital processes in explaining the association or potential moderators of the association. Notably, research exploring the link between gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction among Latino couples was absent from the literature reviewed by Davis and Greenstein and reflects the larger marital literature where empirical studies of marital satisfaction for Latino or immigrant couples are scarce (see Glick, 2010, for a review of research on immigrant families and Helms, 2013, for a review of research on marriage).

Dyadic perspectives informed by cultural ecological approaches of marriage underscore how marital processes are likely to serve as mechanisms linking spouses' gender role attitudes to their own and their partners' marital satisfaction and the contextual conditions that may qualify these associations (Crouter & Helms-Erikson, 1997; Helms, Supple, & Proulx, 2011; Huston, 2000; Peplau, 1983). Qualitative studies with Latino parents and Mexican-origin couples have provided additional insight about the specific marital processes by which spouses' gender role attitudes may be transmitted to marital satisfaction (e.g., Helms, Hengstebeck, Rodriguez, Mendez, & Crosby, 2015; Hirsch, 2003; Parra-Cardona, Córdova, Holtrop, Villarruel, & Wieling, 2008). In contrast to the view that Latinos universally endorse cultural values that promote stereotypic notions regarding family roles (e.g., Peñalosa, 1968), these contemporary studies underscore variation in Latino parents' and Mexican-origin spouses' qualitative accounts about family life, marital roles, and gender role attitudes. In addition, consistent themes emerged across these studies showing that some spouses defined their gender role attitudes in a manner that supported expressions of marital warmth and emotional connection as well as a desire to reduce marital negativity and destructive conflict strategies as part of their gendered marital role (i.e., to be a “good” husband or wife). This work suggests that links between gender role attitudes and marital processes may be especially salient for Mexican immigrant couples (representing the largest group of Latinos in the United States) where contextual demands, such as the necessity of wives' employment, require role flexibility (Boneva & Frieze, 2001; Helms et al., 2011). In this way, it may be that espousing more flexible gender role attitudes promotes marital warmth and reduces negativity—particularly in the context of wives' employment—and that these marital processes are then, in turn, linked with marital satisfaction. Accordingly, in this study, we applied an actor–partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM; Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011) to examine (a) the associations linking Mexican immigrant husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction directly and indirectly through marital processes (i.e., warmth and negativity) and (b) whether the associations between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital processes were moderated by wives' employment.

Gender Role Attitudes among Mexican-Origin Couples

In the context of marriage, *gender role attitudes* refer to cognitive beliefs about husbands' and wives' primary responsibilities within and outside the home that vary from "traditional" or more sex-typed (i.e., specialized homemaker-wife and breadwinner-husband roles) to egalitarian or less sex-typed (i.e., less specialized, shared or flexible roles; Hoffman & Kloska, 1995). Gender plays a central role in family life and Mexican culture (Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2015), and scholars have theorized about spouses' gender role attitudes and their implications for marriage among Latinos for decades (Hirsch, 2003). Early depictions of Latin American and Mexican-origin families, specifically, portrayed spouses as espousing culturally bound, highly stereotyped, and inflexible beliefs about marital roles (e.g., Peñalosa, 1968). Early portrayals of Mexican-origin couples have been challenged, however (Cromwell & Ruiz, 1979; Torres, 1997; Vazquez-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia, & De Leon, 1987), by more recent research emphasizing within-group heterogeneity in Latino and Mexican immigrant husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes (Baca Zinn, 1980; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Parra-Cardona et al., 2008; Parrado & Flippen, 2005).

Theoretical Foundation

Peplau's (1983) model of gendered family roles informs cultural ecological approaches to the study of marriage in its attention to the dyadic underpinnings of the specific links between spouses' gender role attitudes, marital processes (i.e., marital warmth and negativity), and marital satisfaction. Peplau defines roles as "consistent pattern[s] of individual activity that [are] directly or indirectly interdependent with the partner" (p. 222). For Peplau, roles consist of interrelated behavioral, affective, and cognitive patterns. Applied to this study, gender role attitudes were viewed as a cognitive element of gendered marital roles, whereas marital processes—warmth and negativity—were viewed as affective elements. Based on Peplau's model, we expected that spouses' and their partners' thoughts about how gender roles should be enacted (i.e., gender role attitudes) would frame their own and their partners' feelings of warmth and expressions of negativity, which in turn would shape how spouses evaluated their marriage (i.e., marital satisfaction). In addition, we treated wives' employment as a behavioral element of marital roles that has the potential to shape both actor and partner associations between gender role attitudes and marital processes to the extent that wives' employment is congruent or incongruent with spouses' attitudes.

Review of the Literature

Recent work on marriage among Latino and African American couples parallels the inconsistent links between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction found in earlier research with White families. Findings specific to Latinos have found either no support for a direct association or a negative association between spouses' sex-typed gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction (e.g., Falconier, 2013; Hengstebeck, Helms, & Rodriguez, 2015). There is consistent support, however, for the link between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital processes (Wheeler, Updegraff, & Thayer, 2010). More sex-typed attitudes are typically linked with lower self-reported warmth and greater marital negativity, particularly for husbands

(Falconier, 2013; Stanik, McHale, & Crouter, 2013). Accordingly, it is likely that gender role attitudes matter for the marital satisfaction of Mexican-origin couples to the extent that role rigidity undermines, and role flexibility enhances, marital processes. This mediated link has yet to be studied, however, nor have these associations been established within a dyadic framework that takes into account both spouses' perspectives and the possibility of both actor and partner effects linking gender role attitudes, marital processes, and marital satisfaction.

In a recent theoretical application of ecological models of marriage to the experiences of Mexican-origin couples, Helms et al. (2011) suggested that associations between spouses' internalized beliefs and marital processes vary based on contextual conditions that place demands on spouses that may or may not align with their attitudes. As "attitudes or expectations from the country of origin may be adapted or modified upon migration as families accommodate to the work and social constraints encountered" (Glick, 2010, p. 506), marital processes are likely to be affected. For example, in a qualitative study of Mexican immigrants in Georgia (Atiles & Bohon, 2003), both men and women agreed that maternal employment was the most significant transition their family made since moving to the United States. Whereas many Mexican immigrant spouses viewed mothers' employment as a stressor that conflicted with their cultural beliefs about gendered marital roles, resilient couples reframed maternal employment in a manner that was consistent with values emphasizing the importance of personal sacrifice for the well-being of the family. This work suggests that the likelihood of spouses adopting such a stance is dependent on the flexibility of their individual beliefs about the patriarchy specific to marital roles. Additional studies have documented similar moderated associations for White families between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital processes (i.e., warmth, love, negativity, conflict) for other gendered behavioral dimensions of marital roles (i.e., division of housework and childcare; McHale & Crouter, 1992; Helms-Erikson, 2001). In general, the incongruence experienced by spouses who espouse more sex-typed gender role attitudes in the context of wives' employment or an egalitarian division of family work may strain marital processes due to the perceived failure to enact sex-typed ideals (Kroska, 2009). These associations have yet to be tested in studies of Latino or Mexican-origin couples or within dyadic analytic frameworks that account for both actor and partner effects.

The Present Study

Informed by dyadic approaches (Crouter & Helms-Erikson, 1997; Peplau, 1983) and cultural ecological perspectives of marriage applied to Mexican-origin families (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000), we used an actor-partner interdependence mediation model (APIMeM; Ledermann et al., 2011) to examine (a) the associations linking husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes to their marital satisfaction directly and indirectly through affective marital processes (i.e., warmth and negativity) and (b) whether the associations between gender role attitudes and marital processes were moderated by wives' employment. To our knowledge, our study is the first to match the dyadic theoretical underpinnings linking gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction in a manner that accounts for both members of the marital dyad and allows for the examination of mediated, moderated, and direct associations between key constructs. Further, it is the first to empirically test these associations in a sample of Mexican-origin couples, about whom much has been theorized, but little empirical attention has been devoted. Because the

literature is limited, we do not make hypotheses regarding gender differences and partner effects for model paths, but view our examination of these paths to be an important initial step.

Method

Participants and Procedures

This study is based on data collected in 2007–2008 as a part of a larger study on marriage and contextual stress among Mexican-origin couples with children living in North Carolina. One hundred and twenty first-generation Mexican-origin couples who were (a) living together at the time of the study, (b) parents of their biological children, and (c) legally married or “living as married” in consensual unions were eligible to participate in the larger study. Given the high prevalence of common law marriages in Latin American countries and that many undocumented immigrant couples cannot legally marry in the United States, the inclusion of “living as married” couples was important for a more comprehensive definition of marriage among this population (De Vos, 1999; Helms et al., 2011; Wheeler et al., 2010). In addition, to be eligible for the study, at least one spouse had to be of Mexican origin and both spouses had to be of Latin American origin. For the majority of couples (89%), both spouses were from Mexico; most spouses were first-generation immigrants (96% of wives and 100% of husbands).

The following procedures conformed to the requirements of the institutional review board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, were informed by best practices for conducting research with vulnerable populations (Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009), and were supported by staff from UNCG's Center for New North Carolinians. Cultural insiders helped to recruit couples within predetermined census tracts identified based on high concentrations of Latina/o households in central North Carolina. Specifically, Latina project staff, social service workers, and community contacts affiliated with the Center for New North Carolinians made initial contacts with families either in families' homes or at social service agencies that served the Latina/o community in the areas identified with census data. During these initial contacts, families were informed of the goals of the research study, the nature of the interview, and the eligibility criteria. Interested and eligible couples received a flyer with the project's contact information. Couples who contacted project staff via phone were screened for eligibility a second time. Following guidelines for research with vulnerable populations, contact information including addresses and phone numbers were obtained only for eligible couples who initiated contact with project staff. All eligible couples who expressed interest in participating in the study were interviewed with the exception of one couple who withdrew prior to the interview. Because the focus of the larger study was on the experiences of Mexican immigrants residing in a relatively new settlement state in the southern United States, the sample is not representative of all Mexican Americans or couples of Mexican origin living elsewhere.

Data for both husbands and wives were collected during two- to three-hour individual in-home interviews conducted by bilingual Latina project staff. Husbands and wives responded separately to questions about their background, marital quality, gender role attitudes, and wives' employment. To account for variations in literacy, the interviewers read each survey question aloud and participants indicated their response by pointing to numbers on a response card for

each scale. Interviewers then recorded participants' responses on scannable bubble sheets. All but one interview was conducted in Spanish. Participating families received a \$50 gift card.

Of the 120 participating couples, 83 (69%) were legally married and 37 (31%) were living as married. Average ages for husbands and wives were 30 and 28 years, respectively, and there was an average spousal age gap of 3.49 years. Couples had been married or living as married for an average of 7 years. Thirty-seven percent of couples had other adults living in the home, most often reporting one or two additional household members. Couples in the sample had two children, on average, and the mean firstborn's age was 6 years. Wives and husbands averaged 10 and 9 years of formal schooling, respectively. Husbands' average length of time in the United States was 11 years, whereas wives' was 8 years. Ninety-eight percent of husbands and 54% of wives were employed. The average total family income was \$33,297. Though slightly younger than the national median age of 35, our sample was comparable with national estimates of the Mexican-origin population across income, education, and years in the United States (for comparison, see Pew Research Center, 2009). Participating couples resided in small towns (55%), cities (26%), and rural areas (19%). According to 2008 Census data, 95% of couples lived in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty (i.e., ranging from a poverty rate of 19% to 32%). Forty-nine percent of couples lived in neighborhoods classified as 50% Hispanic, 29% of couples lived in neighborhoods ranging from 10% to 25% Hispanic, and 21% resided in neighborhoods classified as less than 10% Hispanic.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas for the Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Marital status ^a	—									
2. Wives' employment status ^b	0.07	—								
3. Wives' gender role attitudes	-0.10	0.01	—							
4. Husbands' gender role attitudes	-0.14	-0.07	0.32***	—						
5. Wives' warmth	0.23*	0.07	-0.05	-0.20*	—					
6. Husbands' warmth	-0.05	-0.05	-0.32***	-0.19*	0.32***	—				
7. Wives' negativity	-0.28**	-0.07	0.11	0.00	-0.31**	-0.15	—			
8. Husbands' negativity	0.03	-0.01	0.12	0.02	-0.28**	-0.31**	0.34***	—		
9. Wives' marital satisfaction	0.23*	0.13	-0.10	-0.15	0.65***	0.24**	-0.31***	-0.22*	—	
10. Husbands' marital satisfaction	-0.06	-0.18*	-0.26**	-0.23*	0.24**	0.65***	-0.05	-0.27**	0.21*	—
<i>M</i>	0.69	0.54	2.48	2.73	8.19	8.29	3.74	3.05	7.20	7.57
<i>SD</i>	0.46	0.50	0.92	1.02	0.79	0.70	1.81	1.50	1.33	0.96
Cronbach's Alpha	—	—	0.72	0.81	0.86	0.84	0.72	0.56	0.94	0.90

Note. ^a Coded as 0 = living as married, 1 = legally married. ^b Coded as 0 = nonemployed, 1 = employed. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Measures

All measures were available in both Spanish and English and had been used in prior research with Mexican-origin populations for which Foster and Martinez's (1995) method of forward- and back-translation was applied (Adams, Coltrane, & Parke, 2007; Wheeler et al., 2010).

Translators from the Center for New North Carolinians familiar with local dialect further verified that the measures were appropriate for use with the present sample. Bivariate correlations, descriptive statistics, and Cronbach's alphas for all study variables are shown in Table 1. There were significant positive within-couple associations for husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes, warmth, negativity, and marital satisfaction. One couple had missing data on husbands'

warmth and another had missing data on husbands' marital satisfaction; full information maximum likelihood (the default in Mplus) was used for the substantive analyses.

Marital satisfaction. The dependent variable was measured using a 16-item adapted version of Huston, McHale, and Crouter's (1986) Domains of Satisfaction Scale, which was revised specifically for measuring marital satisfaction of Mexican-origin couples (Wheeler et al., 2010). Spouses were asked to rate how satisfied they were in the past year from 1 (*extremely dissatisfied*) to 9 (*extremely satisfied*) across 16 domains of marriage (e.g., satisfaction with marital communication, the division of household work, family decision making, involvement with relatives, and shared cultural practices). Participants' scores were based on the average of the 16 domains; higher scores were indicative of higher marital satisfaction.

Marital warmth and negativity. Affective dimensions of marital quality were measured with Braiker and Kelley's (1979) 9-item warmth scale and three items from the original 5-item negativity subscale. The warmth subscale (Wheeler et al., 2010) and reduced negativity subscale (Helms et al., 2015) were previously validated with Mexican immigrant couples. The two items that were deleted from the original 5-item negativity subscale were determined (based on a previous study; Helms et al., 2015) to either have small factor loadings (<0.30 standardized, one item) or failed to demonstrate measurement invariance across husbands and wives (one item). Husbands and wives were asked to rate their warmth and negativity on 9-point scales based on the last year. Warmth items assessed spouses' subjective assessment of connection and emotional intimacy with their partner and include "How close do you feel toward your spouse?" and "To what extent do you have a sense of 'belonging' with your spouse?" and "To what extent do you love your spouse at this stage?" The three negativity items were "How often do you argue with your spouse?" and "When you argue, how serious are the arguments?" and "How often do you feel angry or resentful to your spouse?" Separate scores for marital warmth and negativity were calculated as the average of the respective 9-item and 3-item subscales. Higher values indicate greater warmth and greater negativity.

Gender role attitudes. The six-item marital roles subscale from Hoffman and Kloska's (1995) Gender Role Attitudes Scale measured spouses' gendered attitudes toward marital roles. Several studies have confirmed the validity of the marital roles subscale specifically with Mexican American and immigrant populations, affirming the use of this subscale with the current sample (Adams et al., 2007; Wheeler et al., 2010). Participants were asked on a 5-point scale the extent to which they strongly disagreed to strongly agreed with statements such as "Men should make the really important decisions in the family." Participants' scores were averaged across six items; higher scores indicated more sex-typed gender role attitudes.

Wives' employment status. Wives were asked to indicate whether or not they were currently employed at the time of the interview (coded as 0 = not employed, 1 = employed).

Legal marital status. Legal marital status was included as a control variable in all analyses based on best practices recommendations for the study of Mexican immigrants (e.g., Helms et al., 2012). The inclusion of this control is also empirically supported by the significant bivariate correlations with the present sample between legal marital status and wives' negativity and positive associations with wives' marital warmth and satisfaction.

Results

Overview of Analyses

All analyses were completed using *Mplus* 7.4 (with the default maximum likelihood estimator) to examine (a) direct and indirect (through marital warmth and negativity) links between husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes and their own and their spouses' reports of marital satisfaction and (b) whether the hypothesized associations between spouses' gender role attitudes and marital processes were moderated by wives' employment status (see Figure 1). Marital status was treated as a control variable in all analyses. This analytic approach accounted for interdependence in the dyadic data, produced total, direct, and indirect effects (to examine mediated associations), and allowed for tests of moderator associations for wives' employment status. These analyses also apply more contemporary approaches to "mediation" in that total associations are decomposed into direct and indirect associations, with the latter (if significant when examining bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals) indicative of mediation (Kenny, 2012). *Total* effects refer to the association between the predictor and the outcomes that sums both the direct effect and indirect effect (i.e., what traditional approaches to mediation would report with the mediator not accounted for in the model). *Direct* effects refer to the association between the predictors and outcomes above and beyond the shared covariation with the mediator(s). *Indirect* effects indicate the amount of mediation in the model and are represented by the product of the associations between gender role attitudes and a given mediator (i.e., warmth or negativity) and a mediator with the dependent variable (i.e., marital satisfaction; Kenny, 2012). Indirect effects were assessed for significance using bias-corrected bootstrapped intervals with 1,000 bootstraps.

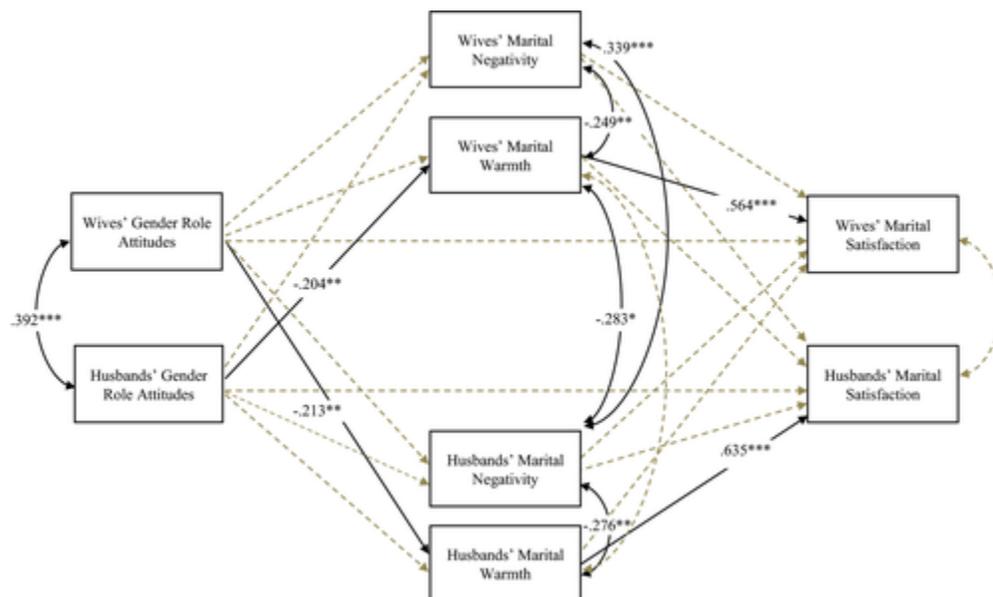


Figure 1. Standardized actor and partner associations of wives' and husbands' gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction through marital warmth and negativity. Model includes marital status as control variable. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$. Solid lines indicate statistically significant paths and dashed lines indicate nonsignificant paths.

Moderation analyses were examined by conducting multigroup analyses using wives' employment status as the grouping variable, which split the sample approximately in half (i.e., 54% employed). Typical multigroup approaches to moderation in SEMs involve testing one model with structural coefficients constrained to equality across groups to compare with another model with those same coefficients freely estimated. To the extent that equality constraints result in a worsened model fit (as indicated by a significant change in chi-square values), there is evidence for moderation. Therefore, to assess moderation, we first estimated a freely estimated model followed by a fully constrained model (i.e., structural paths or coefficients set to be equal across couples in which wives were employed and nonemployed), and assessed the difference between these models using a chi-square difference test.

Direct and Indirect Links between Gender Role Attitudes and Marital Satisfaction

To account for interdependence within couples, we included covariances between husbands' and wives' reports of each marital variable. In addition, covariances were specified between husbands' marital warmth and negativity and between wives' marital warmth and negativity. This initial APIM did not fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 13.60$, $df = 4$, $p = .008$, RMSEA = 0.14; CFI = 0.95). Modification indices suggested that adding an additional covariance between husbands' marital negativity and wives' marital warmth would demonstrate a good fit to these data ($\chi^2 = 3.36$, $df = 3$, $p = .738$; RMSEA = 0.03, CFI = 0.99). Given the improvement in fit and empirical support for the addition of the path, we treated this latter model as the baseline model from which we did additional statistical tests.

The typical approach to an APIM also involves testing for moderation by gender in terms of actor and partner associations. For this test, we compared the model fit with all path coefficients set to equality across spouses. This model demonstrated a good fit to these data ($\chi^2 = 10.73$, $df = 16$, $p = .82$; RMSEA = 0.00; CFI = 1.00), which suggested that the actor and partner associations were comparable within couples. In subsequent analyses, as a result, we constrained all paths in the APIM to equality across spouse (see Figure 1).

The next set of analyses were conducted to examine how gender role attitudes were directly and indirectly related to marital satisfaction via negativity and warmth. Results suggested no direct associations between gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction (see Table 2 and Figure 1 for coefficients). There were statistically significant actor associations linking marital negativity and marital warmth to marital satisfaction (i.e., within spouse, not across spouse; see Table 2). In reference to associations between gender role attitudes and the mediators, there were no significant actor or partner associations predicting marital negativity, nor were there any actor associations linking gender role attitudes to marital warmth. There was a significant, negative partner association, however, linking gender role attitudes to marital warmth. Though unrelated to the central questions of this study, we also found a positive association between legal marital status (i.e., control variable) and spouses' marital warmth.

We assessed indirect effects using bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals, using 1,000 bootstrap draws. Statistically significant indirect associations are an indication that mediation (whether partial or full) is present. Bootstrapped confidence intervals are used to evaluate

statistical significance because indirect coefficients are not symmetrically distributed. We found one significant indirect association that captured a partner association between gender role attitudes and reports of marital warmth (a negative association), which, in turn, was positively associated with marital satisfaction. This overall indirect association ($b = -0.216$, 95% CI $[-0.392, -0.067]$) suggested that the overall link between spouse's own gender role attitudes and their partner's marital satisfaction was mediated by their partner's marital warmth. In other words, sex-typed gender role attitudes of one's partner may lead to one's own decreased marital satisfaction to the extent that the partner's gender role attitudes are associated with lower perceived warmth (see Table 2). Given the statistically significant total association, this also suggests complete mediation or that the significant predictor/outcome association was reduced to nonsignificance after taking into account the mediators.

Table 2. Unstandardized (Standard Error) and Standardized Model Coefficients

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B(W.)/B(H.)</i>	<i>p/[95% CI]</i>
Actor effects				
Gender role attitudes → warmth	-0.023	0.079	-0.018/-0.022	.770
Gender role attitudes → negativity	0.189	0.152	0.065/0.086	.215
Warmth → marital satisfaction	0.910	0.070	0.564/0.635	<.001
Negativity → marital satisfaction	-0.072	0.037	-0.102/-0.107	.051
Gender role attitudes → marital satisfaction	-0.113	0.101	-0.056/-0.077	.265
Partner effects				
Gender role attitudes → warmth	-0.237	0.090	-0.213/-0.204	.008
Gender role attitudes → negativity	0.104	0.160	0.044/0.039	.516
Gender role attitudes → marital satisfaction	-0.004	0.094	-0.003/-0.002	.963
Warmth → marital satisfaction	0.026	0.082	0.021/0.014	.751
Negativity → marital satisfaction	0.032	0.034	0.058/0.038	.349
Covariances				
H. gender role attitudes ↔ W. gender role attitudes	0.164	0.042	0.392	<.001
H. warmth ↔ W. warmth	0.130	0.079	0.259	.101
H. negativity ↔ W. negativity	0.863	0.226	0.339	<.001
H. marital satisfaction ↔ W. marital satisfaction	0.034	0.061	0.047	.581
W. warmth ↔ W. negativity	-0.324	0.131	-0.249	.013
H. warmth ↔ H. negativity	-0.270	0.106	-0.276	.011
W. warmth ↔ H. negativity	-0.315	0.128	-0.283	.014
Significant indirect effects				
H.(W.) gender role attitudes → W. (H.) warmth → W. (H.) marital satisfaction	-0.216	0.086	-0.115	$[-.392, -.067]$

Note. *p*-values and confidence intervals taken from 1,000 bootstrap estimate. W. represents wives, H. represents husbands. When paths were constrained, standardized values are listed first.

Wives' Employment Status as a Moderator

To assess whether wives' employment status moderated the associations between husbands' and wives' gender role attitudes and marital warmth and negativity, we first freely estimated a multigroup model (grouped by wives' employment) of the previously described mediation model and then compared the model fit (using chi-square difference tests). The baseline model with all parameters freely estimated was a good fit to these data ($\chi^2 = 27.07$, $df = 32$, $p = .72$; RMSEA = 0.00; CFI = 1.00). A similar model with path coefficients constrained to equality across employment status did not show a statistically significant decrement in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 17.80$, $\Delta df = 13$, $p = .16$). Taken together, these results suggested that the coefficients

linking gender role attitudes to marital processes were similar regardless of wives' employment status.

Discussion

The current study advances our understanding of the role marital processes play in linking gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction among Mexican-origin couples by adopting a dyadic approach that attends to the interdependent cognitive (i.e., gender role attitudes), affective (i.e., marital warmth and negativity), and behavioral (i.e., wives' employment) dimensions of gendered marital roles (Peplau, 1983). This study is the first to build upon the recommendations of marital scholars who study gender (Davis & Greenstein, 2009) and Latino families (Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2015) to better align dyadic and cultural ecological theoretical approaches (Helms et al., 2011; Huston, 2000; Peplau, 1983) with an analytic strategy that attends to the inherent complexity of marital relationships. Notably, spouses' perceptions of marital warmth were found to fully mediate the association between their partners' gender role attitudes and spouses' own reports of marital satisfaction regardless of wives' employment status or spouses' gender. No direct associations were found linking gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction, nor did marital negativity play a role in the association.

These results suggest that for Mexican-origin couples who are navigating their marriages in the context of cultural adaptation, the more strongly one's partner endorses sex-typed gender role attitudes, the less likely one is to feel warmth, connection, and intimacy in the marriage; this lack of marital warmth is associated with one's own dissatisfaction in the marriage overall. Conversely, for both husbands and wives, being married to a partner whose attitudes about gendered marital roles are more flexible appeared to be protective for marriage to the extent that spouses experienced marriage to their less sex-typed partner as warm and emotionally connected and, in turn, evaluated their marriages more favorably. In contrast to prior work that found support for actor associations between spouses' gender role attitudes and a variety of dimensions of marital quality (e.g., Stanik et al., 2013), in the present study, spouses' attitudes were not linked to their own reports of marital processes or marital satisfaction. This finding offers a caveat to interpretations of earlier work that found within-person associations between gender role attitudes and marital quality in studies that did not also consider partner effects. Our results suggest that when examined in a dyadic framework that takes into account both actor and partner effects, spouses' own gender role attitudes are less relevant to their marital quality than are their spouses' attitudes. Taken together, these findings inform the larger literature on gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction in which direct links have been inconsistently supported, attention to processes has been ignored, and studies of Mexican-origin couples are absent.

Results from this study challenge the historically dominant narrative in early theoretical writings and empirical studies that depicted Mexican-origin couples' sex-typed gender role attitudes as a Mexican cultural value protective of marriage (e.g., Peñalosa, 1968). Our findings offer additional support to an emerging body of research informing clinical practice that underscores within-group variability in Mexican-origin spouses' attitudes and experiences (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008; Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2015) and suggest that the most resilient couples are likely to embrace role flexibility in the context of immigration (Glick, 2010; Hengstebeck et al., 2015). These findings are particularly meaningful given the relatively homogeneous nature

of our sample of predominantly low-income, Spanish-speaking, immigrant couples. Indeed, Mexican-origin couples navigate a “mixture of older traditions with newer ones and a conflict between ideals of family life and day-to-day reality... The Mexican-American family has had to be flexible, pluralistic, and adaptive to survive” (Griswold del Castillo, 1984, p. 132). Role adaptability is likely to operate as a resource for immigrant families that makes partners more resilient to coping with stress and increases their capacity for warmth and emotional connection (Glick, 2010; Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). Warmth and connectedness in marriage is important not only for its role in minimizing relationship dissatisfaction, but also for promoting optimal personal and relationship functioning (Fincham & Beach, 2010). Indeed, although not central to the goals of the study, the within-person negative associations between marital warmth and negativity support prior longitudinal research that underscores how everyday expressions of marital warmth function to foster a sense of connection and “we-ness” in marriage that over time helps couples navigate conflict and minimize negativity (Gottman, 1998).

Although there was theoretical and some empirical support for the hypothesized association linking gender role attitudes to marital satisfaction via marital negativity, significant mediation for marital negativity was not found in our study. This is likely to be explained in part by the greater complexity captured in our APIMeM model than earlier work that found associations between gender role attitudes and marital negativity (e.g., Wheeler et al., 2010), and gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction (e.g., Stanik & Bryant, 2012). Furthermore, our analyses followed recommendations to examine marital warmth and marital negativity as reported by both spouses in the couple dyad simultaneously, rather than separately (Fincham & Beach, 2010). In so doing, we were able to assess the relative contribution of both of these processes in a manner that has not been assessed to date. Our approach better matches spouses’ lived experience and offers empirical support for the important role of positive rather than negative marital processes in explaining the gender role attitudes–marital satisfaction link for Mexican-origin couples. Furthermore, the lack of significant findings for marital negativity’s role in the association between gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction is consistent with conclusions reached by contemporary marital scholars who suggest that constructs such as marital negativity, which have received extensive attention in the literature dominated by studies of White and middle-class families, are perhaps not as central to understanding marriage among more diverse populations. Instead, these scholars purport that a positive affective marital climate that contributes to spouses’ sense of connection and their capacity to face challenges as a team is likely to be more salient to navigating marriage in contexts such as immigration that place additional demands on couples (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2010).

Because the links between gender role attitudes and marital warmth did not vary based on wives’ employment status, the extent to which spouses’ own or their partners’ gender role attitudes align with wives’ behavioral enactment of their marital role via employment did not make a difference for spouses’ perceptions of marital warmth. This finding challenges Peplau’s (1983) theorizing regarding the importance of congruence between cognitive and behavioral dimensions of gendered family roles for marital functioning and empirical work conducted with White working and middle-class families (e.g., Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Contemporary qualitative studies of Latino and Mexican-origin families offer some insights into why this may be so (e.g., Hirsch, 2003; Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). Given the structural constraints associated with cultural adaptation that make wives’ employment and/or husbands’ overwork necessary for

many Mexican immigrant families (Updegraff, Crouter, Umaña-Taylor, & Cansler, 2007), expectations regarding women's roles in their families are often redefined to include wives' employment (Baker, 2004; Esteinou, 2007). Therefore, dissonance between spouses' gender role attitudes and wives' employment may be normative in the context of immigration and correspondingly less salient to spouses' perceptions of marital warmth and connection (Hengstebeck, Helms, Wood, & Rodriguez, 2017). Thus, regardless of wives' employment status, spouses' beliefs in patriarchal marital roles may reduce the capacity for connection in marriage, whereas partners' flexibility in gender role attitudes may serve as a resource for fostering warmth during the process of immigration.

In addition to recognizing within-group diversity among low-income populations of Mexican-origin couples and the capacity for partners' attitudinal flexibility in gender roles to impact marital satisfaction positively via spouses' perceptions of marital warmth, it may be useful for practitioners to intentionally help couples differentiate between the affective climate of marital and family life (i.e., marital warmth, positivity, connectedness) and their gendered attitudes about marital roles. For Mexican-origin couples, specifically, framing such a discussion in the context of family-supporting roles may be particularly fruitful as qualitative studies have suggested that spouses are likely to alter their sex-typed gender role attitudes when they perceive that doing so will benefit family well-being (Helms et al., 2015; Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). Indeed, "Latino men informed by positive machismo and nobleza [noble man] consider that masculinity should be demonstrated by the capacity to establish interpersonal relationships characterized by open emotional expression, warmth, gender equality, and commitment toward one's family" (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008, p. 169). Although not measured directly in the current study, framing discussions about gendered marital roles in the context of the positive aspects of familism—a Latino cultural value that emphasizes the primacy of family and kin, including the importance of providing emotional support for family members—may be fruitful (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Likely to be beneficial are efforts to help spouses understand that attitudes are malleable and the demands of factors operating outside the couple (e.g., managing life together in a new country) often necessitate a re-evaluation of beliefs about what it means to be a "good wife" or a "good husband." Further, using language that emphasizes the importance of maintaining connection with one another as well as working together as a team for the good of the family may help couples reframe their understanding of gendered marital roles in a manner that is culturally relevant and likely to be protective of marriage.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the strengths of our study, several limitations should be considered. First, although the sample was comparable with national estimates of the Mexican-origin population across income, education, and years in the United States (see Pew Research Center, 2009), our younger sample may not generalize to other Mexican immigrants, Latino populations, or immigrant groups. Nevertheless, in light of growing interest in the experiences of Mexican immigrant families in relatively new immigrant destinations, our findings are valuable in that they illuminate knowledge about a large, understudied population that is often the target of intervention. Second, although we did contribute to the very few studies that examine marital processes among Latinos (e.g., Falconier, 2013; Helms et al., 2015; Wheeler et al., 2010), we did not examine how

processes unfold over time nor across different stages of the life course. Future research would benefit from a longitudinal design and a deeper exploration of the processes through which spouses' gender role attitudes and wives' employment status are linked to husbands' marital satisfaction across the course of couples' marriages and family life. Longitudinal research on Mexican-origin spouses' gender role attitudes and employment may be particularly salient given the potential to examine the links between gender role attitudes and marital processes and satisfaction for couples across the process of immigration, cultural adaptation, and the unfolding of family care demands across the life course. Third, the research literature would benefit from examining additional culturally relevant factors that may shape the link between gender role attitudes and marital satisfaction. For example, what role do spouses' familism attitudes play in shaping gendered attitudes about family roles and their links with marital processes and quality? Also, how might premigration factors (e.g., wives' employment status in Mexico, premarital and premigration gender role attitudes) and cultural factors (e.g., *nobleza*, country of origin, ethnic identity, cultural values, and acculturation) operate to moderate these associations? Given the often precarious employment circumstances of Mexican-origin men, how does husbands' unemployment or long work hours in physically demanding work impact spouses' capacity for marital warmth, particularly in combination with one or both spouses' more sex-typed attitudes? Do the specifics of wives' employment (e.g., hours or shift worked, gendered nature of work, percent of family income earned) matter? Fourth, future research should examine whether the theorized causal argument holds with longitudinal data that can attend to the possibility of bidirectional associations over time (Lavner, Karney, & Bradbury, 2016), the effects of changing gender role attitudes on marital satisfaction over time, and whether mismatched gender role attitudes have the potential to erode spouses' capacity for warmth and connectedness, and in turn, long-term marital satisfaction and stability.

Conclusion

In contrast to popular stereotypes, our study found notable variability in gender role attitudes among a relatively homogeneous sample of Mexican-origin couples. Our method made it possible to examine actor and partner, direct and indirect, and moderation effects, which enabled a dyadic examination of our constructs in a manner that expands on the work of others. Using this approach, we found that when spouses reported less sex-typed attitudes, their partners reported feeling more connected to them and more satisfied with the marriage, regardless of whether wives were employed. To the extent that the stresses and changes of immigration undermine warmth and connectedness, the relationships of Mexican-origin couples may be particularly at risk, which will likely have long-term implications for coparenting (Helms et al., 2015) and long-term relationship stability (Lavner & Bradbury, 2010; Lorenz, Conger, Simon, Whitbeck, & Elder, 1991). In the context of immigration, it may be that marital contentment is found with a partner who espouses flexible rather than sex-typed beliefs about gendered marital roles. Indeed, our results suggest that marital satisfaction was most attainable for those Mexican-origin couples in which marital partners were less sex-typed in their attitudes about marital roles to the extent that partners' attitudinal role flexibility promoted spouses' feelings of warmth and connection to their partner.

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