

Background and Significance

- Youth of color face racial discrimination, including discrimination from police (Zeiders et al., 2021).
- Recent events of police brutality underscore the prevalence and consequences of police discrimination (PD) among youth of color (Zeiders et al., 2021).
- PD varies by gender; boys report experiencing more PD than girls (Berkel et al., 2009).
- PD has been shown to negatively impact youth's mental health and academic functioning (Zeiders et al., 2021), but there is growing need to understand factors that can mitigate this harm.
- Social support relates to positive mental health outcomes among adolescents (Qi et al., 2020), and in some instances, reduces the harm of racial discrimination on academic outcomes among Latinx youth (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006).

Research Questions

- The current study examined:
 - the relation between PD and Latinx youths' anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, academic motivation, and differences by gender.
 - the moderating role of family and friend social support in the relationship between PD, mental health, and academic well-being.

Method

Participants: The current study utilized cross-sectional data from a larger study focused on Latinx parent-adolescent dyads living in the US Southwest ($N = 293$). Youth's data were collected from Aug 2020 to May 2021.

Age: $M = 13$ years, $SD = 1.41$,

Range = 11 and 15 years.

Gender:

Girl/Female: 47%

Boy/Male: 51%

Nativity: 95% U.S.-born

Trans Girl/Female: .3%

Non-Binary: 1.7%

Measures

Police Discrimination. Experiences with Police and Law Enforcement scale (English et al., 2017).

- 10 items (e.g., "In the past year, how often have police and law enforcement searched you for no reason?"). Responses: 1 (*Never*) to 4 (*Often*) ($\alpha = .93$).

Family and Friend Social Support. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988)

- Family (4 items; "Your family tries to help you") ($\alpha = .92$).
- Friends (4 items; "You can count on your friends when things go wrong") ($\alpha = .92$).
- Responses: 1 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Very true*).

Method Contd.

Academic Motivation. Academic Motivation Scale (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003).

- 5 items (e.g., "Grades are very important to me").
- Responses: 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly agree*). ($\alpha = .80$).

Anxiety Symptoms. The Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale (GAD-7; Spitzer, 2006)

- 7 items (e.g., "Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge").
- Responses: 0 (*not at all*) to 3 (*nearly every day*). ($\alpha = .91$).

Depressive Symptoms. The Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977)

- 20 items ("I felt that people disliked me.").
- Responses: 1 (*rarely/ none of the time*) to 4 (*most of the time*). ($\alpha = .84$).

Results

Table 1. Experiences of Police Discrimination and Latinx Youths' Outcomes

	Anxiety			Depressive Symptoms			Academic Motivation		
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p	b	SE	p
Gender									
Model 1									
Intercept	0.96	0.25	<.001***	1.87	0.19	<.001***	2.94	0.24	<.001***
Family Income	0.03	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.39	0.02	0.01	0.10
Nativity	0.18	0.25	0.47	0.17	0.18	0.34	0.05	0.24	0.84
Gender	-0.44	0.11	<.001***	-0.33	0.08	<.001***	-0.02	0.08	0.80
PD	0.73	0.18	<.001***	0.44	0.13	0.00**	-0.16	0.15	0.30
Model 2									
Intercept	1.00	0.25	<.001***	1.87	0.19	<.001***	2.95	0.24	<.001***
Family Income	0.03	0.02	0.07	0.01	0.01	0.39	0.02	0.01	0.16
Nativity	0.16	0.25	0.52	0.17	0.18	0.34	0.07	0.24	0.77
Gender	-0.45	0.11	<.001***	-0.33	0.08	<.001***	-0.04	0.08	0.67
PD	1.12	0.32	<.001***	0.43	0.24	0.07	0.26	0.23	0.26
PD X Gender	-0.57	0.39	0.14	0.02	0.29	0.94	-0.75	0.31	0.02*
Social Support									
Model 1									
Intercept	0.98	0.23	<.001***	1.87	0.16	<.001***	3.01	0.24	<.001***
Family Income	0.04	0.01	0.01**	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.19
Nativity	0.02	0.23	0.93	0.05	0.16	0.78	0.03	0.24	0.91
Gender	-0.24	0.11	0.02*	-0.15	0.07	0.04*	-0.06	0.08	0.48
PD	0.51	0.17	0.00**	0.24	0.12	0.05*	-0.11	0.15	0.49
Family SS	-0.36	0.06	<.001***	-0.32	0.04	<.001***	0.08	0.05	0.08
Friend SS	0.14	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.13	0.06	0.05	0.21
Model 2									
Intercept	1.01	0.23	<.001***	1.88	0.16	<.001***	2.97	0.24	<.001***
Family Income	0.03	0.01	0.02*	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.01	0.01	0.22
Nativity	-0.01	0.23	0.98	0.04	0.16	0.82	0.05	0.24	0.83
Gender	-0.20	0.11	0.07	-0.13	0.08	0.08	-0.03	0.09	0.73
PD	0.46	0.19	0.02*	0.23	0.13	0.09	-0.22	0.16	0.18
Family SS	-0.38	0.06	<.001***	-0.33	0.04	<.001***	0.05	0.05	0.35
Friend SS	0.15	0.06	0.01*	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.10	0.05	0.05
PD X Family SS	0.06	0.21	0.79	0.04	0.15	0.77	-0.45	0.27	0.10
PD X Friend SS	0.43	0.24	0.07	0.14	0.17	0.41	0.68	0.32	0.04*

Notes. PD = Police and Law Enforcement Discrimination; Family SS = Family Social Support; Friend SS = Friend Social Support. Gender was coded as 1 = Boy and 0 = Girl. Nativity was coded as 1 = US Born and 0 = Born Outside of US. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Results Contd.

Figure 1. Moderating Role of Gender

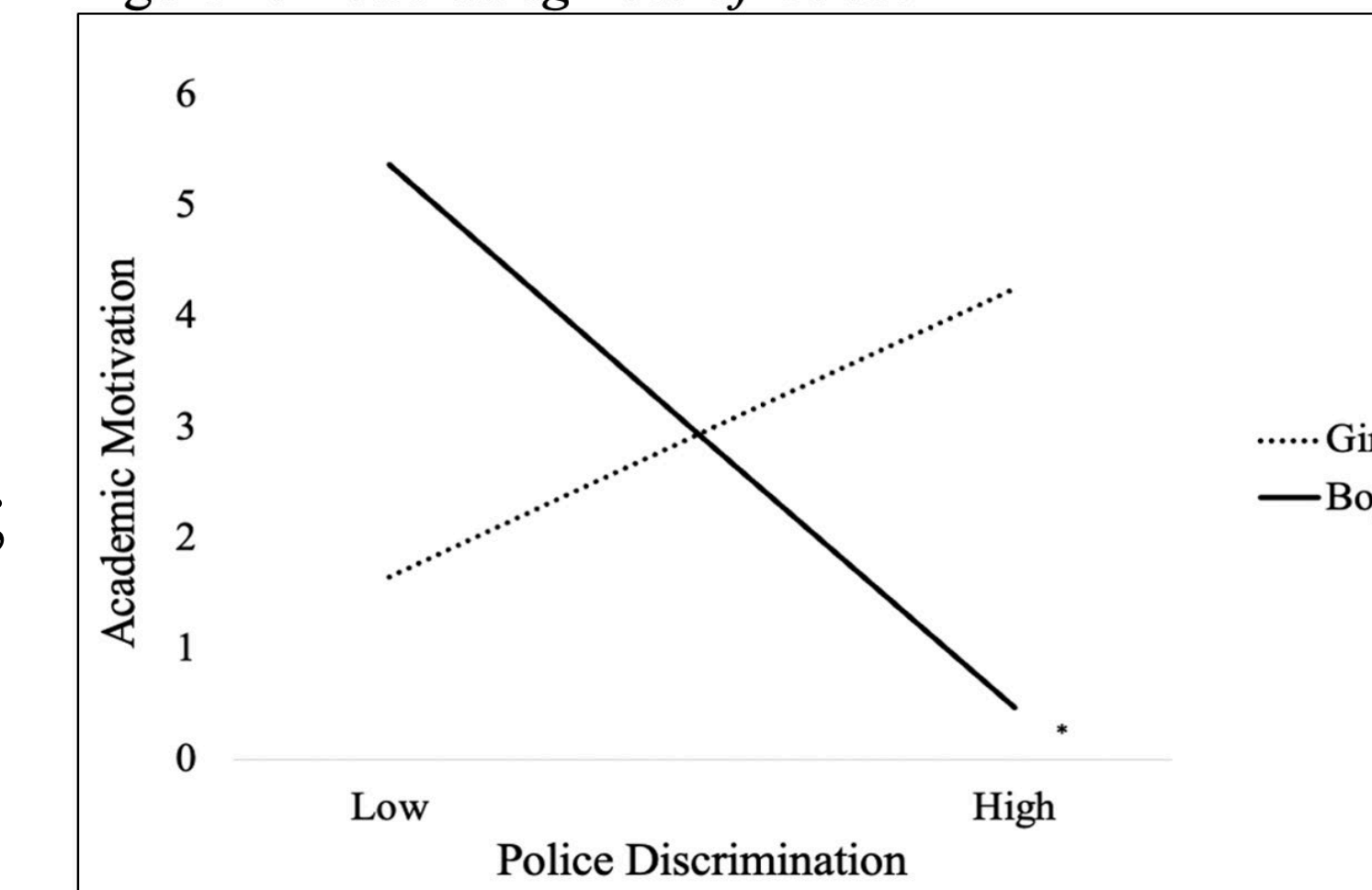
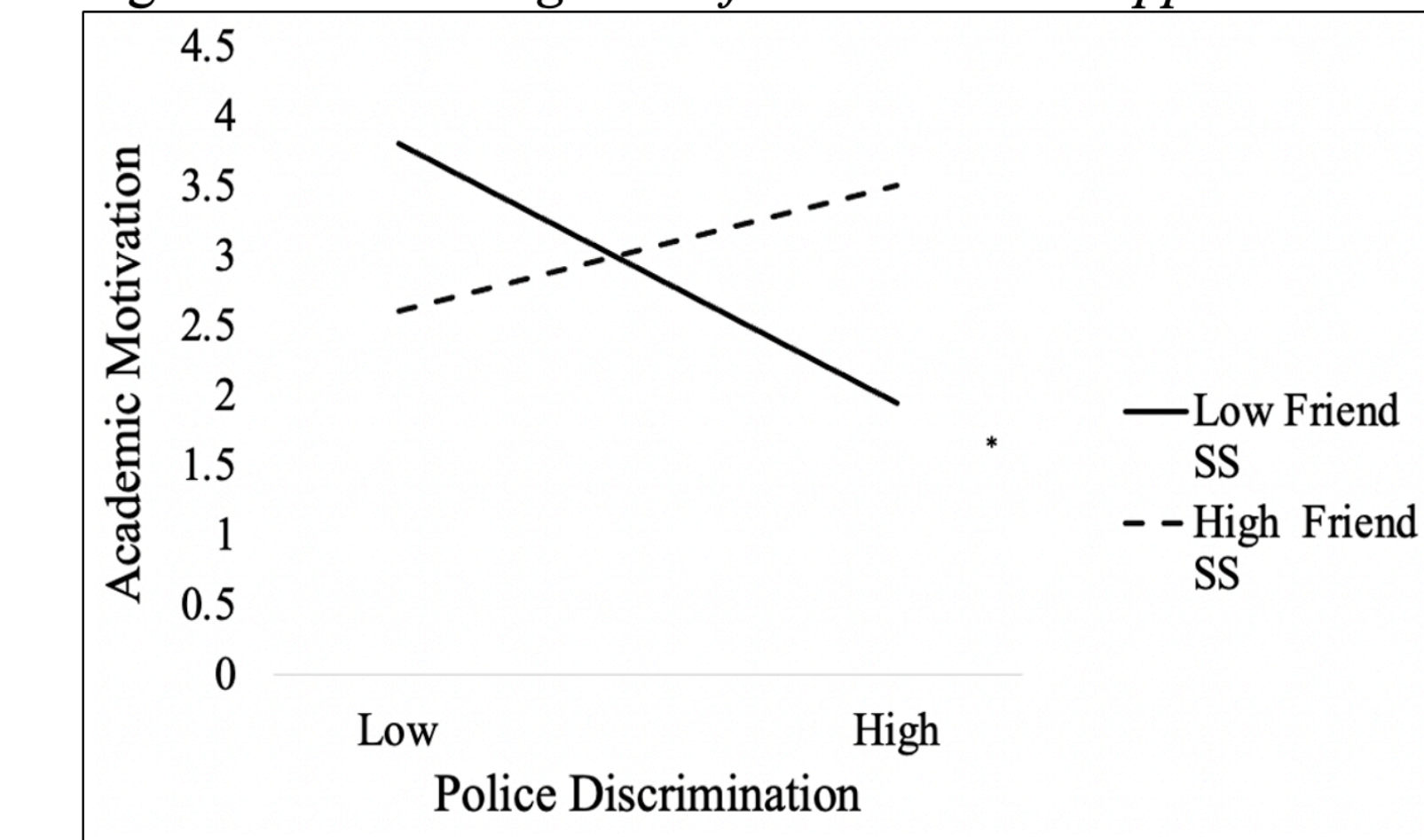


Figure 2. Moderating Role of Friend Social Support



- 16% of youth reported at least one experience of PD in the past year.
- The most common experiences were police assuming they were a thief, being treated unfairly based on how they dress, and being stopped for no reason.
- Boys reported more physical abuse by police, $t(108) = -2.36, p = .05$, and more instances of being arrested for something they did not do, $t(120.49) = -2.11, p = .05$, compared to girls.
- PD was related to higher anxiety and depressive symptoms for all youth (Table 1, Model 1).
- For boys, PD related to low academic motivation, but showed no relation to academic motivation for girls (Figure 1).
- Friend social support moderated the association between police discrimination and academic motivation. At high levels of friend support, no association emerged, but at low levels of friend support, PD was negatively related to academic motivation (Figure 2).
- No significant interactions for family support were found.

Conclusions and Implications

- PD was relatively low, but still related to Latinx youths' anxiety and depressive symptoms and, for boys only, lower academic motivation.
- Social support from friends, buffered the negative effects of police discrimination on academic motivation, in line with other studies finding that friend social support is an important aspect for youth's academic functioning (Rodriguez et al., 2003).
- The findings from the current study highlight the detrimental role that experiences of PD play among the lives of Latinx youth, and the importance of friends.
- Friend social support is a central aspect of peer relationships, and is important for reaffirming self-worth, security, and providing support during times of need (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Wright & Wachs, 2019). Mobilizing friends to provide support was an essential aspect in protecting youth's academic motivation, even when experiences of discrimination were outside of the school context.
- Future research should incorporate a longitudinal design to investigate the long-term impacts of PD on youth's mental health and academic functioning, and the buffering role of social support over time.
- Culturally-informed prevention and intervention programs should be utilized to promote community-level and peer-level social support networks for Latinx youth to lessen the detrimental impacts of individual and institutional discrimination (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006).

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