

# Young Latinx children: At the intersections of race and socioeconomic status

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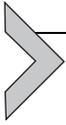
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## Abstract

To understand the developmental outcomes of Latinx children growing up poor in the United States, we examine how socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic minority status jointly condition the development of Latinx children in the United States. To address these gaps, in this chapter we first present a brief demographic profile of Latinx in the United States to contextualize the later theoretical and empirical discussions. We then review theoretical frameworks that explain SES differences in Latinx home environments and examine how they have been used to explain disparities in Latinx children's outcomes. Third, we describe the current research on the early home environments of Latinx children of varying levels of parental SES. Fourth, we review the literature on Latinx children's inequalities noting the scarcity of research that compares Latinx to White children or Latinx to Black children compared to the studies that focus on the White-Black academic gap. Finally, we conclude by summarizing state of knowledge and offering suggestions for future directions. We focus on young children (0–8) due to space limitations but also because the early childhood period is foundational to later development and is where the effects of poverty most likely to have enduring effects.



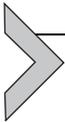
## 1. Introduction

Latinx are the largest and fastest-growing racial/ethnic minority in the United States ([Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2017](#)). Latinx are a diverse group in terms of country of origin, immigration status, language, race, and also socioeconomic status. Although approximately 30% of Latinx children live in poverty ([Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014](#)), in 2017 22% of Latinx are classified as middle class ([Reeves & Busette, 2018](#)). Partly because children living in poverty are at risk for a host of negative outcomes across the lifespan ([Shonkoff & Garner, 2012](#)), we know more about Latinx children growing up in poverty than about those who grow up in better economic circumstances. Children growing up in poverty are at risk for a host of difficulties and challenges both in their skill development and academic achievement. Socioeconomic (SES) disparities in academic achievement among ethnic groups in the United States are evident at the entry to preschool and persist into the school years ([Espinosa, Laffey, Whittaker, & Sheng, 2006](#); [Lee & Burkam, 2002](#)).

Statistics on racial and SES disparities are significant because the racial, ethnic, and income disparities in performance on standardized tests of academic achievement seem to be persistent over time. From 1998 to 2010, studies have documented White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in math and reading in Grades 4 to 12 ranging from 0.50 to 0.85 standard deviations. In contrast, the income gap in achievement between kindergarten students was found to be 1.25 standard deviations in 1998 and 2010 ([Hemphill, Vanneman, & Rahman, 2011](#); [Reardon, 2011](#); [Reardon, Robinson-Cimpian, & Weathers, 2015](#); [Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009](#)). Nevertheless, racial disparities appear to be somewhat reversible. Recent studies have shown that the White-Black and White-Latinx gaps in academic achievement have narrowed since the 1970s ([Reardon et al., 2015](#)). However, during the same period of time the income achievement gap has widened ([Reardon, 2011](#)). Together, these statistics suggest that to better understand the educational outcomes and experiences of Latinx children we must consider how poverty and race and ethnicity jointly shape their normative development and well-being as well as school achievement ([National Center for Education Statistics, 2012](#)).

To examine how socioeconomic status (SES) and ethnic minority status jointly condition the development of Latinx children in the United States, we organize this chapter in the following way: (1) demographic profile of

Latinx in the United States; (2) theoretical frameworks; (3) early environment of Latinx children; (4) SES disparities in Latinx children's development; (5) SES-related mechanisms of influence on Latinx children's development; (6) limitations of current work on Latinx children development; and (7) conclusions. We focus on young children (0–8) due to space limitations but also because the early childhood period is foundational to later development and is where the effects of poverty most likely to have enduring effects (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997).



## 2. A demographic profile of Latinx children and their families

In 2000, the majority of Latinx children were born in the United States, but their parents were more likely to be foreign-born (Garcia & Jensen, 2009; Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008). Of the Latinx children living in the United States, approximately 32% have native parentage, 29% have foreign or mixed parentages, and 39% are foreign born (US Census Bureau, 2001). Since 2000, the U.S.-born Latinx population has continued to grow at a faster rate than the Latinx incoming immigrant population. Between 2000 and 2010, there were 9.6 million Latinx births in the United States and 6.5 million newly-arrived Latinx immigrants. Overall, U.S. births accounted for 60% of the large growth in the Latinx population since 2000 (Krogstad & Lopez, 2014).

Latinx in the United States are often seen as a single racial and ethnic group. Yet, there is great variability in the nationality and ethnicity of Latinx. Of the roughly 50.7 million Latinx, the largest ethnic group are Mexicans (65%) and the second largest group are Puerto Ricans (9.2%). The next largest groups, although much smaller, are Cubans (3.7%), Salvadorans (3.6%), Dominicans (3%), and Guatemalans (2.2%) (Motel & Patten, 2012). Latinx also live in different geographic locations, reflecting different ethnic groups. Mexican, Salvadorans and Guatemalans are largely concentrated in western states, while Cubans, Columbians, Hondurans, and Peruvians largely reside in the South. The largest numbers of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians live in the Northeast (Motel & Patten, 2012). There is also variability in terms of race. According to the 2010 Census, 47% of Latinx self-reported that they were white, 2% reported that they were Black or African American, and 30% self-reported that they were “some other race” (Rios, Romero, & Ramirez, 2014). The heterogeneity of Latinx

is significant as it confers differential vulnerability and protection, which have significant implications for poverty.

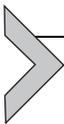
As a group, Latinx face many economic and social challenges. Approximately 19% million Latinx, both native and foreign-born, live below the federal poverty line ([US Census, 2017](#)) and approximately 30% Latinx children grow up in a food-insecure household ([Feeding America, 2018](#)). Using data from the American Community Survey 2006–2010, [Lichter, Sanders, and Johnson \(2015\)](#) found that disproportionately a large share (40%) of Latinx babies are born into poverty. The economic hardships are experienced differently across Latinx ethnic groups. Analyzing data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), [Crosnoe \(2007\)](#) found that of four ethnic groups, including native-born Whites, native-born African Americans, native born Latinxs, and Mexican immigrants, children from Mexican immigrant families had the lowest SES and highest level of poverty.

Higher rates of poverty among Latinx can be explained, in part, by unemployment, income, and education ([Asante-Muhammed, Collins, Hoxie, & Nieves, 2016](#)). Although there has been an overall increase in economic attainment among Latinx, there are still educational attainment gaps and income gaps between Latinx and White households. In 2014, the median household income for Latinx reached 61% of White household income, but this is just 6% points higher than it was in 1970. As of 2015, Latinx were 1.6 times more likely to experience unemployment compared to Whites ([Pew Research Center, 2016](#)). Employment is not necessarily a way out of poverty. Although almost one-third of Latinx mothers and fathers participate in the labor force, they are almost twice as likely as working African American parents to be poor and almost four times as likely to be poorer than European American working parents ([Lichter & Landale, 1995](#)). Part of the reason is low wages: Latinx earn lower hourly wages than their White counterparts and experience lower rates of growth in wages in early adulthood ([Duncan, Hotz, & Trejo, 2006](#)). At the same time, Latinx also experience less income instability than other groups ([Gennetian, Guzman, & Cabrera, 2018](#)). It is also important to note that the number of Latinx with a bachelor's degree or higher has tripled since 1971 ([Pew Research Center, 2016](#)). In 1980, Latinx adults accounted for 6% of the middle class compared to 22% in 2017 ([Reeves & Busette, 2018](#)). This complex economic portrait further highlights the heterogeneity in this population.

However, low levels of income and education are not the sole root causes of poverty ([Lichter et al., 2015](#)). Language barriers, discrimination,

segregation, school quality, and differences in migration histories, also uniquely contribute to poverty (Asante-Muhammed et al., 2016; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Lichter & Landale, 1995). Additionally, Latinx families also often struggle to gain access to federal or state social and economic supports (e.g., welfare, food stamps, public housing, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, and unemployment insurance) compared to other low-income families in the United States.

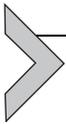
The degree to which Latinx are poor also depends in the region of the country where they live. Poverty is especially high in new destinations, rural and urban (Lichter et al., 2015). Scholars who have compared the well-being of Latinx who migrated to new rural destinations during the 1990s with those who migrated to new rural destinations since 2000s find that the economic circumstances of Latinx in the latter group deteriorated more rapidly in new vis-à-vis traditional destinations than during the 1990s (Crowley, Lichter, & Turner, 2015). By 2010, individual and family poverty rates in new destinations were significantly higher among Latinx than African Americans, despite higher labor force participation and lower levels of unemployment (Crowley et al., 2015). Crowley and colleagues argue that low-income Latinxs in new destinations find themselves in places with limited opportunities for employment and upward mobility and an inadequate welfare safety net, which increase the odds of continuing inter-generational inequality (Lichter et al., 2015).



### 3. Theoretical frameworks

Children's growth and development depend on their early home experiences, which are the foundation for later functioning and well-being (Cabrera, Malin, Kuhns, & West, 2017; Downer & Pianta, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Children's early experiences at home are broadly conceptualized as the physical and psychological space in which children grow, and includes the family resources (e.g., education and income) available to the child, parental investments of time and money (e.g., engaging in literacy learning activities), and family functioning processes (e.g., quality of marital relationship). The dynamic interplay between children and their environments is best reflected in the idea that children develop in an ecological system. In this system, the child reciprocally interacts with caring adults over time and across settings (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Magnusson, 1995; Sameroff, 2009).

The most prominent theoretical models to examine the interplay between early home experiences and children's development include family investment models (Becker & Lewis, 1973), attachment theory (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1982), sociocultural and cultural theories (Super & Harkness, 1986; Weisner, 2002), and models of how ethnic-minority children develop competencies (García-Coll et al., 1996). These theories reflect interdisciplinary perspectives and enable researchers to identify key dimensions of the home environment and the processes or mechanisms that empirically link them to children's development. Ecocultural theories, in particular, are important frameworks that help us differentiate the aspects of development that are universal from those that are culture-specific. Collectively, these models have in common the assumption that parenting characteristics including SES and beliefs and norms are filtered to the child through parenting behaviors and practices that are reflected in the way parents organize the home and the types of experiences they provide for their children (Belsky, 1984; Cabrera, Fitzgerald, Bradley, & Roggman, 2014). Articulating the theoretical assumptions of a research study leads to questions of why and how. It enables researchers to intellectually transition from simply describing a phenomenon they have observed to explaining and generalizing about various aspects of that phenomenon. These theoretical models can be used to both describe and explain the development of low-income Latinx children.



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#### **4. The early environment of Latinx children**

Although the economic hardships that many Latinx families experience on daily bases have important negative consequences of Latinx children's development, recently scholars have identified important opportunities in Latinx families and communities for positive development (Barrueco, López, & Miles, 2007; Cabrera, Beeghly, & Eisenberg, 2012; Galindo, Sonnenschein, & Montoya-Ávila, 2019). In some communities, strong local social networks, including extended family and community members can be mobilized to support children's development (Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Moll, 2010).

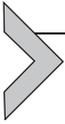
Scholars who take a strength-based approach to the study of Latinx family have consistently shown the positive ways in which these families support their children development, even among Latinx families living in poverty. Values such as familism (*familismo*), or a commitment to and value

of family (Chase-Lansdale, D'Angelo, & Palacios, 2007); proper comportment (*bien educado*); and respectful and polite interactions (*respeto*) with adults (e.g., Bridges, Andrews, & Deen, 2012) are commonly reinforced in Latino families. These values influence the ways that Latinx parents understand their roles as supporters of learning, their socialization approaches and the daily activities and practices that shared with their children (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012; Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Lopez, 2001). Small-scale studies show that Latinx mothers, regardless of their own educational attainment, are committed to their children's academic success using multiple socialization approaches to teach math at home (Galindo et al., 2019; Montoya-Ávila, Ghebreab, & Galindo, 2018). Latina mothers also use daily-living activities at home to expose their children to math through cooking or helping parents with their work (Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016; Civil & Andrade, 2002; Durand & Perez, 2013).

Latinx fathers are another source of important support for children. Most Latinx children live with both parents and their fathers play an active role in their development (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012). Studies of low-income fathers and mothers show that Latinx fathers are involved in their children's lives (Cabrera, Shannon, Mitchell, & West, 2009; Kuhns, Cabrera, Hennigar, West, & Acosta, 2018; Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009) and compared to White fathers, report more warmth and spend more time caring for their infants (Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011; Hofferth, 2003). Spending time with children in playful interactions has been shown to be beneficial for their development and thus a significant a source of variability. Studies of observed father-child play interactions show that fathers make unique contributions to their children's language development. In a sample of Early Head Start families, that included Latino fathers, Malin, Cabrera, and Rowe (2014) found that fathers used more metalingual talk (i.e., dialogic reading strategies) when reading with their 24-month-old children, which in turn predicted children's receptive vocabulary skills at pre-kindergarten.

Using FACES dataset, Kuhns and colleagues (2018) found that Latino toddlers were more likely to live in two parent families and were less likely to be spanked than African American toddlers. Both Latino and African American toddlers had similar levels of observed maternal sensitivity, caregiving, literacy activities, and mealtime routines. For both Latino and African American toddlers, learning materials and father caregiving significantly predicted toddlers' language skills at age 3.

In spite of these opportunities for growth and learning, we acknowledge the devastating negative consequences of economic hardship for child development as we will discuss in the next section.



## 5. SES disparities in Latinx children's development

Children's development is the result of multiple factors, interacting dynamically over time, being propelled by specific input, at specific times, for specific outcomes (Bornstein, 2002; Cabrera & Bradley, 2012; Galindo et al., 2019). In general, scholars have found that the social skills of Latinx children, who are more likely to be poor than White children, tend to be a par with that of their White peers while their cognitive skills and academic performance tend to be weaker. These developmental disadvantages are believed to reflect, in large part, their family SES.

The social-emotional strengths displayed by young Latinx children—in spite of their high levels of poverty, are well-documented in the literature (Cabrera et al., 2017; Crosnoe, 2005; Galindo & Fuller, 2010; Guerrero et al., 2013; Padilla, Cabrera, & West, 2017). On average, Latinx children at the start of kindergarten demonstrate classroom behaviors that are conducive to learning, including following instructions, eagerness to engage in classroom tasks, cooperative practices (Cabrera et al., 2017; Crosnoe, 2005; Galindo & Fuller, 2010; Guerrero et al., 2013; Padilla et al., 2017).

In a study of various indicators of children's social development, Galindo and Fuller (2010) found that social competence levels, in particular approaches to learning assessed as children's ability to regulate their emotions and actions to focus on learning, contributed to Latinx children's cognitive growth. Moreover, compared to white children, only Latinx children in the lowest SES quintiles exhibited weaker social competencies. Latinx children were significantly lower than White children on all five measures of social competence, the magnitudes of the disparity are modest and only significant for lowest income groups. These authors found no differences between White children and Latinx from higher SES groups; the Latino-White gap in social competence was much smaller than the Black-White gap.

In contrast to Latinx children's social development, their cognitive development lags behind their peers. In spite of the fact that there are no significant differences (unadjusted) between Latinx and White children in cognitive outcomes at age 9 months (Cabrera et al., 2017; Iruka, Dotterer, & Pungello, 2014; Iruka, Laforett, & Odom, 2012), the cognitive disadvantages of Latinx children are observed at 24 months and by preschool

disparities in achievement are quite prevalent (Espinosa et al., 2006; Lee & Burkam, 2002). The American Psychological Association Report on Educational Disparities (2012) reported that at age 4, significantly lower percentages of children from Latinx, Black, and American Indian backgrounds are proficient in letter, shape, and number recognition as compared to children from White and Asian American backgrounds. These disparities are also observed in mathematical concepts (Padilla et al., 2017; Starkey, Klein, & Wakeley, 2004).

The Latinx–White achievement gaps at kindergarten entry, although they have declined since 1998, still remain problematic in both math and reading, after controlling for income effects, in both unadjusted models and after adjusting by SES (Reardon & Galindo, 2009; Reardon & Portilla, 2016).

In several studies using the 1998–99 ECLS-K dataset, Reardon and Galindo (2006) split their sample into five SES (i.e., they used the ECLS-K composite that included family income, parents' education, and occupational prestige) groups from lowest quintile to the highest quintile; 78% of Latinx children participating in the study belong to the lowest three SES quintiles. They found that the unadjusted (without controls) Latinx–White achievement gaps at kindergarten entry in reading and math were only observed for Latinx children in the three lowest socioeconomic groups, but not for those in the two highest SES groups. Latinx children in the lowest quintile, for example, were the most behind, starting kindergarten with a math score of 1.2 SD and a reading score of 0.9 SD. In a later study, Reardon and Galindo (2009) found that after controlling for SES, children from first- and second-generation immigrant families and those whose home language was not reported as English had the lowest math and reading achievement scores at Kindergarten, but showed the greatest gains until second grade, where they remain relatively stable. And, using the same dataset, Galindo (2013) found that SES had a positive direct and a multiplicative effect (interaction with their English skills) on Mexican-origin children math achievement. In other words, the positive association between SES and math achievement become stronger as children levels of English proficiency increases. None of these studies, however, controlled for children's cognitive ability of father involvement, which are uniquely related to children's development (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012).

Few studies have examined whether there are gender differences in children's inequalities. A study that examined both within-group and across-group differences found interesting patterns of disparities. Using the ECLS-B, Cabrera et al. (2017) found no differences between Latinx boys

and Latinx girls and White boys in their 9-month cognitive skills, after controlling for household income and education. However, by 24-months, Latinx girls displayed higher cognitive skills than Latino boys and improved language skills at preschool (48 months). At 48 months Latino boys lagged behind white boys on all academic measures (including math, early reading, and language skills), but there were no differences in social skills. Latino boys and girls also had similar social skills at preschool and kindergarten. Latino boys continued to lag behind their white peers on math and language by kindergarten entry, but there were no differences in early reading skills or social skills between the two groups.

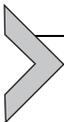
Finally, based on the cumulative risk perspective and using the ECLS-K, [Potter and Morris \(2016\)](#) found that, after controlling for family income and family experiences (e.g., child's activities, parental school involvement), the Black-White achievement gap was reduced by 20% in math and by 16% in reading. The cumulative family experience measures also accounted for 13% of the Latinx-White reading gains gap. When controlling only for the cumulative schooling experiences (e.g., school type, percent student body eligible for free/reduced lunch) the Black-White achievement gap in math increased by 25% and in reading by 30%. Additionally, the cumulative schooling experiences accounted for 45% of the Latinx-White gap in reading gains.

However, little work has examined whether the associations between family SES (i.e., family income and parental education) and achievement differ for Latinx and other groups. When researchers have examined within-group differences in children's outcomes they have focused on key indicators of SES, such as education and income. Studies of Latinx families have found that maternal education rather than income is consistently and directly related to Latinx children's cognitive development ([Cabrera, Shannon, West, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006](#); [Lopez, Gallimore, Garnier, & Reese, 2007](#); [McWayne, Meizi, Limlingan, & Schick, 2016](#); [Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007](#)). [Cabrera et al. \(2006\)](#) using a national sample of Latinx infants and their mothers and fathers who participated in the ECLS-B found that father education (not mothers or household income) was directly and significantly related to infants' cognition at 9 months. Similarly, using ECLS-K, [Suizzo and Stapleton \(2007\)](#) found that for Latinx compared to income, maternal education explained more variance in maternal involvement at home (e.g., verbal activities like looking at picture books or singing songs and on-verbal activities like doing chores and playing games).

Controlling for race, using the ECLSK, [Raver, Gershoff, and Aber \(2007\)](#) found that self-reported household income was a stronger predictor of child

cognitive competence (Peabody Individual Achievement Test), net of parent investments, for Black children than for White and Latinx children (Raver et al., 2007). Also, Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes, and Benner (2008) used the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (NEHSREP) dataset that collected survey and observational data on a sample of ethnically diverse, low-income families from 17 Early Head Start programs found that across immigrant and native households, including Latinx, maternal education was a stronger predictor of an SES composite than income-to-needs ratio or welfare receipt; SES was then, in turn, related to the parental investments and toddlers scores on a cognitive test. They didn't control for race and ethnicity. None of these studies included fathers or controlled for their effect, thus maternal effects might be overestimated. Nevertheless, these studies support the conclusion that parental education among Latinx families is a stronger predictor of children's outcomes than income. Iruka et al. (2012) using data from the ECLS-B found that Spanish-speaking Latinx with more education and income have children with better preacademic skills because their parents engaged often in literacy activities with them.

Overall, the studies that have explored ethnic and income disparities have focused on the White-Latinx gap rather than on Black-Latinx gap. Some studies control for indicators of SES while others control for SES as a composite. Studies that have considered the joint contributions of SES and ethnicity find that the achievement gap is mostly observed for the lowest Latinx groups. These studies also suggest that improvements in SES can reduce inequalities. Indeed, a study found that controlling for SES (measured by parental education, parental occupational status, and household income), the racial gap in test score falls by more than 40% in math and by two-thirds in reading. 1-SD improvement in SES for blacks is related to 0.176 SD increase in math, compared to 0.316 for a white child. A 1-SD increase in the number of books is associated with increases of 0.143 and 0.115 in math and reading predicted scores, respectively (Fryer & Levitt, 2004).



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## 6. SES-related mechanisms of influence on Latinx children's development

Scholarly work on the mechanisms that link SES with Latinx children's outcomes have commonly utilized two main theoretical perspectives: ethnic/cultural and SES/structural or parental investment arguments (Galindo, 2013; Iruka et al., 2014, 2012; Lopez et al., 2007; Mistry et al., 2008).

The notion that culture underlies development is at the center of the ecocultural niche framework, in the tradition of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which has framed much of the research on how children's participation in culturally structured activities and family routines (e.g., cultural scripts, tasks and activities, cultural goals and beliefs) a mechanism of cultural transmission shape their development (Harkness, Hughes, Muller, & Super, 2005; Weisner, Matheson, & Bernheimer, 1996). Parents contribute to their children's development in multiple ways depending on multiple factors, key among them the developmental age of the child (Bornstein, 2002) and the cultural context that includes language, norms, values, and customs (Rogoff, 2003). Cultural arguments examine how group-specific cultural beliefs and family practices may impact children's development (Weisner, 2002). For Latinx children living with immigrant parents, their cultural context might be a combination of the practices and customs of the sending society as well as of the practices and norms of the receiving society (Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016). Both sets of beliefs and practices will change over time, providing a dynamic and complex environment for children's development.

In contrast, socioeconomic/structural investment perspectives argue that child development is shaped by the position of racial/ethnic minority groups within the U.S. social hierarchy and their economic status. Scholars have tested whether SES operates in the same way through parental investments in Latinx families as it does in families across ethnic groups. A sizable literature deeply rooted in family investment model has specifically focused on indicators of SES (e.g., parental education, and income) to explain children's inequalities. There are several key mechanisms through which family SES is channeled through to impact children's development. Although an exhaustive analysis of all the mechanisms goes beyond the scope of this article, we focused on: Access to quality early education, stimulating home learning environment, parenting practices, parent-child relationships, cultural mechanisms, family and school cultural mismatches, and family functioning.

## 6.1 Access to high quality early education

Research suggests that, compared to family characteristics, early educational environments contribute more to SES academic achievement differences (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). These effects can be far reaching and lasting; for example, Chetty et al. (2011) found that when students were assigned to higher quality classrooms from Kindergarten to third grade, students had higher earnings, college attendance, more retirement savings, and lived

in better neighborhoods. Moreover, schools in low-income areas often serve children from low-income families who are at risk for lower academic achievement, further compound children's disadvantage. These schools often experience high levels of staff turnover, poor physical conditions, and are under resourced, which often result in declines in student achievement (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008; Reynolds, Hopkins, Potter, & Chapman, 2001). Therefore, access to high quality, early education may help to buffer children's risk for low academic performance (Lopez, Grindal, Zanoni, & George, 2017).

Research has investigated the use of early care and education services across Latinx populations. Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) specifically looked at participation in center-based care and preschool programs and found that Latinx immigrant children had the lowest rates of participation in nonparental care of any type. However, additional research suggests low-income Hispanic children may be participating in early care and education at rates more similar to their low-income white and Black peers in recent years (2016).

Using data from the ECLS-B and after controlling for education, employment, and other family characteristics, Bassok (2010) found that the effect of children attending preschool in literacy outcomes is larger for Black and Latinx children than their White counterparts. Both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking subgroups benefit from preschool participation (when compared to those under parental care) but there is a larger effect in literacy outcomes for children raised in Spanish-speaking homes than for children raised in primary English-speaking homes. Additionally, among both Latinx subgroups, the estimated impact of participating in Head Start was significant when compared to the insignificant effect among White children.

McWayne, Foster, and Melzi (2018) found that Latinx parents who participate in Head Start engage with their children's learning and development at home through supporting their social awareness and behavior and connecting them to their cultural heritage, suggesting a more culturally specific way of engaging. However, school-based engagement may be less culturally specific and more universal to how other families engage in the school environment.

### **6.1.1 Stimulating home learning environment**

According to investment models, disparities in children's inequalities reflect differential investments of time and money: when parents have higher levels of education and income, they have more resources of time and money to

invest in their children by purchasing more educational toys and series and spending more time engaged in cognitive stimulating activities as well as being more involved at school, which in turn, support learning and skill development (Magnuson & Duncan, 2006; Magnuson, Sexton, Davis-Kean, & Huston, 2009; McWayne et al., 2016).

Using large-scale datasets, several studies have tested whether indicators of SES (e.g., maternal education and income) are related to children's outcomes (e.g., language skills, cognitive skills, academic achievement) through its impact their home learning environment (e.g., literacy activities, maternal educational supportiveness). Galindo and Sonnenschein (2015) found that the relationship between family SES and math performance was mediated by home learning characteristics such as learning materials, parents' learning activities such as reading, and parents' educational expectations for all children regardless of race/ethnicity.

Similar findings have been observed for Latinx children. In a study of 73 Latinx children, Lopez et al., 2007 found that parental education was predictive of parents' literacy activities and preschool attendance which in turn predicted better language scores and math achievement in elementary school and middle school. Also, Iruka et al. (2014), using the ECLS-B, found that different types of investments (e.g., outside activities) mediated the link between SES and children's skills. In particular, they found that for Latinx families, investing in learning materials and in activities that stimulated language development (i.e., frequency of mothers reading, talking, singing, and playing with their child) was the most consistent mediator between SES and children's preacademic skills, including receptive and expressive language, literacy, and numeracy skills.

Specifically related to math, using a small sample of low-income Latinx mother in an exploratory study in the Baltimore–Washington Metropolitan area, Galindo et al. (2019) found Latina mothers' knowledge and attitudes toward math vary by their educational levels. Latina mothers who did not finish high school reported less advanced school conceptions of math, (e.g., problem solving, algebra) and fewer out-school math conceptions. Less educated mothers also reported less positive attitudes toward math. They did not, however, test whether maternal knowledge and beliefs is a potential mediating mechanism.

Mistry et al. (2008) used the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (NEHSREP) dataset found that both immigrant and nonimmigrant mothers' resources of education (compared to income) impacted children's scores on the Bayley Scales of Infant Development

through investments of language/literacy stimulation (as measured by the HOME scale) and maternal supportiveness (i.e., observed sensitivity, cognitive stimulation, and positive regard). They did not control for race and ethnicity. However, they also found that parenting stress mediated the effects of SES on children's aggressive behavior among native-born families, but not immigrant households (Mistry et al., 2008).

In efforts to examine whether SES operates in the same way across ethnic groups, Iruka et al. (2014) used the ECLS-B and controlling for child age, gender, cognitive skills at 9 months, primary language, paternal employment status, nativity status, tested the investment model across other racial/ethnic groups. They found that different types of investments (e.g., outside activities) mediated the link between SES and children's skills. In particular, they found that for Latinx families, investing in learning materials and in activities that stimulated language development (i.e., frequency of mothers reading, talking, singing, and playing with their child) was the most consistent mediator between SES and children's preacademic skills, including receptive and expressive language, literacy, and numeracy skills compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

In a small-scale study of immigrant Latinx mothers and their 33–47-month-old children, Boyce et al. (2004) found that, during shared book reading, Latinx mothers enhanced children's attention to printed text and promoted interactions and conversations about the book content, but engaged less often in complex literacy strategies (e.g., elaborating on children's ideas, soliciting predictions). Moreover, after controlling for mothers' vocabulary, children whose mothers used more complex strategies had the largest vocabularies. This study did not control for SES. However, in another small-scale study that included Dominican, Mexican mothers and their 4-year-old children, Luo, Tamis-LeMonda, Kuchirko, Ng, and Liang (2014) controlling for SES found that Latinx mothers were less likely to ask children about the story, which was a predictor of children's own storytelling skills and vocabulary. This variability in the quality of maternal input has not been explored with fathers. Studies that have compared mothers to fathers find that although fathers read less often to their children, they typically use more metalingual talk (e.g., using *wh*-questions such as what, where, why), a marker of quality of reading, which predicted to children's receptive skills (Malin et al., 2014).

Using a sample of Latinx infants and their parents drawn from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), Cabrera et al. (2006) examined Latinx mother-infant interactions and Latinx father

engagement with their infants and found that, after controlling for household income and parent education, fathers engaged moderately in literacy activities (e.g., reading, singing, telling stories) with their young children. Moreover, Latinx mothers who were observed to engage in sensitive parenting that included cognitive stimulation (e.g., verbal interaction), had infants who scored higher on cognitive tests; fathers' engagement in literacy activities (e.g., reading) was not related to infants' cognition. Moreover, household income was negatively related to father caregiving. Maternal education was not related to either father caregiving or mother-child interactions.

Using the ECLS-B dataset, [Guerrero et al. \(2013\)](#) found that after controlling for education, Mexican-American mothers engaged less often in cognitive facilitation (i.e., maternal communication encouraging children to think), oral language, and preliteracy skills at home than White mothers. However, it should be noted that the Mexican American families participating in the ECLS-B, include a significant percentage of mothers with less than 8th grade education and given immigration patterns might be even illiterate. Indeed, Spanish-speaking Mexican mothers reported the lowest rates of language inputs to their children ([Sims & Coley, 2016](#)). It is possible that these differences reflect huge disparities in mothers' education.

### **6.1.2 Parenting practices and discipline**

A key parenting task in the early years is to discipline children to help them acquire the norms and cultural values of the community where they live. Parents use an array of behavioral or psychological strategies to help children comply with their requests or control/discipline children's behaviors. Parents use of positive and developmentally appropriate discipline (e.g., reasoning) is related to positive outcomes whereas harsh discipline such as spanking has the opposite effect ([Gershoff, 2013](#)). Research has shown that low-income parents are more likely to use harsh and inappropriate discipline than wealthier parents ([Gershoff, 2013](#)). Thus parenting practices around discipline might be potential mechanisms that can explain the effect of SES on children's inequalities.

Studies of the type of discipline that Latinx parents use with toddlers are not very rigorous; most are based on small samples of convenience. Studies have found that the use of directives is as common among White European samples as it is among Latinx samples (e.g., [Kochanska, Coy, & Murray, 2001](#)). But there may be other qualitative differences. For example, in

contrast to European-American mothers, Latinx mothers were found to be more likely to minimize or not respond to child negative affect (Lugo-Candelas, Harvey, & Breaux, 2015).

In general, studies show that Latinx parents of young children use a number of strategies to help children follow rules and comply with directives. Livas-Dlott, Fuller, and Stein (2010) found that Latinx mothers who were observed in daily home activities typically employed direct verbal commands (e.g., don't do that) to get their children to comply with their demands. Direct commands have not been found to be very effective as they are negatively related to compliant behaviors in non-Latinx samples (Livas-Dlott et al., 2010). Ispa and colleagues (2013) analyzed the EHSREP dataset that included observational mother-child dyad from ages 1 to 5; they found that while all groups declined in directiveness over time, Mexican American mothers showed the steepest decline after the first time point. However, directiveness was associated with children's behavior problems for all groups, but not for Mexican American children. In one of the few studies to include fathers, Malin, Cabrera, and Rowe (2014) found that fathers use of directives or commands during a cleanup task with their 24-months-old children was predictive of their children's sustained attention and emotion regulation in pre-kindergarten, over and above maternal supportiveness. They also found that fathers adjusted the use of strategies depending on their children's abilities; fathers used fewer regulatory behaviors (i.e., physical discipline, modeling) when children had more advanced vocabulary skills.

Discipline with older children typically includes spanking. Spanking, the harshest way to make children comply with parents' requests, is infrequent during infancy, but increases as children get older for all ethnic groups (e.g., Straus & Stewart, 1999; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff, & Runyan, 2008). Spanking is negatively related to compliance, moral internalizing, aggression, delinquent and antisocial behavior, and children's mental health overall (see Gershoff, 2002 for a review). Although spanking has decreased for all parents across groups, Latinx parents have been found to spank less frequently than their peers (Padilla et al., 2017; Ryan, Kalil, Ziol-Guest, & Padilla, 2016).

Berlin et al. (2009) used cross-lagged path analysis to explore the reciprocal patterns of toddler fussiness and parental verbal punishment and spanking in a sample of approximately 2500 low-income White, African American, and Mexican American mothers and their toddlers. Overall, they found that for all children spanking, but not verbal punishment, at age 1 predicted children's aggressive behavior at age 2 and lower Bayley mental development scores

at age 3. It is unclear how spanking factors into inequalities in children's outcomes. But, disparity in spanking practices across groups might be an important source of inequality in children's outcomes. Spanking is related to parents' SES but might also reflect cultural beliefs about child rearing.

### **6.1.3 Parent-child relationship**

Early parent-child relationships are important because they are robustly related to later developmental outcomes. High-quality parent-child interactions are characterized by sensitive and supportive parents who provide security and confidence help children regulate and initiate social and non-social experiences (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). And yet the evidence on whether parental insensitivity plays a role in child inequalities across ethnic groups is less clear. In a study that included observations of Mexican American mothers and their toddlers who participated in the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (NEHSREP), Ispa et al. (2004) found large variability in mother-child interactions. They found that maternal intrusiveness predicted increases in mother-reported child negativity (e.g., the extent to which children showed anger or dislike toward their mother) across race and ethnicity and maternal warmth did not moderate this relationship for Mexican American mothers. Based on a small sample of Latinx mothers, Gamble and Modry-Mandell (2008) found that mothers who reported having a warm relationship with their child and reported strong endorsement of familism had children with fewer behavior problems (teacher rated). Fuller et al. (2010) also found that Latinx mothers reported having lower quality interactions with their infants (i.e., they offered less praise and encouragement during parent-child interactions) which was then related to lower cognitive skills at 9 months.

Using a sample of Latinx infants (9 months) drawn from the ECLS-B, Cabrera et al. (2006) found that Mexican-American mothers had lower responsiveness scores than other mothers; however, this was not due to differences in SES, but rather parents' proficiencies in English, a proxy for acculturation. Further, they found that higher maternal interaction scores were associated with infant's having higher cognitive scores, but fathers' engagement (i.e., frequency of literacy activities, caregiving, and physical play) was not. These findings highlight the variability in maternal behaviors but also, more importantly, perhaps some cultural differences regarding what is considered the right way to interact with infants. Perhaps more acculturated mothers had learned the "American" ways to interact with infants, especially engagement in high levels of verbal interaction, which is not

normative in other cultural groups (e.g., [Arcia, Skinner, & Bailey, 2001](#)). Perhaps codes of maternal sensitivity were actually picking up normative patterns of interaction with babies that are very common in the United States. Other cultures might express sensitivity not so much through verbal interactions but rather through tactile interactions, touching and holding the baby.

Overall, these studies suggest that there is substantial variability in the quality of mother-child interactions among Latinx families and when mothers exhibit high sensitivity, their children exhibit better cognitive outcomes and better social skills. It is likely that poverty, mental health, and other stressors may take a toll on parenting, and in turn, on children's development, which may help to explain this variability ([Lin, Crnic, Luecken, & Gonzalez, 2017](#); [Martí, Bonillo, Jane, Fisher, & Duch, 2016](#)).

#### **6.1.4 Cultural mechanisms**

Sociocultural theories contend that children's participation in culturally structured activities (e.g., family visits) and family routines (e.g., eating meals together) teaches children about norms, values, and practices that help them adapt in that particular cultural context ([Weisner et al., 1996](#)). In this sense, theorists have argued that human development must be understood as a cultural process during which parents' ethnotheories—parenting values and practices of a particular cultural group—shape daily routines, which are influential in how children are socialized to meet the cultural group's values, norms, and expectations. As children grow up, this ecological niche expands to include peers, friends, and other adults functioning in the larger society.

[Ng, Tamis-LeMonda, and Godfrey \(2012\)](#) explored parents' socialization goals in a sample of low-income mothers that included Dominican and Mexican immigrant mothers. Latinx mothers in this study reported on the qualities deemed as desirable or undesirable in their children; they emphasized achievement (desirable qualities) and disapproved of improper demeanor (undesirable qualities). Their goals were more similar to each other than to African American mothers. We know even less about how Latinx parents help their children adapt to the norms and values of the host country ([Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016](#)). How these processes might help Latinx children become bicultural and develop the social competence skills, which sets them apart from other children especially in the early years, is an open empirical question.

### **6.1.5 Family and school cultural matches that support collaboration**

Authentic families and school collaborations are important for improving Latinx children's learning opportunities and achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jiménez-Castellanos, Ochoa, & Olivos, 2016; Montoya-Ávila et al., 2018). Nevertheless, research has consistently shown that collaborations between schools and low-SES families are a challenging endeavor. Research has consistently shown the cultural mismatches between Latinx families, and other families of color, could interfere with building authentic partnerships. Some Latinx families, especially those from lower SES backgrounds, may feel unfamiliar with U.S. schools' expectations, policies and practices (Gaitan, 2004), and their cultural strengths may be less recognized by schools and teachers (Lareau, 2003). The cultural strengths that Latinx families bring to the schools may not be recognized by these institutions who are mostly aligned with White-middle class' cultures (Lareau, 2003), the extent to which these assets are embraced in early educators remains unclear.

Trying to explain racial differences in children's inequalities in outcomes and framed by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological theory, Sonnenschein and Galindo (2015) found that White children higher levels of parent involvement in school than Black children, these effects were large. Compared to Latinx children, White children's parents were more engaged in learning activities and also had higher levels of parents' involvement in school, but these effects were modest. However, compared to Black children, Latinx children's parents were more involved in school and had higher future educational expectations, these effects were also modest. These findings are puzzling but do not explain why Latinx children, who as a group are more economically disadvantaged than Black children, perform better in schools than Black children. Understanding the root of these Black-Latinx differences is an important focus for future research. Such studies would illuminate the way how SES and other structural variables operates in a cultural and ethnic context. The Black-Hispanic inequality might reveal structural barriers such as racism and discrimination that although harmful for all groups might have a deeper and intergenerational history for African American thus differentially causing inequalities in this group.

## **6.2 Family functioning**

Parents' mental health is one of the strongest predictors of child well-being (England & Sim, 2009; Goodman et al., 2011). It affects the quality

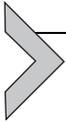
of emotional support and cognitive stimulation mothers provide for their children, across ethnic groups (Pachter, Auinger, Palmer, & Weitzman, 2006). Although mental health is clearly related to SES (cite), it is less clear whether depression varies across ethnic group.

Using the ECLS-B, Cabrera et al. (2006) found within-ethnic group differences in maternal and paternal reports of depressive symptoms. Specifically, fathers of Mexican-American infants reported fewer depressive symptoms than did fathers of other Latinx subgroups. This was not the case for mothers. Importantly, low maternal depressive symptoms were associated with higher cognitive test scores for other Latinx children, but not for Mexican American children.

In a study of adolescent African American and Latinx mothers, Huang, Costeines, Kaufman, and Ayala (2014) found that mothers who reported more parenting stress (i.e., parenting is too demanding, difficult) and less social support, reported more depressive symptoms, which was subsequently associated with developmental delays in infants 1 year later. They found no racial differences.

Co-parenting or parents' ability to work together as a team to rear their children, has emerged over the last couple of decades as a key family functioning process that is related to both parenting and children's development (Belsky, Putman, & Crnic, 1996; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). There is some evidence that Mexican American parents who report conflict in their co-parenting behaviors also report less positive engagement with their children (Cabrera, Shannon, & La Taillade, 2009) and that parents who report shared parenting also report a more positive emotional family climate (Sotomayor-Peterson, Figueredo, Christensen, and Taylor (2012). However, this association is lessened when fathers are more acculturated, again, maybe reflecting cultural norms that the parent-child relationship is separate from the mother-father relationship.

In summary, the role that family functioning plays in young children's development among Latinx families has received little attention from the research community. There are no studies on paternal depression or on the quality of the marital relationship or how other extended kin—grandparents, siblings—might act as sources of co-parenting support on children's outcomes. The extant literature shows that parenting stress and mental health issues are important barriers to good parenting and that promoting a supportive co-parenting relationship can improve parenting and ultimately child well-being.



## 7. Limitations of current work on Latinx children development

The literature on ethnic and SES disparities on Latinx children's outcomes reveals that as a group low-income Latinx children, especially those in the poorest SES quintiles, have cognitive difficulties and perform below their White peers on academic tests. These inequalities seem to be more related to parents' education than income and the mechanisms by which this occurs are focused on certain aspects of the home environment, in particular learning materials. This literature, however, suffers from important limitations.

First, studies based on SES inequalities do not account for within-group differences. Latinx in the United States are characterized by large variability in SES, immigration histories, religion, and language. There is also large variability in the paternal investments and family processes that may promote learning and development, even in low-income environments. This rich heterogeneity is not represented in research. There is little research on non-poor Latinx samples; thus, it is still unclear how Latinx children from middle-class families fare in their developmental outcomes compared to their White, middle-class peers.

Second, child inequalities are observed for academic and cognitive outcomes rather than for social skills. Overall, studies of Latinx children show that they are socially adjusted as White children (e.g., [Crosnoe, 2005](#); [Galindo & Fuller, 2010](#); [Han, Lee, & Waldfogel, 2012](#)). Yet, there is little research on what are the specific family processes and parenting practices that promote social adjustment.

Third, the literature on Latinx children's inequalities does not explicitly include structural barriers, such as racism and discrimination, which are risk factors that may also contribute to these disparities (e.g., [Fryer & Levitt, 2004](#)). The public narrative is that people are poor because they lack education and money. However, structural oppression (e.g., racial marginalization, exploitation, violence, cultural imperialisms, and powerlessness) not only directly influences children's outcomes, but also shapes their early home experiences, through the barriers parents face in accessing resources such as income and education (e.g., [Ready, 2010](#)). Studies indicate that racism and discrimination increased maternal depression and stress which can also increase infants' physiological responses to stress ([Flinn, 2006](#); [Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002](#)).

Fourth, many of the studies on inequalities are not guided by theory (e.g., [Condrón, 2009](#); [Reardon, Kalogrides, & Shores, 2018](#)) and have mostly focused on the White-Black gap. Controlling for SES and using the ECLS-K: 1998 dataset, [Condrón \(2009\)](#) found that the Black-White achievement gap declined by almost 19% for reading and 16% for math when social class is controlled suggesting that class inequality explains a significant portion of the Black-White achievement gap in school-year gains. As Black students are more likely to attend racially segregated schools that have worse teachers than predominantly White schools.

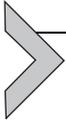
Fifth, most of the literature on inequalities is descriptive, with only a handful of studies aiming to explain why inequalities occur ([Galindo & Sonnenschein, 2015](#); [Potter & Morris, 2016](#)). Hence, there is less understanding of the various mechanisms that might explain or moderate the effects of SES on children's well-being. When mechanisms are tested, they are drawn from models that do not account for the effect of culture or parenting practices on children's development. For example, Latinx children are also likely to experience protective and promotive factors, such as living in two-parent families, strong family ties, or becoming bilingual and bicultural, that hold the potential to protect them from the negative effects of economic hardship ([Dinan, 2006](#); [Huynh & Fuligni, 2008](#)).

Sixth, most studies compare Latinos to Whites. Most studies on inequalities hold white families, who are more likely to be advantaged, as the standard against which ethnic minority families, who are more likely to be disadvantaged, are compared (Black versus White and Latinx versus White comparisons (e.g., [Fryer & Levitt, 2004](#); [Reardon, Kalogrides, & Shores, 2016](#)). In the few instances where researchers compare developmental trajectories of children holding SES constant, the findings are different (e.g., [Padilla et al., 2017](#); [Reardon & Galindo, 2006](#)). These studies show that Latinx children's initial disparities in reading and math compared to Black children disappear by the end of kindergarten and surpass them by 4th grade.

Seventh, developmental outcomes of Latinx children vary considerably depending on diversity of this group, including their immigrant generation, country/region of origin, language used at home, and length of time in the United States ([Iruka et al., 2012](#)). This variability is understudied.

Together these limitations lead us to conclude that although poverty is a strong predictor of a host of adverse outcomes for children, there are other factors both protective and promotive that play a role in either increasing or reducing inequalities. To truly understand the developmental outcomes of

Latinx children growing up poor in the United States, we need to have a better grasp of both the challenges and adversity as well as the protective and promotive factors that buffer children from the negative effects of poverty on their well-being.



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## 8. Conclusion

Latinx children, as a group, lag behind in achievement and cognitive tests compared to their White peers. This is not the case for social skills, where they seem to be a par or even surpass their peers. The literature that supports these conclusions is not straightforward. Studies of SES inequalities show that low-income children who are likely to include Latinx, perform worse on academic tests than their better off peers, who are more likely to be White. Although many of these studies control for SES, there is less understanding of what explains inequalities beyond SES. It is striking that although social skills is a domain of development where Latino children do not lag behind their peers, there are few studies that have examined the development of social competence alongside the cognitive delays or poor achievement. Moreover, the literature on disparities is more descriptive than explanatory, and does not always have the right controls or comparison groups (few studies compare Black to Hispanic children). The studies that have examined mechanisms of how inequality is transmitted to children have predominantly focused on parents' provision of learning materials and activities, language use, positive parenting (e.g., warmth, responsiveness, and sensitivity) and have neglected culturally-based mechanisms such as parenting practices around discipline and father involvement as well other factors related to being ethnic minority in this country such as racism and discrimination that are also implicated in children's development.

It is also notable the lack of attention to how parents' resources—strong family cohesion, stably working parents, cultural beliefs about parenting, positive parenting—translate into benefits for children. In other word, how do these resources compensate for low levels of education and income? Future research on inequalities should focus on testing pathways derived from sociocultural models. Factors such as acculturation, nativity status, cultural beliefs, and religiosity may be important sources of strength. Ethnic minority families have multiple social identities, how do they intersect at the individual and structural levels to produce inequalities? What are the mechanisms that might explain these associations? What are the factors that might moderate it?

Methodologically, we need to move beyond group comparisons that perpetuate a deficit perspective and that focus only on the White-Black divide. Comparing poor Latinx to Whites leads to misleading conclusions. Latinx are a heterogeneous groups and these comparisons assume homogeneity or that the within-group differences are not significant. We need studies that compare children across ethnicity while holding SES constant. These studies are more likely to reveal sources of inequality that go beyond SES. In one such study, [Padilla et al. \(2017\)](#) found that over time poor Latinx children surpass both poor Black and poor White children in social skills. Moreover, Latinx children who lagged behind their poor White and Black peers in reading and math soon bypass Black children. Why do poor Black children perform worse academically and socially than poor Latinx children? Why do poor White children do better than their poor peers? What else is at play that produces different pattern of inequalities?

There remain many theoretical and methodological gaps in the current literature, making it difficult to fully understand the sources of strengths, the challenges, and how all these factors produce inequalities in children's outcomes. We need to think more critically about the structural barriers such as racism and discrimination young ethnic minority children and their parents face. Including structural barriers poses methodological challenges, since factors such as racism, discrimination, and other aspects of oppression can be difficult to operationalize and measure. We need more rigorous methodologies to address these concerns but also more studies that explore the diversity within Latinx populations in a more in depth. Additionally, many studies reviewed for this chapter lack a theoretical framework. It is crucial to utilize theory to guide these questions. Additional research should move beyond looking across difference, but also expand to look at groups and across SES.

There are several important areas for future research. We need research that adequately acknowledges both the strengths and the challenges Latinx families face. The interplay of multiple potentially protective factors, such as family structure and various parenting practices such as routines, are hardly examined in the current research and merit further study. There is also a need for research that focuses on the intersectionality of SES, ethnicity, nativity, language, and other risk factors rather than focus on one and control for others. Statistically controlling for SES to understand how parenting matters is inadequate and has little practical significance as there are a variety of intersecting identities Latinx in the United States experience. Further, we need more systematic and rigorous research to understand how specific

aspects of the home environment of Latinx children support their development not just cognitively (e.g., language and math), but also socially, physically, and mentally across the lifespan. Finally, we need transactional research that includes mothers, fathers, and children (and extended kin) and takes a family systemic view. We have amassed a convincing body of work that fathers make unique contributions to children's development, yet their contributions, beyond financial, are largely absent from the literature that examines inequalities. New research that addresses these gaps should highlight where programmatic efforts are most likely to pay off. For example, most Latinx children live in two-parent families, but these families experience sustained stress and anxiety due to economic hardship, balancing work and family, finding appropriate schools or childcare for their children, and general stress related to parenting in a foreign country. Programmatic efforts should focus on providing social support for both mothers and fathers for the maintenance of positive marital and parenting relationships, especially at key developmental transitions, helping families secure high quality childcare/schools, and strengthening coping mechanisms available to these families.

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