

Latinx Families' Strengths and Resilience Contribute to Their Well-being

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Introduction

Latinx children's early life circumstances often differ in key ways from those of non-Latinx children.^{1,2,3,4} As a group, Latinx families and their children are more likely to face institutional and socio-structural inequities and social and economic stressors—such as poverty, xenophobia, racism, residential segregation, and discrimination—that jeopardize their well-being.^{5,6,7} These conditions are concerning because children who experience challenging circumstances early in life are at greater risk for a host of negative outcomes, including poor academic performance and increased behavior problems that can marginalize them, impede their social mobility, and widen existing socioeconomic disadvantages.⁸

However, Latinx families are “more than their hardships.”^a Latinx families belong to one of the largest, most demographically diverse ethnic groups in the United States; partly as a result of this diversity, they have multiple strengths they can draw on to be resilient in the face of hardship and guard against the negative effects of adversity on their well-being.^{9,10,11,12,13} Strengths—also referred to in the literature on resilience as assets or promotive factors—include characteristics of individuals (e.g., optimism, bilingualism) and families (e.g., family cohesion, intergenerational households, family support and stability) that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. When faced with adversities, many Latinx families rely on their strengths to provide a loving and nurturing environment for their children. Consequently, many Latinx children are reared in loving and sensitive homes in which parents invest time and money, increasing their kids' odds of developing the academic and social skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.¹⁴

A significant limitation in the literature on resilience is that there is less information available about the strengths of families of color including Latinx families than there is about the adversities they face.¹⁵ And the few studies that have examined strengths have mostly *described* them rather than *explained how* these strengths protect children from harm.^{16,17} That is, there is little evidence about the specific ways in which protective factors operate and how they are



Strengths—also referred to in the literature on resilience as assets or promotive factors—include characteristics of individuals (e.g., optimism, bilingualism) and families (e.g., family cohesion, intergenerational households, family support and stability) that increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

^a This quote is from a Latinx woman in a separate study led by the first author and being conducted in California, which examines how Latinx families responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

associated with children's developmental outcomes. We also have little evidence for the degree to which strengths are protective at varying levels of risk—in other words, whether a particular strength is as protective against a higher level of risk as it is against a less severe risk.¹⁸ With this context, we use this brief to take stock of the existing research on strengths and resilience within Latinx families and offer guidance on future research that could help programs make more targeted investments in family strengths.

In this brief, we first summarize key findings from the literature on Latinx families' strengths, along with recommendations for programs, practice, and research. Then, we describe key concepts and our selection criteria and analysis methods for conducting our literature review. Next, we synthesize, in greater depth, the existing literature on the strengths of Latinx parents and their young children and use the research to summarize the strengths of children, parents, and families. We also highlight the empirical evidence on how parents' (including fathers') strengths protect children from adversity. Finally, based on this analysis, we provide, in more detail, our recommendations for programs and practices to build on Latinx families' strengths and to guide researchers in advancing strengths-based research.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

Key findings from the literature on Latinx family strengths

These findings draw from 35 studies published from 2000 to 2022—the majority of which were quantitative and slightly less than half of which were based on nationally representative datasets. For more information on the studies, see [Appendix](#). Below, we summarize these findings in terms of the strengths of individuals and the strengths held by Latinx parents and families. While we organize these findings thematically, we acknowledge that these strengths cut across levels—that is, they may apply to individual children or parents, to parenting practices, or to families' structures. While a growing body of research has focused on documenting the strengths of Latino parents and families, few have examined the processes by which strengths may lead to better outcomes among Latinx children and none (to our knowledge) have examined how protective factors function at varying level of risks.



Children's strong social skills (individual strengths)

- Most Latinx children enter formal schooling with strong social skills, including the ability to develop friendships and be liked and accepted by their peers and teachers.
- Latinx children's social skills are important for developing resilience because they promote other domains of development.

Biculturalism and bilingualism (individual and parenting strengths)

- Latinx children and families may benefit from their bilingual and bicultural status (i.e., their close identification with both U.S. culture and their heritage culture).
- Being bilingual promotes children's social and cognitive development.
- Parents' biculturalism is also promotive of better parenting behaviors, which are, in turn, related to better outcomes in children.

Parenting and parental investments (individual and parenting strengths)

- Many Latinx children experience high-quality parenting, characterized by high levels of warmth and supportiveness.

- Latinx fathers are highly committed to their children and involved in their lives.
- Latinx fathers' commitment to their children starts early in childhood and is long-term.
- Latinx fathers' engagement with their children significantly contributes to their cognitive, language, and social development, over and above mothers' contributions.

Early home learning experiences (family strengths)

- Latinx parents are highly invested in their children's futures, as evidenced by their frequent engagement in learning experiences—particularly with their preschoolers—which foster the development of early school readiness skills.
- Latinx children's day-to-day experiences are often characterized by routines and predictability, which support healthy social-emotional development in early childhood.

Family stability, household composition, and familial support (family strengths)

- The majority of young Latinx children with foreign-born parents live in two-parent households that are relatively stable during the early years of life.
- Support from extended family and living in intergenerational households can benefit Latinx children's cognitive skills and social-emotional functioning.

Family functioning (family strengths)

- High co-parenting relationship quality is another strength of Latinx families: Parents who support each other in their parenting roles are more likely to have fewer conflicts and to show more supportive and responsive parenting, both of which are important for children's development.
- Parents' psychological functioning is a promotive factor that can influence young children's development, through its effects on parenting practices and the quality of the early home environment.

Recommendations for programs, practice, and research

Programs and practice

- Curricula for parenting programs should include the culturally specific ways in which Latinx parents promote child development and should encourage Latinx parents to maintain these practices.¹⁹
- Programs should acknowledge Latinx parents' and families' strengths (e.g., strong co-parenting relationships) and encourage families to use these strengths as a platform to build further competencies.
- Practitioners should familiarize themselves with and increase their understanding of the cultural beliefs and practices that Latinx parents view as important resources to help them live in the United States.^{20,21}
- Programs should capitalize on Latinx parents' optimism, or the attribute of thinking positively about the future.^{22,23,24} This trait is associated with positive outcomes for children, and programs can reinforce Latinx parents' positive views of the future to encourage them to continue investing in their children.
- To help build resilience for children and families, programs should invite involvement from fathers and extended family members who are involved in childrearing and who may be sources of social support for Latinx parents.^{25,26,27,28}
- Programs should meet families where they are—in other words, they should recognize that families have diverse backgrounds and inherent strengths—and be flexible and targeted in their programming efforts.
- Programs should build on Latinx parents' high levels of investment in their children's futures and engage parents in programs by validating and encouraging these investments.

Research

- Future research should include more longitudinal studies with large samples of Latinx families to examine within-group variability in individual-level strengths, parenting practices, family functioning, and resilience.
- Studies should more frequently use a strength-based perspective to identify strengths and assets of children, parents, families, and communities so that programs and interventions can reinforce and sustain them.^{29,30}

- Research studies must examine more systemic forms of adversity such as racism and discrimination.
- Research must further extend the study of bilingualism to better understand how it acts as a resource for Latinx children once they enter school settings—and under what conditions it serves as a resource.
- Researchers should also widen the focus of studies to include fathers and extended family members to obtain a more well-rounded view of children's early home environments.^{25,26,31}
- Researchers should focus on understanding how protective factors operate—that is, the mechanisms through which they impact family functioning—which should offer insight into the types of protective factors necessary to protect families at different levels of risk.

About This Brief

Background and context

This brief builds on our previous work, which examined the early home environment of Latinx children,^{15,17} by synthesizing the existing literature focusing on strengths (or promotive factors) of Latinx parents and their young children at the individual, parenting, and family levels; highlighting the empirical evidence on how parents' strengths protect children from harm; and providing recommendations for practice and future research

We organize the literature using an ecological framework—that children's development is influenced by interdependent family systems, including parents and others in the family.³² To the extent possible, our review includes studies that have tested whether promotive factors or strengths are protective, and at what levels of risk they are protective. Because the empirical evidence on how promotive factors actually protect families is limited, we identify family- and parent-level strengths that hold promise.

Definitions and methodology

We synthesize 35 studies published from 2000 to 2022 that examine promotive factors (or strengths) and protective factors in Latinx families. We use the following definitions to guide our literature review and discussion of findings.

Resilience is broadly defined as the capacity to adapt successfully to adverse conditions that threaten development.^{29,33,34,35,36} Resilient individuals exhibit adaptive functioning and positive outcomes in the context of challenging circumstances.³⁷ Resilience depends on the interactions with other systems—in particular, parents—who are most influential on children's development. Thus, resilience is a process, not a characteristic of an individual.

Risk and adversity refer to any challenging circumstance or event that increases the likelihood of maladaptive outcomes.²⁹

Strengths or promotive factors (i.e., assets, resources) are characteristics of individuals (e.g., optimism) or families (e.g., family cohesion) that increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes.¹² These characteristics may promote development, but they may not protect individuals from harm if the levels of risk are too high.

Protective factors are typically defined as characteristics of the child, family, and broader environment that protect the individual—that is, they buffer or reduce the negative effects of adversity on child outcomes.^{33,38,39}

Selection criteria

The studies highlighted in this review met the following inclusion criteria: (1) included Latinx families as the primary sample of analysis or had a sufficiently large subsample of Latinx families with children under age 8; (2) were published in English from the years 2000 to 2022; (3) were peer-reviewed articles or gray literature; (4) included at least one of the following key terms: *Latinx/Hispanic/Latino*, *social skills/social competence*, *bilingualism/dual language learner*, *biculturalism*, *parenting*, *parenting involvement*, *parental investments*, *family functioning*, *coparenting*, and *extended family/households*; and (5) could be accessed through one of the following academic databases: ERIC, Psycinfo, Academic Search Complete, and Google Scholar. To narrow the scope of our review, we selected studies that were conducted with families with young children from birth to age 8. We selectively focus on early childhood given that this developmental period is critical for later developmental outcomes.

Coding of studies

We reviewed the full text of the articles highlighted here and summarized them based on (1) whether they identified individual-, parenting-, or family-level promotive factors; and (2) the type of statistical analyses (e.g., main effects; interaction effects) they employed. Several of these studies used nationally representative samples of Latinx families (which included native- and foreign-born parents) enabling us to highlight within-group variability.

We identified 35 articles for inclusion, which included qualitative ($n = 2$) and quantitative studies ($n = 33$). Of these, 16 used nationally representative datasets, 18 explicitly mentioned that their participants were from low-income backgrounds, and 21 included samples of immigrant parents. The majority of studies were descriptive ($n = 8$) or tested only main effects ($n = 20$); only five studies tested whether the promotive factor they identified also acted as a protective factor.

Conceptual/theoretical frameworks

Our review is guided by two frameworks: the strength-based integrated framework and the relational developmental systems framework.^{29,30} The strength-based integrated framework integrates economic and human development perspectives to understand how to best foster the strengths of families and children of color.³⁰ It incorporates promotive (e.g., adaptive culture, acculturation) as well as risk factors (e.g., racism, various forms of segregation) that are unique to families of color.⁴⁰ The relational developmental systems framework is an ecological perspective that situates the child within multiple systems, such as family, schools, communities, and cultures.²⁹ These interdependent systems are dynamic and interact to influence child and family functioning and well-being. Changes in one system (e.g., family) can produce changes in others (e.g., community). Thus, resilience is not an attribute of the child or family but, rather, a process shaped by the interactions among these systems and the resources that these systems provide.

In both the strength-based integrated framework and the relational developmental systems framework, the concept of resilience integrates both individual- and family-level resilience.^{30,41} Therefore, while we organize this review thematically, we indicate which of the three levels of promotive and protective factors—individual-level factors, parenting, and family-level factors—each group of findings involves.

Additional Reading

Cabrera, N., & Hennigar, A. (2019). The early home environment of Latinx children: A research synthesis. Report 2019-20-45. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. Retrieved from <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/the-early-home-environment-of-latino-children-a-research-synthesis/>

Gennetian, L., Guzman, L., Ramos-Olazagasti, M., & Wildsmith, E. (2019). An Economic Portrait of Low-Income Hispanic Families: Key Findings from the First Five Years of Studies from the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. Report 2019-03. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic & Families. Retrieved from <https://hispanicrescen.wpengine.com/research-resources/an-economic-portrait-of-low-income-hispanic-families-key-findings-from-the-first-five-years-of-studies-from-the-national-research-center-on-hispanic-children-families>

Mendez, J., Crosby, D., & Siskind, D. (2018). Access to early care and education for low-income Hispanic children and families: A research synthesis. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families. Retrieved from <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/access-to-early-care-and-education-for-low-income-hispanic-children-and-families-a-research-synthesis/>

Findings of Empirical Research on Promotive and Protective Factors

Children's strong social skills (individual strengths)

Most Latinx children enter formal schooling with strong social skills, including the ability to develop friendships and be liked and accepted by their peers and teachers. This is a significant finding because children with strong social skills tend to perform better in social and academic contexts than children with poorer social skills.^{42,43} It also suggests that educators and programs should validate, support, and capitalize on Latinx children's strong social skills to promote their academic achievement.

Social skills encompass a broad range of skills that enable children to get along with others, make friends, and learn. Latinx children who can pay attention and stay engaged in a task, who are persistent, and who cooperate with their peers are better equipped to learn in the classroom than children who are less skillful at navigating social situations.

As one example, the emergence of strong social skills among Mexican-American children from low-income backgrounds is evident as early as toddlerhood and continues across the early years.⁴⁴ A study with a nationally representative sample of children found that Latinx children in low-income families (i.e., at or below 200% of the federal poverty level) were rated highly on interpersonal skills from kindergarten to third grade.⁴⁵

However, some Latinx children are reported to have better social skills than others. Using a nationally representative sample of Latinx children, researchers found that those born in the United States to U.S.-born parents (i.e., second-generation children) were perceived by their teachers to be more socially competent than Latinx children whose parents were born elsewhere (i.e., first-generation children).⁴⁶ The reasons for this variability are not clearly understood and may even reflect teacher bias, but this finding suggests the importance of programs adopting a targeted approach, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach, in fostering the social skills of Latinx children.

Latinx children's social skills are important for developing resilience because they promote other domains of development. Although we found no studies that examined the degree to which social skills protect children from the negative effects of adversity, some studies have found that Latinx children's social skills promote abilities in other domains of development. In a large study of children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, Latinx kindergartners whose teachers rated them as having better approaches to learning (e.g., task persistence) showed more growth in their mathematical understanding over the course of the year than children who were rated less highly on approaches to learning, when controlling for the children's socioeconomic status.⁴⁶ In another study with a smaller sample of predominantly Mexican American children from low-income backgrounds in rural California, researchers found that teachers' perceptions of children's prosocial skills (e.g., cooperation) in the fall of the kindergarten year predicted kindergartners' performance on verbal analogies (verbal reasoning abilities) in the spring, controlling for the kids' earlier oral language abilities.⁴⁷ Overall, these findings suggest that Latinx children growing up in low-income households are perceived by their teachers to have developmental competencies; therefore, schools and teachers should view Latinx children as having the skills they need to learn and should have high expectations of these children and their families.

Biculturalism and bilingualism (individual and parenting strengths)

Being bilingual and bicultural are strengths that should be supported and prioritized by schools and programs. The ability to communicate in two languages promotes the development of executive function skills, which are foundational for children's success in school.^{48,49}



Latinx children and families benefit from their bilingual and bicultural status (i.e., their close identification with both U.S. culture and their heritage culture).

A national survey in 2015 showed that 85 percent of Latinx parents spoke Spanish to their children, and 97 percent of immigrant parents reported doing so.⁵⁰ In addition, 70 percent of Latinx parents reported often encouraging their child to speak Spanish; this percentage was higher among immigrant parents (82%).⁵⁰ There is also variability in the language skills of Latinx children: U.S.-born Latinx parents are less likely to immerse their child in a Spanish-only environment. The majority of U.S.-born Latinx parents (60%) speak Spanish to their child and 47 percent encourage their child to use Spanish.⁵⁰ This is not surprising, given that public school systems generally do not prioritize bilingualism or provide parents with information about its benefits.

Latinx children and families may benefit from their bilingual and bicultural status (i.e., their close identification with both U.S. culture and their heritage culture).

Being bilingual promotes children's social and cognitive development. Socially, bilingual children can interact and flexibly communicate with diverse groups of people, develop a strong and positive ethnic identity, and often serve as cultural brokers for their families.²⁰ Studies with infants and preschoolers have found that bilingual children are better at taking in other people's perspectives than monolingual children; this advantage also exists among monolingual children who are regularly exposed to a second language.^{51,52}

Being bilingual gives children a cognitive edge, especially in developing stronger executive function skills (e.g., attentional control, inhibitory control, cognitive flexibility), which are central to academic and social success.^{48,49,53} Executive function skills are important for positive classroom engagement, including paying attention in class, being able to switch between activities, and following rules and directions. And in social interactions, bilingual children must switch languages based on who they interact with while simultaneously suppressing the other language. A small study with English monolingual and English-Spanish bilingual kindergarteners from socioeconomically diverse backgrounds found that bilingual children scored higher on executive function tasks than monolinguals who were in English-only schools and those who were in English-Spanish/Japanese immersion schools, even after controlling for maternal and paternal education.⁵⁴ In another small study, children ages 5 to 11 who experienced more dual language input (i.e., a greater proportion of time in which both English and Spanish were used) and had better language skills performed better on a cognitive flexibility task than children who received less dual language input and had worse language skills.⁵⁵ Given the importance of bilingualism for all aspects of Latinx children's development, there is an urgent need for more research to examine how bilingualism is protective for all children, especially for children growing up in low-income households.

Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners alike must acknowledge that many parents are concerned that exposing children to two languages during early childhood can lead them to trail behind their English monolingual peers in language and literacy skills.^{56,57} While there is no empirical support for this concern, it highlights the need for better dissemination efforts to parents about the importance and benefits of growing up bilingual. Empirical evidence shows that simultaneous exposure to English and Spanish does not hinder children's acquisition of each language and, in fact, it might facilitate this process.⁵⁸ In a small study with second-generation Latinx children from Dominican and Puerto Rican families with low incomes, children from bilingual families (i.e., those who were exposed to both English and Spanish) had greater gains in English and Spanish skills from kindergarten to second grade than those from English-dominant families.⁵⁹ Likewise, children who were in classrooms that provided both English and Spanish instruction grew more in both English and Spanish skills than those in English-dominant classrooms.⁵⁹

Parents' biculturalism is also promotive of better parenting behaviors, which are, in turn, related to better outcomes in children.

Many Latinx parents rear their children in a bicultural environment in which they are exposed to beliefs and values from their own ethnic heritage culture as well as those of U.S. culture. Bicultural Latinx parents have been found to have better-quality interactions with their children, which may reflect these parents' ability to adapt and provide their children with the cultural tools to successfully navigate two cultures. A study with a small sample of Mexican immigrant mothers and fathers with children ages 2 to 6 showed that fathers who were connected to both Latinx and American cultures (e.g., those who reported sharing most of their beliefs and values equally with Hispanics/Latinxs and Anglos/Americans) had fewer self-reported aversive interactions (e.g., took frustration out on the child) with their children than fathers who were only connected to Latinx culture. Fathers who are connected to both their heritage culture and to the U.S. culture are reported by their wives to be less withdrawn in their interactions with their children.⁶⁰ In another study, bicultural parents had children with fewer internalizing behaviors (e.g., anxiety) and more adaptive behaviors, compared to parents who were not bicultural.⁶¹

Parenting and parental investments (individual and parenting strengths)

Parenting that is responsive and sensitive is indisputably the most significant influence on children's well-being and positive developmental outcomes.⁶² As a group, parents with lower levels of education, in general, are more likely to provide learning activities that vary in quality than their wealthier peers. But there is also tremendous variability in responsive parenting among economically vulnerable families. It is possible for families to have limited economic resources and still be responsive and loving to their children.

Many Latinx children experience high-quality parenting, characterized by high levels of warmth and supportiveness.^{63,64}

On average, Latinx mothers report low levels of negative parenting behaviors (e.g., intrusiveness), high levels of emotional support, and low to moderate levels of cognitive stimulation with their children, especially with their preschoolers.¹⁹ Compared to other groups, Latinx mothers report the lowest levels of spanking as a method to discipline their children. The majority of Latinx mothers participating in a nationally representative sample of children born in 2001 reported never spanking their children at any age.¹⁹ Latinx mothers born in the United States report more spanking than immigrant Latinx mothers, but the rate is still relatively low compared to other groups of mothers.^{65,66} Programs and practitioners should validate and support abstention from spanking because an abundance of research indicates that spanking is harmful for children: Spanking encourages aggression, does not increase desirable behavior, undermines trust, and jeopardizes the parent-child relationship.⁶⁷



Latinx fathers are highly committed to their children and involved in their lives. National data show that nearly three quarters of Latinx fathers in the United States live with all of their children.¹¹ Latinx fathers' commitment to their children starts even before their infants are born. Many are prenatally involved in multiple ways, such as supporting their partner during the pregnancy and birth, attending doctor visits, buying things for the baby, and being present at the time of the birth.⁶⁸ Studies have shown that fathers who belong to ethnic minoritized groups, including Latinx fathers, report being highly prenatally involved in ways that connected them to their unborn child (e.g., seeing a sonogram, listening to heartbeat).^{69,70} Fathers who are highly prenatally involved are more likely to stay involved in their children's lives, which, in turn, is related to better short- and long-term well-being for their partners and children.^{71,72}

Latinx fathers' commitment to their children starts early in childhood and is long-term. Latinx fathers report being more engaged in physical play and caregiving activities with their 9-month-old infants than White fathers.²⁵ In a study with a national sample of men, more than 90 percent of Latinx fathers reported eating dinner with their preschool- and school-age children every day or multiple times a week.²⁶

The degree to which fathering behaviors vary by important characteristics of the father, such as nativity status, is still debated in the literature, but existing research does offer some insights. A study using a national sample of men found that U.S.-born Latinx fathers reported playing with, reading to, bathing, and changing their children's diapers more frequently than foreign-born Latinx fathers.²⁶

Latinx fathers' engagement with their children significantly contributes to their cognitive, language, and social development, over and above mothers' contributions.^{17,73}

A longitudinal study with a large sample of parents found that Latinx fathers' own levels of education and engagement in literacy activities were some of the strongest predictors of children's school readiness, and these were uniquely related to children's early math and reading skills at kindergarten entry.¹⁶ Overall, Latinx fathers in the United States play a significant role in supporting the well-being of their families and make positive contributions to their children's development through

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their parental engagement and personal characteristics. Together, these findings indicate that fathers contribute more than money to their children's well-being. Programs and policies targeted primarily toward mothers should intentionally include and involve fathers as a means of promoting child well-being. Whether or not father involvement is a protective factor for children—and under what condition—is an important next step for the research community.

Early home learning experiences (family strengths)

Latinx parents are highly invested in their children's futures, as evidenced by their frequent engagement in learning experiences—particularly with their preschoolers—which foster the development of early school readiness skills. National studies find that a majority of Latinx parents read and sing to their preschoolers (48 and 60 months) at least once a week.¹⁹ Almost half of all Latinx children under age 4 are told stories frequently (i.e., three or more times a week).¹⁹ National studies also show that, although low-income Latinx parents report reading to their children less frequently than White and Black parents at kindergarten, they read equally as often to their second graders as White and Black parents.⁴⁵ Engaging in literacy activities gives children plenty of opportunities to learn vocabulary, communicate, and share intimate and joyful moments with their parents that build relationships and strengthen filial bonds. Other literacy activities such as singing and telling stories are significant not just for language building, but also for the transmission of cultural values and beliefs that connect children to their rich heritage and culture.

Latinx children's day-to-day experiences are often characterized by routines and predictability, which support healthy social-emotional development in early childhood. The majority of Latinx mothers report that their families eat meals together three or more times per week.¹⁹ Children with regular routines at home tend to have greater self-regulation skills, which are the building blocks of good mental health.⁷⁴ When children learn to regulate feelings and behaviors, they are able to identify their feelings and build the skills to manage those feelings, enabling them to adapt to everyday challenges and stressors.⁷⁵ Routines also strengthen caregiver-child relationships because they teach children that the important caregivers in their lives behave in predictable ways and engage in events that occur at predictable times.⁷⁶ Bedtime or mealtime routines anchor children's days according to the family's expectations. Moreover, Latinx mothers use *consejos* (advice) and direct modeling to teach their children to be *bien educado* (well behaved), which is associated with children's social competence and sociability.^{77,78}

Family stability, household composition, and familial support (family strengths)

The majority of young Latinx children with foreign-born parents live in two-parent households that are relatively stable during the early years of life.¹⁰ More than half of foreign-born (73%) and native-born (65%) Latinx mothers live with the father of their child at the time of the child's birth.⁷⁹ However, Latinx children with foreign-born parents are more likely to continue to live with both parents by the time they are age 5, compared to Latinx children with native-born parents and children from other ethnic groups.^{10,13} Overall, Latinx fathers typically have biological children with only one partner, and often live with all of their children.¹¹ However, national data indicate variability in the marital status of Latinx parents who live together. The U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 statistics show that 62 percent of Latinx children under age 18 live in two-parent married households, while 6 percent live in two-parent cohabiting households.⁸⁰ And according to data from the Community Population Survey, there has been a decrease in the percentage of Latinx children living in two-parent married households—from 75 percent in 1980 to 62 percent in 2020.⁸¹ Children benefit from living in two-parent households because there are more economic and social resources, more parental time, and less parenting stress.

In terms of family stability (i.e., probability of parents breaking up or re-partnering), national studies find that Latinx mothers from low-income backgrounds live with their child's father at the time of their baby's birth and that these relationships tend to be stable over time, especially during the first five years following the birth of their child.¹⁰ Latinx mothers report high levels of family stability (e.g., stable residential relationships or stably single).¹⁰ However, there are also significant differences by parents' nativity status. On average, foreign-born Latinx couples exhibit greater family stability than U.S.-born couples and foreign-born, low-income Latinx mothers are unlikely to experience a break-up or re-partner during their child's first five years of life.^{10,79} Family instability is very difficult for children because it often means disruption in living arrangements and parental conflict that can lead to children's anxiety and behavioral problems.

Living in two-parent families is often considered a strength, as it offers children increased household income, more time spent with parents, and more involvement in cognitively stimulating activities, all things being equal.¹⁷ However, these potential benefits are not linear or clear cut. Latinx children with at least one immigrant parent are more likely to live with an adult who has full-time employment status than Latinx children with native-born parents.¹³ In a sample of 1,102 Latinx

fathers and their families, researchers found that most reported strong and stable engagement in the labor market and most had worked full-time or part-time in the last week.¹¹

There is some evidence that living in two-parent families is not as protective for low-income racial and ethnic minority youth (including Latinxs) as it is for White children.⁸² For example, across varying levels of health, economic, and social risks, married and cohabiting Latinx mothers have a higher probability of living in poverty than married and cohabiting White mothers.⁸³ And while having a cohabiting partner who contributes financially can help keep the family out of poverty, this advantage in material well-being is smaller for Latinx families than for White families.⁸⁴ Other research suggests that there are no significant differences in food and housing insecurity experienced by Latinx children with married vs. cohabiting parents; this is likely due to Latinx parents having similar educational attainment regardless of their family structure.⁸⁴ Although a limited number of studies have examined whether living in two-parent families is *protective* for Latinx children,¹⁷ family *stability* might be a more important predictor of child well-being than family structure.^{10,85}

Another source of family stability for Latinx families is low rates of incarceration, but there are differences for Latinx families by nativity status. Incarceration rates are higher for U.S.-born Latinx men than for their foreign-born counterparts, although this estimation might be biased: Most studies exclude immigrant men who are deported for crimes—immigration-based or otherwise.¹¹ While immigrant Latinx families may not be as burdened by the disruption and instability that accompanies men being incarcerated, they face other immigration status-related risks—detention and deportation—that impact family disruption and instability. Approximately 25 percent of Latinx children (4 million) have at least one undocumented parent.⁸⁶ Latinx fathers are more likely to be deported than mothers,⁸⁷ which increases financial strain and strains parent-child relationships.²¹ However, many Latinx parents and children rely on their social networks for instrumental emotional support as they navigate the social uncertainty that follows family disruption, which may offset some of the economic and psychological consequences of detention and deportation.²¹

Support from extended family and living in intergenerational households can benefit Latinx children's cognitive skills and social-emotional functioning. There is very little information on how intergenerational households can be protective, but there are some indications that it can be beneficial on several fronts. This type of household composition may serve as a protective factor for young Latinx children by increasing the economic resources that are available to them. For instance, when a grandparent lives in the home or extended family members live nearby, Latinx infants and toddlers from low-income backgrounds are more likely to be cared for by relatives,⁸⁸ which tends to be of no or lower cost than other forms of child care.⁸⁹

Besides the potential economic benefits of relying on extended family, extended family can also have positive influences on Latinx parents' parenting behaviors and their children's development. Mexican and Dominican mothers who report receiving more familial support (e.g., emotional support) also report engaging in more positive parenting behaviors, such as warmth, which, in turn, are associated with greater positive social behaviors (e.g., ability to adapt to new situations) in Latinx kindergartners.²⁷ It is likely that social support provided by extended family can alleviate stress (which may be particularly important for Latinx families living in poverty), leading to more positive parent-child interactions.

Although the evidence is limited, some research shows benefits to residing in multigenerational households. A nationally representative study found that young Latinx children who lived in three-generation households (i.e., with at least one grandparent) at any point between 9 months and 4 years of age had higher levels of observed expressive language and lower levels of mother-reported externalizing behaviors (e.g., impulsivity) than their counterparts.³¹ However, this was only true for young Latinx children with foreign-born mothers, suggesting that extended households may be more beneficial for first-generation Latinx children. The conditions under which living in multigenerational households with multiple adults is beneficial (or harmful) for Latinx children are yet to be fully understood. Instead of concluding that crowded conditions are harmful to children (a consequence of living in intergenerational households) based on research with White families, we need research to understand the nuanced ways in which access to multiple adults in the household may be promotive—rather than a risk factor—for young children's developmental outcomes.

Family functioning (family strengths)

High co-parenting relationship quality is another strength of Latinx families: Parents who support each other in their parenting roles are more likely to have fewer conflicts and to show more supportive and responsive parenting, both of which are important for children's development. Supportive co-parenting is characterized by mothers' and fathers' ability to work together to manage their parenting responsibilities, agreement on childrearing issues, and low levels of undermining or disrespecting their co-parent's parenting role.⁹⁰ On average, Latinx mothers perceive themselves as having more supportive co-parenting relationships (e.g., partner respecting their parenting rules) with their partners compared to White mothers.¹⁰ In addition, Latinx mothers of young children in stable residential relationships over the child's first five years of life perceive greater co-parenting support than mothers in nonstable relationships.¹⁰

The quality of the couple relationship is another source of strength for Latinx families. National studies show that Latinx mothers report being either very happy or fairly happy in their relationship with their spouses or partners during the child's early years of life,¹⁹ which is beneficial for later developmental outcomes.^{91,92}

Parents' psychological functioning is a promotive factor that can influence young children's development, through its effects on parenting practices and the quality of the early home environment. Studies with large samples of families, including Latinxs, reveal that immigrant Latinx mothers report fewer depressive symptoms than native-born Latinx mothers.¹⁰ This is an important finding: Mothers' depressive symptoms are a strong predictor of the quality of their parenting practices and parent-child interactions.⁹² Notably, there are limited studies on fathers' psychological well-being and especially its associations with parenting and child outcomes—despite the important role that fathers play in children's lives.⁹³

Parents' optimism, defined as a relatively stable trait of an individual to think positively about the future, has been identified as a protective factor that boosts child and parent well-being in disadvantaged contexts.^{22,23} However, virtually no studies examine how parental optimism influences Latinx families with young children.¹⁷ A focus group with 30 low-income immigrant Latinx mothers and fathers, whose children were ages 2 to 4, showed that most parents emphasized optimism as an important resource for helping their family thrive in the United States.²⁰ Specifically, these parents believed that modeling optimism would teach their child to think positively about the future; despite their socioeconomically disadvantaged status, these parents also felt confident that they could find more opportunities for themselves and for their children in the United States than "back home."²⁰

Optimism and access to economic resources seem to be especially protective during times of economic and social uncertainty.^{23,24} Take, for example, the findings from a study with a relatively large sample of low-income, predominantly Latinx, mothers, fathers, and toddlers who were interviewed about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, mothers who rated themselves as being highly positive (or optimistic) during the pandemic were less likely to report being depressed or stressed, and mothers and fathers who reported high levels of optimism also reported being highly engaged (e.g., playing) with their child.²³ Another study found that, among Latinx parents experiencing economic risk (e.g., income loss, financial difficulties) during the pandemic, those who reported high levels of optimism and access to economic resources (e.g., access to services and benefits) reported higher levels of parental engagement than those with low levels of optimism and limited access to economic resources.²⁴ Overall, more research is needed to understand the degree to which optimism protects children from the negative effects of various risk factors.



Recommendations for Programs, Practice, and Research

For programs and practice

- **Curricula for parenting programs should acknowledge the culturally specific ways in which Latinx parents promote child development and should encourage Latinx parents to maintain these practices.**¹⁹ Programs can achieve this by interviewing parents about their goals for their children, and discussing what parents already do at home to promote learning and well-being. Program staff, service providers, and interventionists should validate what Latinx families are already doing well (e.g., singing, storytelling, using low levels of spanking).^{66,68} Moreover, parenting programs offered in primary care settings (i.e., parenting services offered by health care professionals through primary health care clinics) are ideal settings for validating and encouraging families who are, for example, engaging in storytelling—an activity that would go beyond just translating materials to Spanish.⁹⁴ For instance, a version of the GenerationPMTO® preventative parenting intervention that is culturally adapted for low-income, immigrant Latinx families with adolescents also targets immigration-related challenges and discrimination, and promotes biculturalism.⁹⁵
- **Programs should acknowledge Latinx parents' and families' strengths (e.g., strong co-parenting relationships) and encourage families to use these strengths as a platform to build further competencies.** Our findings suggest that programs that use this approach to engage Latinx families might be more effective than programs that do not acknowledge what Latinx families have to offer their families.¹⁰
- **Practitioners should familiarize themselves with and increase their understanding of the cultural beliefs and practices that Latinx parents view as important resources to help them live in the United States.**^{20,21} Collecting this information will help programs ensure that their content aligns with the goals and values of Latinx parents, which could help increase engagement.
- **Programs should capitalize on Latinx parents' optimism^{22,23,24} and reinforce their positive views of the future to encourage them to continue investing in their children.** Understanding how families' optimism can help them through difficult times is especially important for programs that aim to improve mental health. Mental health includes the absence of pathology and the presence of psychological strengths such as optimism.
- **To build resilience for children and families, programs should invite involvement from fathers and extended family members who are involved in childrearing and who may be sources of social support for Latinx parents.**^{25,26,27,96} The content of parenting program curricula should address co-parenting relationships not just among couples, but also with others in the household (e.g., grandparents). Capitalizing on strong co-parenting relationships and families' investment in children may reap benefits for children by increasing their exposure to positive caregiver practices (e.g., warmth, literacy activities) that in turn promote the acquisition of important skills.
- **Programs should meet families where they are—in other words, they should recognize that Latinx families have diverse backgrounds and inherent strengths—and be flexible and targeted in their programming efforts.** For example, research shows that foreign-born Latinx fathers are less engaged in their children's learning,²⁶ so programs should encourage these dads to play with, read, and care for their children by highlighting the benefits of their active involvement. This can be achieved by helping fathers find activities they themselves find enjoyable and would like to participate in with their children. In terms of family functioning, given that foreign-born immigrant couples report having strong relationships with their partners,¹⁰ programs should focus on maintaining relationship stability—especially at developmental transition points, during which parenting tends to be more challenging and represents a source of stress for families.
- **Programs should build on Latinx parents' high levels of investment in their children's futures and engage parents in programs by validating and encouraging these investments.** For example, Latinx families endorse routines such as sharing meals, which are excellent opportunities for bonding, conversation, and emotional support. Programs' services should emphasize the benefits of routines for children's development, praise parents for engaging in them, and offer tips on continuing routines as children get older.

For research

- **Future research should include more longitudinal studies with large samples of Latinx families to examine within-group variability in individual-level strengths, parenting practices, family functioning, and resilience.** Longitudinal studies enable researchers to determine whether the strength of associations among these factors changes over time and whether certain resources are more protective during certain developmental periods than others—information that can inform subsequent intervention efforts.
- **Researchers should more frequently use a strength-based perspective to identify strengths and assets of children, parents, families, and communities so that programs and interventions can reinforce and sustain them.**^{29,30} This practice is necessary for framing and understanding how parenting, family functioning, and parents' psychological well-being contribute to children's development, and to determine what factors strengthen or mitigate these associations. Such an approach will also require researchers to stop centering non-Latinx White parenting practices and behaviors as the ideal or the norm, which may either devalue or ignore (i.e., not measure) Latinx cultural-specific practices (e.g., storytelling). Instead, researchers should investigate the full range of developmental trajectories and human experiences.
- **Research studies must examine more systemic forms of adversity such as racism and discrimination.** More studies on parents' optimism are also needed, especially with families of young children, to understand the mechanisms (e.g., moderation, mediational effects) through which optimism protects Latinx families who experience hardships.^{22,23,24}
- **Research must further extend the study of bilingualism to better understand how it acts as a resource for Latinx children once they enter school settings—and under what conditions it serves as a resource.** Although we know that bilingualism is a promotive factor for child development (e.g., language, executive function),^{54,59} we still do not have enough empirical evidence about how bilingualism protects children, particularly for those exposed to multiple risk factors.
- **Researchers should also widen the focus of studies to include fathers and extended family members to obtain a more well-rounded view of children's early home environments.**^{25,26,31} There is currently a gap in our understanding of the mechanisms through which extended family members contribute to Latinx children's developmental outcomes. This research can inform ways to involve and engage fathers and other family members in parenting programs and interventions.

Conclusions

This review has provided an overview of research on the strengths and protective factors seen among Latinx families at the individual, parenting, and family levels. The studies we reviewed identify the many ways in which Latinx families provide their children with what they need to succeed in school and beyond. For instance, Latinx children, overall, have strong social skills that can facilitate positive interactions with others and effective learning in the classroom. Latinx parents' positive outlook on the future, their connection to two cultures, and their supportive co-parenting relationships help them provide high-quality early experiences for their children. Latinx parents also exhibit warmth and love for their children and are highly invested in their future, as evidenced by their promotion of early learning through stimulating activities such as reading, storytelling, and singing.

Still, this review has also highlighted the lack of rigorous and longitudinal research on Latinx families' strengths and assets during children's early years of development. Our knowledge of what constitutes promotive factors among Latinx families—and under what conditions these factors are protective—is quite limited in scope and breadth. These gaps significantly limit our understanding of the specific ways in which promotive factors protect children from the negative effects of poverty, racism, and discrimination and consequently dampen the potential benefits that intervention programs can offer families. Future research should expand the focus of study from adversity and risk to additionally examine how fathers and extended family members contribute to Latinx families' resilience, as well as how protective factors actually protect families from various levels of adversity. Addressing these research gaps will be essential for developing programs and services that build on Latinx families' strengths and maximizing public investments in the well-being of Latinx families and their children.

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Appendix

Key Terms

Resilience: The capacity to show adaptive functioning and positive developmental outcomes even in the context of adverse conditions that threaten development^{29,36}

Risk, adversity: Any challenging circumstance or event that increases the likelihood of maladaptive developmental outcomes²⁹

Promotive factors, assets, resources: Characteristics of the child, family, and broader environment that increase the likelihood of positive developmental outcomes regardless of risk level¹²

Protective factors: Characteristics of the child, family, and broader environment that mitigate the negative impact of risk on developmental outcomes³⁸

Executive function: A set of skills that allow individuals to control their thoughts and behaviors in a goal-directed manner; skills include working memory (i.e., the ability to hold information in our mind), attentional flexibility (i.e., the ability to shift and focus attention), and inhibitory control (i.e., the ability to inhibit a dominant response)

Internalizing behaviors: Behaviors that reflect problems with an individual's emotional well-being (e.g., anxiety; depressive symptoms; feeling nervous or restless)

Externalizing behaviors: Behaviors that reflect problems with individual's interactions with others (e.g., aggression; hostility)

Racial/ethnic identification and pride: The extent to which individuals identify with their race(s) or ethnic background(s) in positive ways (e.g., celebrating heritage traditions); the extent to which individuals feel connected to their racial/ethnic/cultural background

Table 1: Sample, data source(s), and protective factors for all articles cited in this brief

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Aldoney, D., & Cabrera, N. J. (2016). Raising American citizens: Socialization goals of low-income immigrant Latinx mothers and fathers of young children. <i>Journal of Child and Family Studies</i> , 25(12), 3607-3618.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 30 parents (20 mothers, 10 fathers) of preschoolers living in Washington, DC • Low-income (i.e., household income at or below the federal poverty level) • 90% foreign-born; average number of years in the U.S.: 10.4 • 50% of parents were from Central America, 40% were of Mexican origin, 10% were from South America • 23% had a high school diploma or GED, 67% had less than a high school degree, 10% had some college or a college degree 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Motivation to succeed • Provision of <i>consejos</i> (advice) • Modeling and teaching by example 	This was a qualitative study—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
Bridges, M., Cohen, S. R., McGuire, L. W., Yamada, H., Fuller, B., Mireles, L., & Scott, L. (2012). Bien educado: Measuring the social behaviors of Mexican American children. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> , 27(3), 555-567.	<p>Ethnographic pilot study sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 26 Mexican mothers and their preschoolers living in California and Arizona • 69% of the mothers were foreign-born • 54% had a high school degree or more <p>MAS Scale Pilot Testing Sample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 143 Mexican parents (93% mothers) and their preschoolers • 89% of parents were foreign-born 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting goals and socialization 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Cabrera, N., Chen, Y., Alonso, A., West, J., & Fagan, J. (2021). Latino parents report positive co-parenting and parent-child interactions that vary by gender and nativity. Report 2021-04. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/Latino-Parents-Report-Positive-Co-parenting-and-Parent-Child-Interactions-that-Vary-by-Gender-and-Nativity/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,081 Latinx fathers and 1,182 Latinx mothers with a child under age 18 • 66.5% of fathers and 61.8% of mothers were foreign-born • 63.5% of fathers and 70% of mothers reported completing high school or more 	Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM) Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower use of spanking among Latinx immigrant mothers compared to native-born Latinx mothers 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
Cabrera, N. J., Fagan, J., & Farrie, D. (2008). Explaining the long reach of fathers' prenatal involvement on later paternal engagement. <i>Journal of Marriage and the Family</i> , 70(5), 1094-1107.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,686 urban, low-income fathers • African American (56.8%), Hispanic (27.3%), White (14.6%) 	Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers' prenatal involvement • Presence at birth 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Cabrera, N., He, M., Chen, Y., & Reich, S. M. (2022). Risks and protective factors of Hispanic families and their young children during the COVID-19 pandemic. <i>Children (Basel)</i> , 9(6), 792.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 161 Latinx parents (57% mothers) with a young child ages 22 to 55 months • 61% of parents lived in California and 39% lived in the Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland area • Average household annual income: \$39,934 • 14% of parents had less than a high school education, 23% had a high school degree, and 63% had some college or more 	Baby Books 2 Project (BB2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimism • Economic resources (e.g., access to services and benefits) 	This study tested the interaction of parental positivity and economic support with economic risk on parental engagement.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Cabrera, N., Hennigar, A., Chen, Y., West, J., Fagan, J., & Wildsmith, E. (2021). Programs can build on the strengths of Latinx families with low incomes to improve outcomes. Report 2021-02. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/programs-can-build-on-the-strengths-of-latino-families-with-low-incomes-to-improve-outcomes/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 950 Latinx children • All children came from low-income households (i.e., 185% or below the federal poverty line) 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of intrusiveness • High levels of emotional support • Moderate levels of cognitive stimulation (e.g., singing) • Low levels of spanking • Routines (e.g., eating meals together) 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
Cabrera, N. J., Hofferth, S., & Chae, S. (2011). Patterns and predictors of father-infant engagement: Variation by race and ethnicity. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> , 26, 365–375.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 5,089 infants (1,586 Latinx, 3,102 White, and 401 African American) who lived with both biological parents 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father education level • Mother-father relationship quality • Marital status • Maternal depressive symptoms 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Cabrera, N. J., Karberg, E., & Fagan, J. (2019). Family structure change among Latinos: Variation by ecologic risk. <i>Journal of Family Issues</i> , 40(15), 2123–2145.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,314 urban mothers, who self-identified as U.S.-born (n = 772) or foreign-born (n = 542) • Self-identified as Latina and who lived with their child at least 50% of the time • Most Latina mothers (70%) were of Mexican origin 	Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater family structure stability among foreign-born Latinx mothers compared to U.S. born Latinx mothers 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Cabrera, N. J., Malin, J. L., Kuhns, C., West, J. (2017). The early home environment of Latinx boys and their peers: A developmental perspective. <i>Infant Mental Health Journal</i> , 38(1), 97–114.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 5,200 Latinx (45% native born) and White children • 85% lived with a resident father, 11% had an involved nonresident father, 68% non-Hispanic White, and 32% Hispanic/Latinx 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B); 9- and 24-month, preschool (48 months), and kindergarten entry (60 months) waves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal and paternal investments in literacy activities • Household resources • Family functioning 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Cabrera, N. J., Shannon, J. D., Mitchell, S. J., & West, J. (2009). Mexican American mothers and fathers' prenatal attitudes and father prenatal involvement: Links to mother–infant interaction and father engagement. <i>Sex Roles</i> , 60(7), 510–526.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 735 Mexican American infants and their resident, biological parents • Mean age of infants = 10 months • 55% of infants were boys 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers' and fathers' pregnancy wantedness • Relationship quality • Fathers' prenatal involvement 	This study tested whether mother-father relationship quality was a moderator of the effect of mothers' and fathers' pregnancy wantedness on mother-infant interaction and father engagement. Mothers' and fathers' pregnancy wantedness and fathers' prenatal involvement were also modeled as main effects.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Cabrera, N. J., Shannon, J. D., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2007). Fathers' influence on their children's cognitive and emotional development: From toddlers to pre-K. <i>Applied Development Science</i> , 11(4), 208-213.	<p>Two- and three-year timepoints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n = 290 families and their toddlers • 60% White with remaining families Black and Latinx • Annual income at two-year timepoint: \$18,820 • Annual income at three-year timepoint: \$25,440 <p>Prekindergarten timepoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • n = 313 families and their preschoolers • 51% White with remaining families Black and Latinx • Annual income at prekindergarten timepoint: \$59,459 <p>Across timepoints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33%-50% of fathers had less than a high school degree 	National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (EHS Study) and the EHS Father Study's Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality parenting (e.g., high levels of sensitivity; low levels of intrusiveness) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Calzada, E. J., Brotman, L. M., Huang, K., Bat-Chava, Y., & Kingston, S. (2009). Parent cultural adaptation and child functioning in culturally diverse, urban families of preschoolers. <i>Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology</i> , 30(4), 515-524.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 130 children age 4 • Parents' ethnicity included 28% Latinx, 39% non-Latinx Black, 18% non-Latinx White, and 15% Asian American • 53% parents and 8% children were foreign-born • 54% reported a household income of less than \$30,000 • 63% of primary caregivers did not work outside the home • 72% were married or living with a partner • 45% had continued their education beyond high school 	ParentCorps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' biculturalism (high ethnic and American identity) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Carlson, S. M., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2008). Bilingual experience and executive functioning in young children. <i>Developmental Science</i> , 11(2), 282-298.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 kindergarteners (72 months) with exposure from birth to Spanish and English • Half the parents reported they had lived in the U.S. for less than 10 years; half of parents reported they had lived in the U.S. 10 to 20 years • Parents reported a median education of high school • Annual family income was \$20-30K 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual language exposure 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Castro-Schilo, L., Ferrer, E., Taylor, Z. E., Robins, R. W., Conger, R. D., & Widaman, K. F. (2013). Parents' optimism, positive parenting, and child peer competence in Mexican-origin families. <i>Parenting: Science and Practice</i> , 13(2), 95–112.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 521 children ages 10 to 13; 521 mothers and 438 fathers of Mexican origin from two-parent families • Mothers on average spent 16.1 years in the U.S. and fathers 19.4 years • Educational level ranged from no schooling to Master's degree for the mothers (81.7% completed high school or less) and from 1 year of schooling to doctoral or other advanced degree for the fathers (82.4% completed high school or less) 	The California Families Project (CFP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental optimism 	This study tested main effects of optimism on positive parenting and an interaction with positive parenting on child peer competence.
Collins B. A. (2014). Dual language development of Latinx children: Effect of instructional program type and the home and school language environment. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> , 29(3), 389–397.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 163 second-generation immigrant kindergarteners • Mothers came from the Dominican Republic (53%) and Puerto Rico (22%) • Median household income less than \$20,000 per year • Most families (86%) were recipients of at least one government assistance program • Mothers had moderate to low levels of education 	Part of a larger study of Latinx dual language learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual language exposure 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Crespo, K., Gross, M., & Kaushanskaya, M. (2019). The effects of dual language exposure on executive function in Spanish–English bilingual children with different language abilities. <i>Journal of Experimental Child Psychology</i> , 188, 104663.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 156 typically developing Spanish-English bilinguals ages 5–11 Primary caregivers' years of education was 15.11 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual language exposure 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Crosby, D., & Mendez, J. (2020). <i>Multiple Factors Predict Higher Child Care Costs for Low-Income Hispanic Households</i> . Report 2020-01. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://hispanicrescenc.wpengine.com/research-resources/multiple-factors-predict-higher-child-care-costs-for-low-income-hispanic-households .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 786 Hispanic households with a child from birth to age 5 Household income below 200% of the 2012 federal poverty line 65% of households had at least one member born outside of the U.S. 	2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (nationally representative dataset)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergenerational households Extended family 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
Galindo, C., & Fuller, B. (2010). The social competence of Latinx kindergartners and growth in mathematical understanding. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , 46(3), 579-592.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 19,590 children (56% White, 15% African American, 18% Latinx, 6% Asian, 5% Other race) <p>Latinx subsample:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 3,640 children 64% Mexican American, 9% Puerto Rican, 4% Cuban, 13% Central and South American, 10% Other Latinx 8% of children were first-generation, 54% were second-generation, 38% were third- or more generation 27% of Latinx parents had less than a high school education 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K: 1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater social competence (e.g., persistence on tasks) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Gassman-Pines, A., & Skinner, A. T. (2018). Psychological acculturation and parenting behaviors in Mexican immigrant families. <i>Journal of Family Issues</i> , 39(5), 1139–1164.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle childhood sample: 47 mothers, 38 fathers, and 46 youth of Mexican origin • Early childhood sample: 185 mothers and 155 fathers of Mexican origin • Across samples: 80–82% reported annual incomes below \$30,000 per year • Across samples: average 8–10 years of education • Across samples: 80% two-parent families 	Part of an ongoing longitudinal study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents' biculturalism (feeling connected to both Hispanic and American cultures) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Guerrero, A. D., Fuller, B., Chu, L., Kim, A., Franke, T., Bridges, M., & Kuo, A. (2013). Early growth of Mexican–American children: Lagging in preliteracy skills but not social development. <i>Maternal and Child Health Journal</i> , 17(9), 1701–1711.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 4,690 mothers and their toddlers (24 months at first wave) • 22.9% of mothers had less than a high school degree, 22.7% had a high school diploma, 24.4% had some college, and 30% had a bachelor's degree or more 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong social skills 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
He, M., Cabrera, N., Renteria, J., Chen, Y., Alonso, A., McDorman, S. A., Kerlow, M. A., & Reich, S. M. (2021). Family functioning in the time of COVID-19 among economically vulnerable families: Risks and protective factors. <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , 12, 730447.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 247 low-income mothers and fathers with children ages 22 to 55 months • Average annual household income was \$40,051 • 12% less than high school, 19% high school diploma, 43% some college, and 26% college degree • 70% Hispanic, 14% Black, 7% White, and 9% other races 	Baby Books 2 Project (BB2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental optimism • Coparenting relationship 	This study tested main effects of optimism and coparenting on parent engagement and children's prosocial behaviors and interactions with economic stress on parent mental health.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Jensen, B., Reese, L., Hall-Kenyon, K., & Bennett, C. (2015). Social competence and oral language development for young children of Latinx immigrants. <i>Early Education and Development</i> , 26(7), 933-955.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 57 Latinx kindergartners and their families • 95% had limited English proficiency • 79% of mothers and 81% of fathers were foreign-born (Mexico) • 45% and 16% of mothers had only elementary schooling and some college, respectively • 36% and 12% of fathers had only elementary schooling and some college, respectively 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social competence (e.g., prosocial skills) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Karberg, E., Cabrera, N., Fagan, J., Scott, M. E., & Guzman, L. (2017, a). Family stability and instability among low-income Hispanic mothers with young children. Report 2017-12. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/family-stability-and-instability-among-low-income-hispanic-mothers-with-young-children/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban, low-income Hispanic (foreign-born n = 420 and U.S.-born n = 509) mothers who reported living with their children (born from 1998 to 2000) at least half of the time 	Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household structure stability • Low levels of depression • Supportive coparenting relationships 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Karberg, E., Guzman, L., Cook, E., Scott, M., Cabrera, N. (2017, b). A portrait of Latinx fathers: Strengths and challenges. Report 2017-10. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/a-portrait-of-latino-fathers-strengths-and-challenges/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,102 Latinx resident and non-resident fathers ages 18 to 44 with biological children birth to age 18 (64% immigrant) 	National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) 2006-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low rates of multiple partner fertility and teen fatherhood • Low rates of prison, jail, or juvenile detention • Tendency to live with all their kids and romantic partner • High rates of employment 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Lee, S. J., & Altschul, I. (2015). Spanking of young children: Do immigrant and US-born Hispanic parents differ?. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i> , 30(3), 475-498.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,739 parents (37% fathers) and their preschoolers • 38% of mothers and 46% of fathers were foreign-born • 62% of foreign-born mothers had less than a high school degree, 21% had a high school degree or GED, 13% had some college or technical school, 4% had college or higher • 42% of native-born mothers had less than a high school degree, 29% had a high school degree or GED, 25% had some college or technical school, 4% had college or higher • 68% of foreign-born fathers had less than a high school degree, 17% had a high school degree or GED, 12% had some college or technical school, 4% had college or higher • 36% of native-born mothers had less than a high school degree, 36% had a high school degree or GED, 22% had some college or technical school, 6% had college or higher 	Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower use of spanking among Latinx immigrant mothers compared to native-born Latinx mothers 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Mendez, J., Crosby, D., & Siskind, D. (2020). <i>Work Hours, Family Composition, and Employment Predict Use of Child Care for Low-Income Latinx Infants and Toddlers</i> . Report 2020-04. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/work-hours-family-composition-and-employment-predict-use-of-child-care-for-low-income-latino-infants-and-toddlers/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 1,037 Latinx households with children younger than age 3 • 68% of households had at least one member who was foreign-born • 51% of households were single-parent • Average household income-to-poverty ratio: .81 	2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (nationally representative dataset)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational households • Extended family 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.
Padilla, C. M., Cabrera, N., & West, J. (2017). <i>The development and home environments of low-income Hispanic children: Kindergarten to third grade</i> . Report 2017-37. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/the-development-and-home-environments-of-low-income-hispanic-children-kindergarten-to-third-grade/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 2,290 first-time kindergarteners in fall 2010 • 41% White, 39% Hispanic, 20% Black • Low-income (below 200% of the poverty level) 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten (ECLS-K: 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater interpersonal skills than Black children from kindergarten to third grade (on par with White children) • Fewer externalizing behaviors than Black children and fewer than White children, Grade 1 through 3 • More likely to live in two-parent households than White and Black children at kindergarten entry 	Results were descriptive—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Pilkaukas, N. V. (2014). Living with a grandparent and parent in early childhood: Associations with school readiness and differences by demographic characteristics. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , 50(12), 2587–2599.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 6,550 mothers and their children (9 months of age at first wave) • 58% White, 22% Hispanic, 14% Black • 81% of mothers were native-born • 19% of mothers had less than high school education; 28% had high school degree; 53% had some college or more 	Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational households 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Serrano-Villar, M., Huang, K. Y., & Calzada, E. J. (2017). Social support, parenting, and social emotional development in young Mexican and Dominican American children. <i>Child Psychiatry & Human Development</i> , 48(4), 597-609.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 610 Mexican and Dominican mothers and their preschool- and kindergarten-age children (49% boys) in NYC • On average, Mexican and Dominican mothers lived 11.23 and 12.54 years in the U.S., respectively • 84% and 54% of Mexican and Dominican mothers, respectively, were living in poverty • 44% and 7% of Mexican and Dominican mothers, respectively, had less than a high school degree 	Part of an ongoing longitudinal study in NYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support • Positive parenting (mediating factor) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main and mediating effects were modeled.
Shannon, J. D., Cabrera, N. J., Tamis-LeMonda, C., & Lamb, M. E. (2009). Who stays and who leaves? Father accessibility across children's first 5 years. <i>Parenting: Science and Practice</i> , 9(1-2), 78–100.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N = 2,160 ethnically diverse low-income mothers (i.e., European American n = 797, African American n = 796, and Latin American n = 567) 	National Early Head Start evaluation study (EHS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers' residence at birth • Prenatal involvement 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Tamis-LeMonda, C. S., Kahana-Kalman, R., & Yoshikawa, H. (2009). Father involvement in immigrant and ethnically diverse families from the prenatal period to the second year: Prediction and mediating mechanisms. <i>Sex Roles</i> , 60(7), 496–509.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 204 low-income fathers; Dominican immigrants (n = 73), Mexican immigrants (n = 65), and African Americans (n = 66) residing in New York City 	Small-scale study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fathers' prenatal involvement Fathers' race and ethnicity Mother-father relationship quality Fathers' residence 	Fathers' ethnicity and residency were modeled as moderators. The mother-father relationship quality and fathers' prenatal involvement were modeled as main effects.
Turner, K., Guzman, L., Wildsmith, E., & Scott, M. (2015). The complex and varied households of low-income Hispanic children. Report 2015-04. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/the-complex-and-varied-households-of-low-income-hispanic-children/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic (n = 39,086), non-Hispanic White (n = 49,181), and non-Hispanic Black (n = 29,272) children birth to age 17 in low-income families Two-thirds of the Hispanic children (n = 25,394) lived with at least one foreign-born parent or guardian 	Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files of the American Community Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-parent married households Living with biological father High employment rates 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Valdez, C. R., Padilla, B., & Valentine, J. L. (2013). Consequences of Arizona's immigration policy on social capital among Mexican mothers with unauthorized immigration status. <i>Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences</i> , 35(3), 303-322.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 21 Mexican-origin parents (84% mothers) Mean parent age: 23-54 93% of parents were undocumented 69% of sample lived in U.S. < 15 years 	Qualitative study – focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social networks 	This was a qualitative study—neither main effects nor moderation effects were tested.

Article Citation	Sample Characteristics	Data Source	Promotive or Protective Factor Highlighted	Were protective factors tested?
Wildsmith, E., Karberg, E., Whitfield, B. (2020). Resident Hispanic fathers report frequent involvement in the lives of their children. Report 2020. Bethesda, MD: National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/resident-hispanic-fathers-report-frequent-involvement-in-the-lives-of-their-children/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hispanic resident fathers (ages 15 to 44) with children from birth to age 18, including 2,367 fathers with children from birth to age 4 and 598 Hispanic fathers with children ages 5 to 18 	2013-15 and the 2015-2017 cycles of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fathers' engagement (e.g., eating dinner with child) Paternal warmth Fathers' caregiving (e.g., feeding, bathing) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.
Zhang, Y., Edwards, R. C., & Hans, S. L. (2020). Parenting profiles of young low-income African American and Latina mothers and infant socioemotional development. <i>Parenting: Science and Practice</i> , 20(1), 28-52.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N = 239 low-income mothers and their infants living in Illinois 54.8% and 45.2% of families were African American and Latinx, respectively 92% of families were receiving Medicaid 61.1% of mothers had less than a high school degree, 31.8% had a high school degree or GED, 7.1% had some college 	Randomized controlled trial of evidence-based home-visiting programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality parenting (e.g., sensitivity; cognitive stimulation) 	This study did not test for moderation effects. Only main effects were modeled.

Suggested Citation

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About the Center

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families (Center) is a hub of research to help programs and policy better serve low-income Hispanics across three priority areas: poverty reduction and economic self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education. The Center is led by Child Trends, in partnership with Duke University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and University of Maryland, College Park. The Center is supported by grant #90PH0028 from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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