



Identifying and Investing in the Strengths of Latinx Families

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OUTLINE

- Latinx families in context
- Why focus on strengths?
- How do strengths support development
- Fathers' unique role in families
- Summary and Recommendations



Use of Terms “Latino/x” and “Hispanic”

We use “Hispanic” and “Latino/x” interchangeably throughout the presentation. Consistent with the U.S. Census definition this includes individuals having origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, as well as other “Hispanic, Latino or Spanish” origins.



Adversity exposure is common for Latinx children and families

- ❑ 54% of Latinx children live in or near poverty.¹
- ❑ 1 in 4 Latinx children have an [unauthorized immigrant parent](#).²
- ❑ During COVID,
 - ❑ 4 in 10 Latino households with children reported [housing insecurity](#).³
 - ❑ 1 in 5 Latino households with children were [food insufficient](#).⁴
 - ❑ Over one third of lower-income Latino adults living with children have frequent [anxiety or depressive symptoms](#).⁵



**Latinx families are
"more than their hardships."**

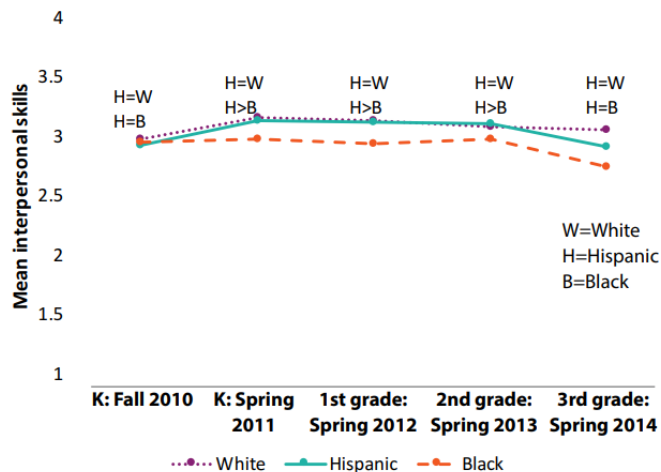
Strengths of Latinx Families



Individual & Parenting Strengths

Most Latinx children enter formal schooling with strong social skills

Figure 3. Low-income Hispanic Children's Interpersonal Skills Equal or Exceed Those of Their Peers Throughout Early Elementary School



Why it matters:

Latinx children's social skills are important for developing resilience because they promote other domains of development.

Source: Authors' analysis of low-income children in the ECLS-K: 2011 Kindergarten - Third Grade restricted use data.

Note: Significant group differences (<math>< </math>, $>$) are noted at the <math>p < 0.05</math> level; "$=$" indicates no significant difference between groups.



Source: Padilla, C. M., Cabrera, N., & West J. (2017). *The Development and Home environment of Low-Income Hispanic Children: Kindergarten to Third Grade*. National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families (NRCHCF). <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/the-development-and-home-environments-of-low-income-hispanic-children-kindergarten-to-third-grade/>

Latinx children and families may benefit from their bilingual and bicultural status

- ❑ 85% of Latinx parents speak Spanish to their children.
- ❑ 70% of Latinx parents report often encouraging their child to speak Spanish.
- ❑ Among immigrant parents,
 - ❑ 97% of immigrant parents report speaking Spanish.
 - ❑ 82%% report often encouraging their child to speak Spanish.

Why it matters:

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.



Many Latino children benefit from positive parenting experiences

- ❑ Warmth and supportiveness
- ❑ Frequent father involvement
 - “hands on” parenting
- ❑ Engagement in learning experiences



Latinx parents are highly invested in their children's futures

Table 3. Parenting in low-income Latino families

Variables	9 Months n= 950	24 Months n= 950	48 Months n= 950	60 Months n= 950	Overall significant differences
Literacy activities					
Reads books					
Never	21.3% ^{a,b,c}	6.7% ^{a,e}	4.7% ^b	3.5% ^{c,e}	a, b, c, e, f
1-2 times per week	44.2% ^c	42.1% ^e	43.1% ^f	36.7% ^{c,e,f}	
3+ times per week	34.4% ^{a,b,c}	51.3% ^{a,e}	52.3% ^{b,f}	59.9% ^{c,e,f}	
Sings songs					
Never	3.5% ^{b,c}	4.2% ^{d,e}	6.2% ^{b,d}	7.4% ^{c,e}	a, b, c, d, e, f
1-2 times per week	14.4% ^{b,c}	16.7% ^{d,e}	28.3% ^{b,d,f}	34.9% ^{c,e,f}	
3+ times per week	82.1% ^{b,c}	79.1% ^{d,e}	65.5% ^{b,d,f}	57.7% ^{c,d,f}	
Tells stories					
Never	28.9% ^{a,b,c}	15.9% ^{a,d,e}	10.1% ^{b,d}	8.8% ^{c,e}	a, b, c, f
1-2 times per week	36.6% ^{b,c}	36.2% ^{d,e}	49.2% ^{b,d,f}	44.8% ^{c,e,f}	
3+ times per week	34.4% ^{a,b,c}	47.9% ^{a,d}	40.7% ^{b,d,f}	46.4% ^{c,f}	

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), Longitudinal 9-Month-Kindergarten Restricted-Use Data File.

Note: All estimates are weighted. Sample sizes are rounded to the nearest 50. ^a Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 9 months and 24 months; ^b Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 9 months and 48 months; ^c Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 9 months and 60 months; ^d Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 24 months and 48 months; ^e Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 24 and 60 months; ^f Statistically significant (p < .05) differences between 48 and 60 months. These data are limited to children whose parents identified them as Hispanic/Latino and who lived in low-income households (185% of the federal poverty threshold).

X Estimate suppressed due to small sample sizes per data use agreement.

- Parents in low-income Latinx families read more often to older children and sing more to infants.

Why it matters:

Parent engagement in their children's learning activities foster the development of early school readiness skills.



Source: 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.* National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/programscan-build-on-the-strengths-of-latino-families-with-low-incomes-to-improve-outcomes/>

Family Strengths

Latinx children's day-to-day experiences are often characterized by routines and predictability.

- The majority of Latinx mothers report that their families eat meals together three or more times a week.

Table 3. Parenting in low-income Latino families

Variables	9 Months n= 950	24 Months n= 950	48 Months n= 950	60 Months n= 950	Overall significant differences
Family has a regular mealtime routine					
Never	---	7.3% ^{d,e}	14.2% ^d	11.5% ^e	d, e, f
1-2 times per week	---	5.2% ^d	8.4% ^d	7.0%	
3+ times per week	---	87.4% ^{d,e}	77.5% ^{d,f}	81.5% ^{e,f}	

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), Longitudinal 9-Month-Kindergarten Restricted-Use Data File.

Note: All estimates are weighted. Sample sizes are rounded to the nearest 50. ^a Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 9 months and 24 months; ^b Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 9 months and 48 months; ^c Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 9 months and 60 months; ^d Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 24 months and 48 months; ^e Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 24 and 60 months; ^f Statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences between 48 and 60 months. These data are limited to children whose parents identified them as Hispanic/Latino and who lived in low-income households (185% of the federal poverty threshold).

X Estimate suppressed due to small sample sizes per data use agreement.

Why it matters:

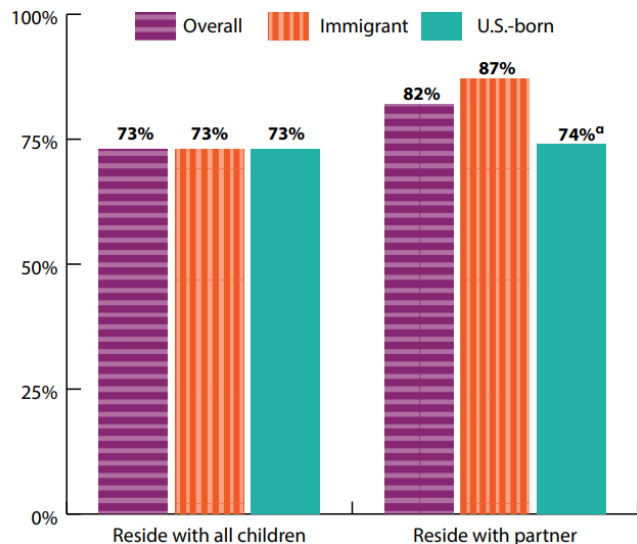
Regular routines support healthy social-emotional development in early childhood.

Children with regular routines at home tend to have greater self-regulation skills, which are the building blocks of good mental health.



Sources: 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*. National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/programscan-build-on-the-strengths-of-latino-families-with-low-incomes-to-improve-outcomes/>
Bater, L. R., & Jordan, S. S. (2017). *Child routines and self-regulation serially mediate parenting practices and externalizing problems in preschool children*. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 46(2), 243–259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2012.00249.x>

Most Latinx fathers reside with their partner and all their children



Hispanic fathers' residential status with their children and partner by nativity status, 2006-2010

Source: National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), 2006-2010

Note: "Reside with partner" includes fathers who are cohabiting or married.

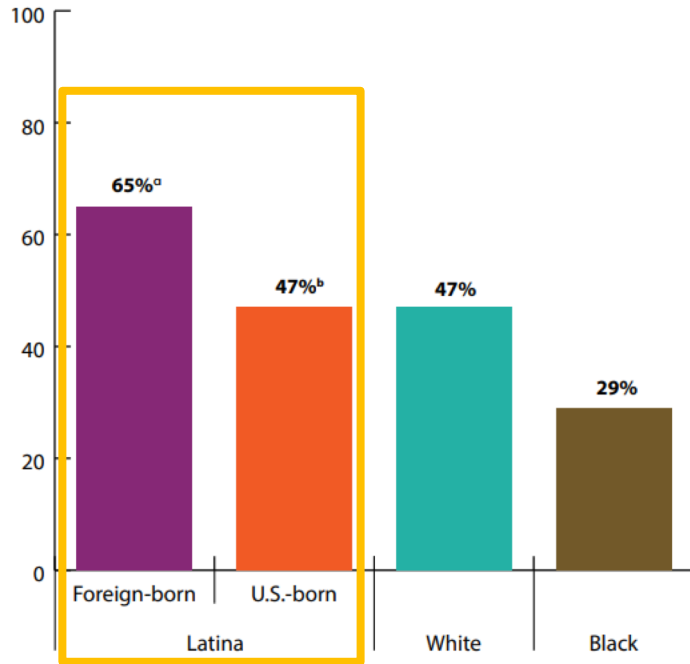
^a Indicates significant differences between immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanic fathers at the $p=.001$ level

Why it matters:

Children benefit from living in two-parent households because there are more economic and social resources, more parental time, and less parenting stress.



Most Latino children experience stable family structures in the early years



Percentage of low-income mothers experiencing family stability during the first 5 years of their child's life, by race, ethnicity, and nativity status

Why it matters:

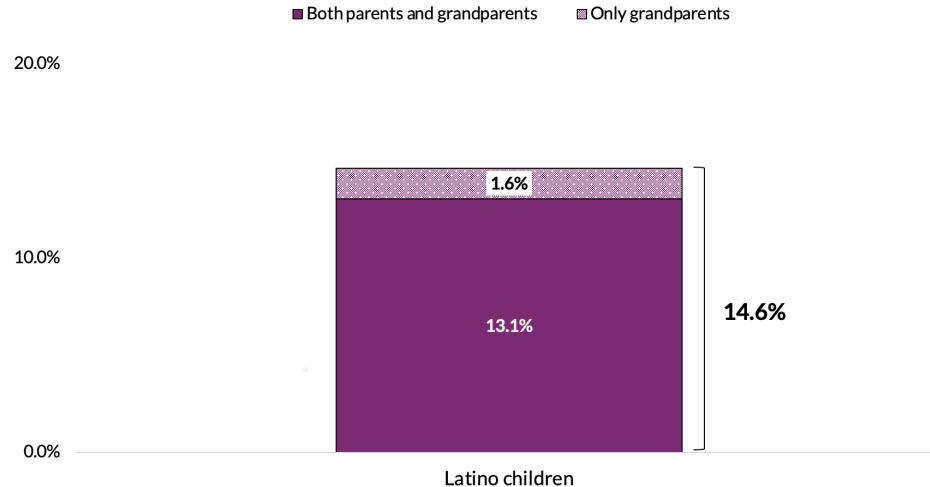
Family instability is very difficult for children because it often means disruption in living arrangements and parental conflict that can lead to children's anxiety and behavioral problems.



Support from extended family and living in intergenerational households can benefit Latinx children's cognitive skills and social-emotional functioning.

Figure 1. Close to 15 percent of Latino children lived with grandparents in 2019; the vast majority also lived with parents or in 3-generation households

Percentages of Latino children under age 18 who lived with both parents and grandparents and with only grandparents in 2019



Why it matters:

Intergenerational households can be protective for Latinx children by

- Increasing availability of economic resources
- Positively influencing Latinx parents' behaviors and their children's development



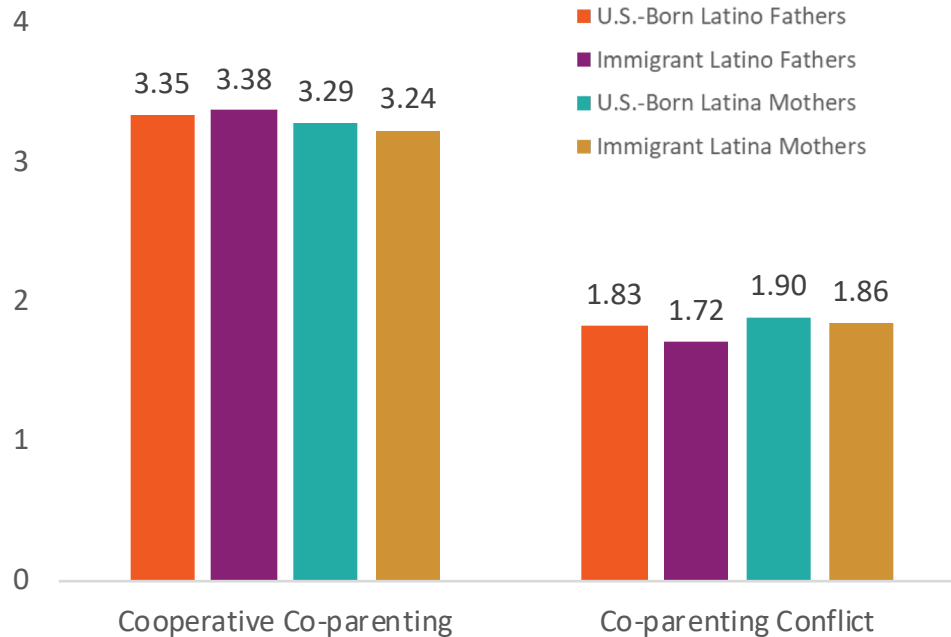
Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) 2019 American Community Survey, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Notes: Person weights provided by the Census Bureau are applied to these estimates.



Source: Yiyu, C., Guzman, L.. (2022). *One in Seven Latino Children Live With Grandparents, Who Play an Important Role in Children's Lives*. NRCHCF. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/latino-children-have-diverse-family-structures-but-most-live-with-two-parents/>

Latino parents experience positive, low conflict, co-parenting relationships



Average ratings on cooperative co-parenting and co-parenting conflict for U.S.-born and immigrant Latino fathers and Latina mothers

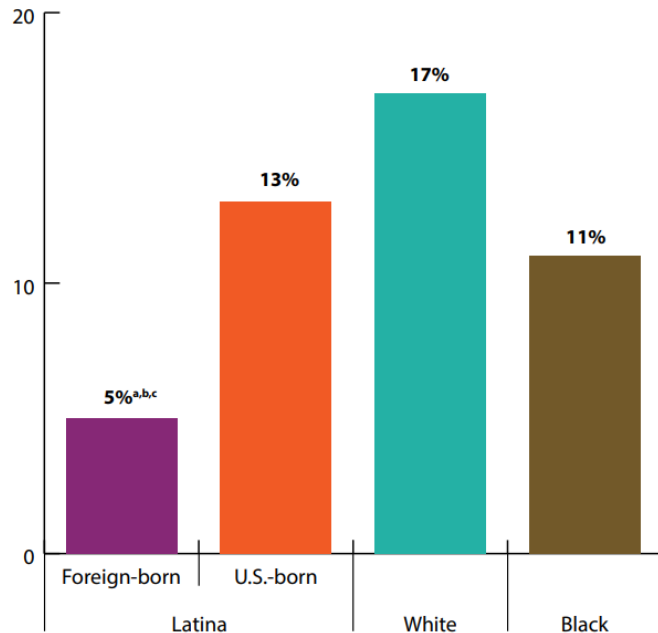
Why it matters:

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.



Source: 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*. NRCHCF. https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Hispanic-Center-SHM-brief-2021_Final.pdf

Foreign-born Latinx mothers report fewer depressive symptoms



Percentage of low income mothers reporting depression, by race, ethnicity, and nativity

Source: Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing, 2001-2003

Why it matters:

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.



Source: 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. NRCHCF. <https://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/research-resources/family-stability-and-instability-among-low-income-hispanic-mothers-with-young-children/>

Latinx fathers' commitment to their children starts early in childhood and is long-term

- ❑ Latinx fathers report engaging in physical play and caregiving activities with their infants.
- ❑ More than 90% of Latinx fathers report eating dinner with their child every day or several times week.
- ❑ U.S-born Latinx fathers report frequently playing with, reading to, bathing, and changing their children's diapers.

Why it matters:

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

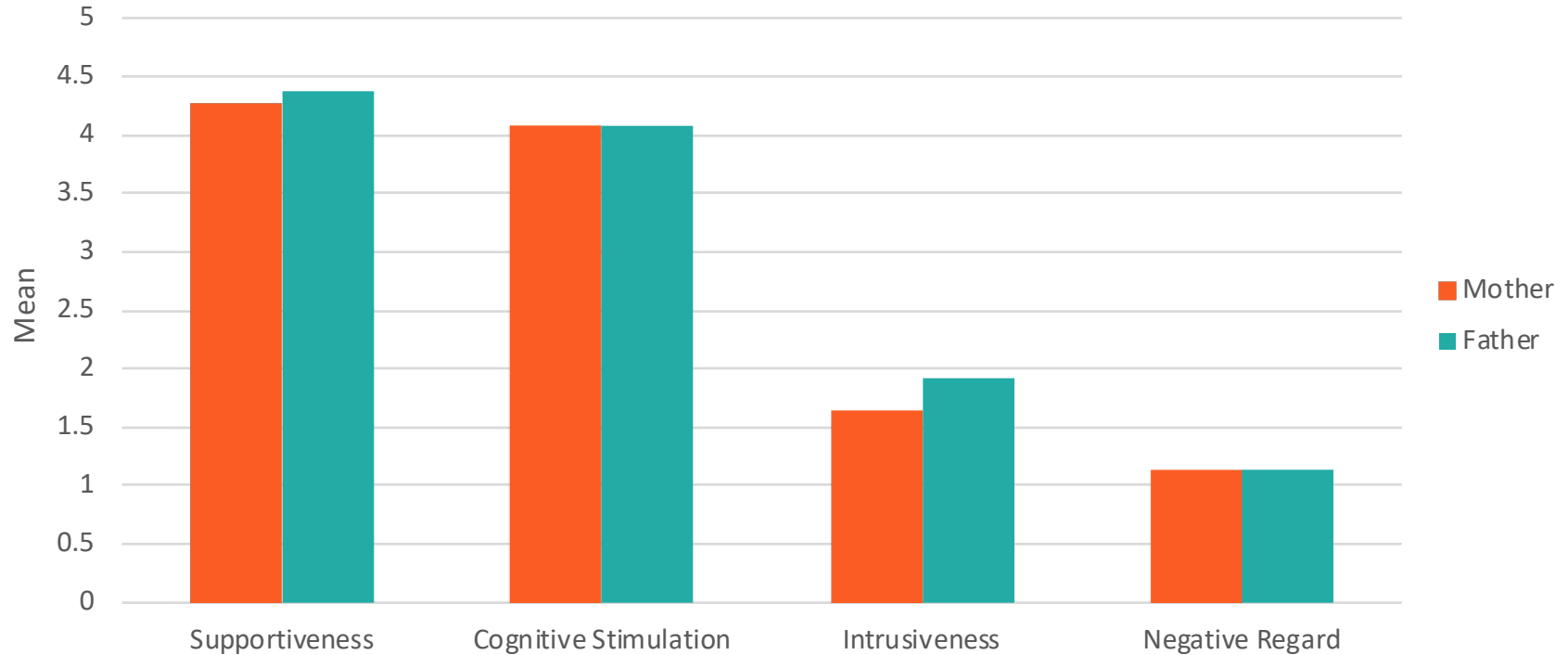




How Fathers Matter for Children's Development in Early Childhood



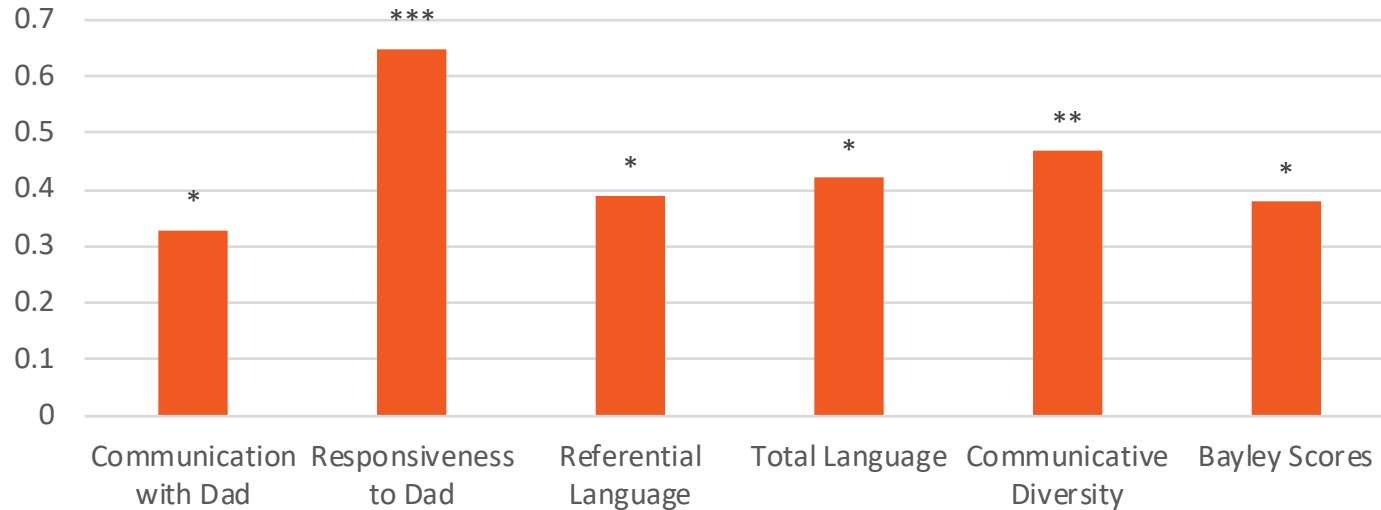
Fathers are sensitive and supportive



Source:

Fathers matter for cognitive skills

Father-child interactions and toddlers' cognitive skills



All Influences Significant at $p < .05$, $.01$ or $.001$ levels. $N = 50$



Source:

Fathers help their toddlers comply and self-regulate



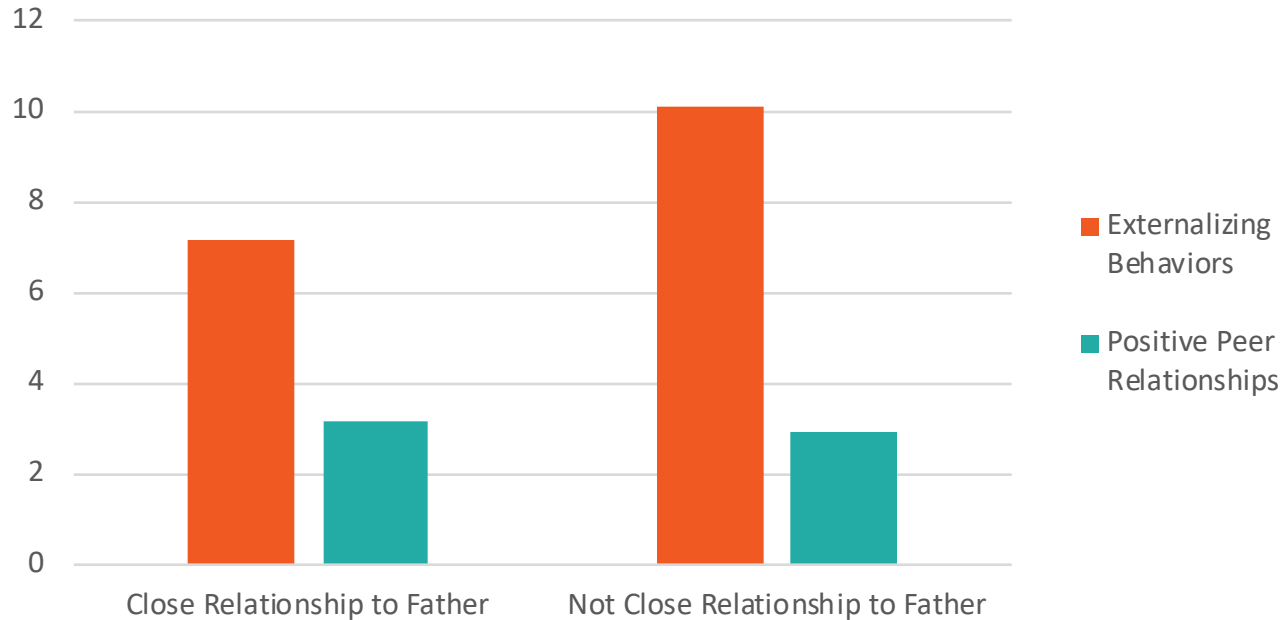
At 24 months:

- ❑ Fathers use **regulatory language** (e.g., direct commands “don’t do that”) to promote compliance
- ❑ Fathers use **regulatory language** with boys and **regulatory behavior** (e.g., physical) with children with poor language skills
- ❑ Fathers’ **regulatory language** → child **emotion regulation**
- ❑ Fathers’ **regulatory behavior** → child **sustained attention** at preK



Source:

Father-child relationships during toddlerhood matter for social adjustment in middle school



Study of N=509 children and their families: Father residency did not predict social adjustment, only father-child relationships mattered



Source:



Summary

- ❑ Latinx families have the key ingredients to thrive.
- ❑ Programs should recognize and capitalize on the strengths of Latinx families to build further competencies.
- ❑ Building on strengths helps provide culturally responsive services.



Recommendations for 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.
- ❑ Acknowledge Latinx parents' and families' strengths and encourage families to use these strengths to build further competencies.
- ❑ Increase own understanding of the cultural beliefs and practices that Latinx parents view as important resources to help them live in the United States.
- ❑ Capitalize on Latinx parents' optimism



Recommendations for programs and practice

- ❑ Invite involvement from fathers and extended family members who may be sources of social support for Latinx parents.
- ❑ Meet families where they are and be flexible and targeted in programming efforts.
- ❑ Build on Latinx parents' high levels of investment in their children's futures and engage parents in programs by validating and encouraging these investments.



A photograph of a man with glasses holding a baby in front of a tall building. The man is on the left, looking towards the baby. The baby is in the center, wearing a blue and green plaid shirt and green shorts, and is smiling. The background is a tall, multi-story building with many windows. The image has a warm, orange-tinted color palette. The text "THANK YOU" is overlaid in the center in white, bold, sans-serif font.

THANK YOU

Disclaimer

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families is supported by grant #90PH0028-01-00 from the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents of this presentation are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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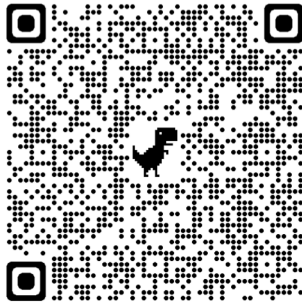
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