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Latin American Immigrant Parents and their Children's Teachers in U.S. Early Childhood Education Programs

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Abstract

For many immigrants, their children's schools offer their first sustained interaction with the major societal institutions of their new countries, and so exploring the ways in which immigrant parents manage their children's educational experiences offers insight into how they adapt to new cultural norms, customs, and expectations and how they are treated in return. This study delved into the involvement of Latin American immigrant parents in U.S. education, shifting the traditional focus down from elementary and secondary school to early childhood education. Statistical analysis of nationally representative data revealed that Latina immigrants had lower frequencies of most home- and community-based involvement behaviors than U.S.-born and foreign-born parents of varying racial/ethnic backgrounds but higher frequencies of involvement behaviors requiring participation in early childhood education programs. As a window into these national patterns, qualitative data from an early childhood program in an immigration-heavy state revealed that Latina immigrant mothers and their children's teachers often talked about each other as partners in supporting children's educational experiences but that their actual interactions tended to socialize mothers into being more passive recipients of teachers' directives.

Keywords

Immigrant parents; parental involvement; early childhood education

Immigration between Latin America and the U.S. is the largest migration stream in the world. Often depicted as a clash of cultures, it is politically and socially contentious (Chiquiar & Salcedo, 2013). Increasingly, early childhood education programs are a flashpoint in this issue. They are often the introduction for Latin American parents and children to major institutions that will shape their lives. Research on non-immigrant populations has revealed that preschool teachers socialize parents into the behavioral norms of U.S. schools, including expectations that parents be visibly involved in school and classroom affairs. This socialization is relevant to Latin American immigrant parents, who

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for several reasons may be less likely to know “scripts” of family-school interactions in U.S. schools than U.S.-born parents of the same or different race/ethnicities (Colegrove & Adair, 2014; Fuller, 2007; Adair & Tobin, 2007). Thus, early education programs can acculturate Latin American immigrant parents, who, in turn, change the perceptions of teachers doing that acculturation. This two-way process is precisely why many organizations are implementing interventions to help demystify U.S. schools for Latin American immigrants (Goldenberg & Light, 2009).

In this spirit, this study investigates the involvement activities of Latin American immigrant parents of young children as a means of elucidating how they may be integrated into or alienated from the educational system that matters so much to their children’s futures. First, we draw on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), a nationally representative sample of U.S. children followed from birth, to test the hypothesis that Latin American immigrants will engage less in the involvement activities in multiple settings that are emphasized by U.S. schools while their children are enrolled in early education programs than parents from other backgrounds. Second, we draw on qualitative data from parents and teachers in 26 preschool classrooms serving diverse communities in Texas to explore how the nature of the involvement activities that do occur may blunt their potential rewards.

Parental Involvement in the U.S

According to theoretical models, parental involvement in education occurs at home (e.g., cognitively stimulating the child), in the community (e.g., enrolling the child in activities), and at school (e.g., meeting with teachers). Such behaviors are thought to support children’s achievement through scaffolding, support, and reinforcement, and they are a mechanism by which parents manage opportunities for children, are integrated into schools and communities, and develop a sense of agency and empowerment in societal institutions more broadly. Evidence supporting these processes has helped to create a model of intensive and visible parental involvement that dominates discourse in U.S. schools (Epstein, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). This model has been especially embraced by White middle class parents as part of the general intensification of their strategic investment in their children’s futures over the last several decades. Given their status within U.S. schools, what *they* model as involved parenting tends to shape the expectations that school personnel have of *all* parents (Kornrich & Furstenberg, 2013; Lareau, 2003).

These sociodemographic disparities in parental involvement have fueled educational policies, such as the federal education legislation known as No Child Left Behind, aiming to increase the involvement of parents from historically disadvantaged populations (Domina, 2005; Epstein, 2005). In general, two sets of obstacles tend to reduce their involvement relative to White middle class parents. The first concerns *practical constraints* that keep parents from fully acting on their parenting values, such as logistical demands on time (e.g., nonstandard work schedules that impede efforts to craft cognitively stimulating activities for children at home) and inadequate access to resources (e.g., a lack of money to enroll children in community-based activities). This set of obstacles is more pronounced for racial/

ethnic minority parents. Not only are they more likely to be socioeconomically disadvantaged, they are also affected by segregation, which interferes with the availability of community-based activities, and by discrimination and disenfranchisement, so that their demands for interactive time with teachers or a greater role in school affairs are often unanswered (Crosnoe, 2015; Turney & Kao, 2009). The second set of obstacles concerns *cultural mismatches*—when parents and educators work from different assumptions about how to serve the best interests of children or have different perceptions of their roles vis-a-vis one another. Such mismatches can occur when parents from low-income and/or racial minority groups have a parallel conception of family-school connections (e.g., parents are in charge of health and development outside of school, teachers are in charge of learning and achievement inside of school) while educators from different backgrounds have a synergistic conception that involves coordinated efforts across domains and settings. Importantly, these mismatches may occur even when such parents are paired with educators of similar backgrounds if those educators have internalized written and unwritten norms of parental involvement in education that reflect the dominant White middle class culture (Lareau, 2003; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007).

Latin American immigration is a critical lens through which to study disparities in parental involvement in the U.S. Latino/a immigrants tend to engage in lower levels of many dimensions of involvement. These disparities reflect many of the same practical constraints discussed above as well as immigration-specific constraints like language barriers that tend to be even more acute among immigrants from Latin America than immigrants from other regions. Importantly, they also seem to be rooted in cultural mismatches reflecting the nature of immigration. Specifically, Latino/a immigrants often have little familiarity with U.S. schools and, therefore, less knowledge of the “rules” that operate within them. This lack of familiarity is important given that the model of active involvement entrenched in U.S. education is less representative of educational systems in Latin America and because the negative stereotyping of the educational orientations of Latino/as is worse than those of other immigrant groups, particularly those from Asia and Africa (Crosnoe et al., forthcoming; Fuller, 2007).

Given the importance of parental involvement in U.S. education due to its power to support children’s learning as well as the tendency for schools to reward the children of parents perceived to be involved, involvement disparities between Latin American immigrants and other parents are important to document. After all, programs can increase the frequency of involvement behaviors (Goldenberg & Light, 2009). Yet, evening out these frequencies across diverse groups will be insufficient if the nature of involvement still differs across groups; for example, if one group’s involvement is embedded within the kinds of family-school partnerships that appear to be most conducive to children’s academic success while another’s is not elicited, accepted, matched, or supported by the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Thus, research on disparities in parental involvement needs to go beyond documenting quantitative differences across groups to better understand the substance and context of the involvement behaviors that do occur within the most vulnerable groups. Latin American immigrants may be at a double disadvantage, facing more obstacles to getting

involved in their children's education but also deriving less benefit when they are involved (Adair & Tobin, 2007; Crosnoe, 2015).

Focusing on Early Childhood Education

Support for our general argument for understanding immigration-related disparities in parental involvement as a point of cross-cultural contact between home and school comes from theory and evidence concerning elementary and secondary school students. How it extends to early childhood education is less clear.

This extension into early childhood education is important for two reasons. First, how children fare in early education programs is crucial to school readiness, and disparities in school readiness have an outsized role in long-term inequalities in educational attainment in the U.S. and other countries (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2014; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Thus, identifying and unpacking the correlates of such disparities, such as group differences in parental involvement in early education, provides leverage for efforts aiming to remedy unfolding educational disparities. Second, early education is a setting in which many parents from culturally and economically marginalized populations learn about how schools work and come to see the importance of making educators understand who they are, what they believe, and what their children need. Thus, understanding how immigrant parents interact with early childhood educators—especially immigrant groups, like Latino/as, that have low rates of educational attainment and English proficiency and face high levels of discrimination—offers a glimpse into foundational experiences on both sides that set the stage for ongoing connections between immigrant families and U.S. schools (Adair & Tobin, 2007; Crosnoe, Bonazzo, & Wu, 2015).

In this spirit, we test whether disparities in the frequencies of several types of parental involvement related to Latin American immigration in the U.S. extend down into early childhood education, above and beyond the socioeconomic disparities related to this immigration stream. We then explore what is going on within interactions between the most socioeconomically disadvantaged Latin American immigrants and early childhood educators that might elucidate the obstacles that prevent them from getting the most of their involvement.

Method

ECLS-B is a nationally representative birth cohort of 10,700 children followed from 9 months of age (2001) through the first year of formal schooling, which is called kindergarten in the U.S. (2006 or 2007; <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/birth.asp>). Our analytical sample was restricted to children who participated in the preschool wave at age 4, attended a formal education program (pre-K, Head Start, center-based care) during this wave, and had a White, Black, or Latina mother (note: although our conceptual argument was agnostic about parental gender, the overwhelming majority of parent respondents were women, necessitating a focus on mothers). With these restrictions, the final sample included 3,900 families (see Table 1; per regulations from the Institute of Education Sciences, sample sizes are rounded to the nearest 50).

The qualitative data came from Cole, which housed pre-kindergarten (pre-K) classrooms from six schools in the large and diverse Southwest Independent School District (SWISD) in Texas. As background, any child in Texas who comes from a low-income family or who is an English language learner can enroll in free pre-K at age 4. Some SWISD schools did not have the capacity to house their pre-K classrooms, and so Cole became a pre-K campus with 26 classrooms serving 600+ kids. For this data collection, investigators conducted classroom quality observations (using the Classroom Assessment Protocol; see Pianta et al., 2007), interviewed teachers in each classroom, and conducted group and individual interviews with 25 mothers across classrooms. Reflecting the demographic composition of the pre-K program, almost all mothers were foreign- or U.S.-born Latinas, primarily low-income and Spanish-speaking, and two-thirds of the teachers were Latinas, primarily U.S.-born and bilingual.

Quantitative Measurement

Race/ethnicity and immigration status—Mothers' reports of race/ethnicity and nativity were cross-classified to identify our focal group of foreign-born Latinoa parents ($n = 350$). To compare this focal group with the historically least and most advantaged segments of the U.S. population, we categorized U.S.-born White ($n = 2,250$) and U.S.-born Black ($n = 750$) parents and then also foreign-born White ($n = 100$) and Black ($n = 100$) parents. To gauge assimilation among Latinas, we also identified U.S.-born Latina ($n = 350$) parents. Among all Latinas, foreign-born mothers mostly came from Mexico (66%) and Central or South America (27%). One in six (16%) U.S.-born Latinas originated from Puerto-Rico (a U.S. territory). Home language was highly correlated with foreign-born status. Roughly 90% of foreign-born Latinas spoke a language other than English at home compared (vs. 20% of U.S.-born Latinas and no U.S.-born Blacks or Whites). Of the foreign-born Latinas who spoke a language other than English at home, 61% reported that they did not speak English well. Because of this overlap between language use and immigration status (primarily Latin American), we had to drop it from our main analyses (for similar approaches; see Jung, Fuller, & Galindo, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009), although we did conduct some ancillary analyses with this factor.

Parental involvement—Involvement was measured following past work with ECLS data (Cheadle, 2008; Crosnoe et al., forthcoming). Cognitive stimulation summed 3 items from the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984) on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 4 = *every day*): how often parents read books, told stories, and sang songs with their child ($\alpha = .59$). Extracurricular activities summed 7 binary items (1 = *yes*), such as performing arts, crafts, and athletics ($\alpha = .77$). Preschool involvement summed parent reports of whether they had participated (1 = *yes*) in 5 preschool/center-based activities ($\alpha = .65$), such as attending parent-teacher conferences or volunteering in the classroom.

Socioeconomic status—Mothers reported their educational histories (high school degree or less, some college, bachelor's degree, graduate school) and household income (multiple categories from 1 = \$5,000 or less to 13 = \$200,000+). Income was analyzed in conjunction with a count of household size.

Children's academic skills—Although our focus was on parenting as outcomes, we also extended the main models to examine children's reading and math skills at age 4 as outcomes. These factors were measured with an assessment developed for ECLS-B ($\alpha = .92$). Content from the reading assessment covered letter recognition, early reading, and phonological awareness. The math assessment covered number sense, properties, and measurement. Because these assessments were highly correlated ($r = .76$), we summed them (Crosnoe et al., 2015).

Covariates—To reduce demographic variability and the possibility of spurious associations, all analyses accounted for a key set of covariates: parents' marital status, maternal age, mothers' employment status, household size, number of siblings, child gender, child age, children's age two cognitive skills as measured by the Bayley Scale of Infant Development ($\alpha = .92$; Bayley, 1993), urbanicity, and region.

Plan of Analyses

Beginning with the quantitative analyses of group differences in the frequency of parental involvement, models regressed the parenting outcomes on the race/ethnicity and immigration variables and the covariates. These *Mplus* models included: 1) longitudinal weights, ensuring that the sample was representative of U.S. children and addressing differential attrition across waves, 2) clustering and stratification variables to adjust standard errors as a result of the clustered sampling frame, and 3) multiple imputation (50 datasets) to ensure that all cases were retained. To give a sense of how much apparent disparities related to race/ethnicity and immigration were linked with socioeconomic differences across diverse groups, these models of involvement included socioeconomic indicators as predictors. We also formally tested the degree to which socioeconomic indicators mediated the associations of race/ethnicity and immigration status with the parental involvement outcomes using the *z*-statistic from the Sobel Test (1982).

One complication was that the sample of children attending early childhood education programs at age 4 demographically differed from children who were not in this sample because they were not so enrolled. To address bias related to this differential selectivity, we calculated propensity scores gauging the probability of enrollment based on children's pre-academic and behavioral skills, child and family demographics, household characteristics, and a set of interactions between some of the key socioeconomic and demographic variables. The predicted odds of being in enrolled in preschool were then outputted and saved as a new variable, which was included as a covariate in all subsequent analyses. Effectively, this approach combined propensity score weighting, which improves on the traditional propensity score matching approach by allowing all cases to be retained (Frank et al., 2008), and Heckman two-stage modeling, which corrects for sample selectivity (Puhani, 2000).

Turning to the qualitative analyses, we relied on guidelines from Miles and Huberman (1984). All Cole interviews and field notes were transcribed and content-coded by personnel trained to an acceptable level of agreement through a central coding scheme based on a master codebook iteratively constructed based on randomly sampled transcripts. This

codebook included both a priori and emergent themes. A set of nearly a dozen tree-coded themes on parental involvement organized the coding, and these data were then sorted by parents' immigration status and teachers' race/ethnicity and immigration status.

Results

Quantitative Comparisons of Parental Involvement

Table 2 presents results from regressions predicting the parenting outcomes. Model 1, which included race/ethnicity and immigrant status and the full set of covariates (including the propensity score gauging differential selection into preschool), revealed that foreign-born Latinas scored significantly lower on two measures of involvement than U.S.-born Whites. They engaged in less cognitive stimulation with their children at home ($b = -.86, p < .001$; 45% of a standard deviation effect size) and were less likely to enroll children in organized activities in the community ($b = -.40, p < .001$; 33%). The exception was that foreign-born Latinas were more likely to be involved in their children's preschools ($b = .25, p < .05$; 17%) than U.S.-born White parents. We repeated these analyses by rotating the reference category for the race/ethnicity and immigration status dummy variables to capture all pair-wise comparisons (not shown in Table 2). Foreign-born Latinas scored significantly lower on cognitive stimulation at home and extracurricular activities in the community than U.S.-born Latinas, with differences corresponding to 26% and 34% of a standard deviation respectively, as well as foreign-born Blacks (34–35%) and foreign-born Whites (28–39%). The only significant difference between foreign-born Latinas and U.S.-born Blacks, however, was for extracurricular activities.

Model 2 added the socioeconomic variables as potential mediators. Maternal education and household income both predicted each outcome, with effect sizes ranging from 7–17% of a standard deviation depending on the socioeconomic indicator and outcome. Importantly, these indicators explained large portions of the Model 1 disparities in the parenting outcomes between foreign-born Latinas and U.S.-born Whites (Model 1 versus 2; $z = -2.07$ to $-3.26, p < .05$); for example, 58% of the difference in extracurricular activities and 41% of the difference in cognitive stimulation. Furthermore, when accounting for socioeconomic status, the difference in preschool involvement between foreign-born Latinas and U.S.-born Whites doubled in size. These disparities were similarly attenuated when comparing foreign-Latinas with U.S.-born Latinas (38–47%; $z = -1.99$ to $-4.99, p < .05$) and foreign-born Whites (44–64%; $z = -2.16$ to $-4.26, p < .05$) but not with foreign-born Blacks. Despite this attenuation by socioeconomic status, foreign-born Latinas continued to score lower on these measures of involvement, and additional analyses showed that disparities among foreign-born mothers were also not fully explained by differences across groups in mothers' English language use.

To gauge the significance of these disparities, we conducted supplemental models demonstrating that measures of parental involvement significantly predicted children's achievement test scores at age 4 (not shown) and that their inclusion attenuated the associations of the race/ethnicity and immigration status dummy variables with test scores. For example, the children of foreign-born Latinas scored roughly 15% of a standard deviation ($p < .05$) below their classmates of U.S.-born White mothers on academic test

scores. After accounting for the involvement behaviors, the overall level of attenuation of these differences was 10%, and Sobel tests revealed that cognitive stimulation ($z = -2.22$, 15% attenuation, $p < .05$), home resources ($z = -1.82$, 5% attenuation, $p < .10$), and preschool involvement ($z = 2.06$, 20% increase, $p < .05$) were significant mediators of this difference, individually and collectively.

In sum, foreign-born Latinas scored lower on home- and community-based aspects of parental involvement in children's early education than almost all other groups studied, including U.S.-born Latinas and other immigrant parents. These patterns were mostly, but not entirely, a function of systematic differences in socioeconomic status across racial/ethnic and immigration groups, with some portion leftover to be accounted for by other factors, such as cultural mismatches. The one exception was that foreign-born Latinas were actually more likely than other groups of parents to participate in preschool-based involvement. Notably, these disparities in parental involvement appeared to have implications for children's academic achievement.

A Qualitative Exploration of Parental Engagement

Documenting that Latina immigrants had lower frequencies of some involvement behaviors than mothers of different race/ethnicities and/or immigration statuses and higher frequencies of other behaviors is only part of the endeavor to understand parental involvement in this population. We need to better understand these behaviors within the context of family-school *transactions*, which help to translate parental involvement into benefits for parents and children. Following recent mixed methods work on immigrant families, we did so by supplementing the quantitative cross-group analyses of population data with qualitative within-group exploration of local data (Crosnoe et al., 2015). The goal was to unpack the nature and substance of involvement behaviors in the focal group of Latin American immigrants within a specific educational context in order to elucidate what their levels of involvement mean. The most intriguing finding to emerge from this exploration concerned the tendency for Latina immigrants and their children's teachers to value family-school partnerships in spirit but "execute" these partnerships in ways that could blunt their positive effects.

To begin, the parents and teachers emphasized the importance that they placed on working together to support children's learning. As one mother explained, children succeeded when home and school were in sync with each other: "Yes, we make a good team." In addition to this teamwork talk that pervaded all discussions at Cole, we were struck by how often Latina immigrants used phrasing commonly seen in early childhood education about parents serving as *home* teachers who worked with *school* teachers to help children get the most out of their learning experiences. As one mother remarked:

"She's very happy and also because when there are three teachers in the classroom. Well I'm not a teacher (laughs), you know, both of the teachers and including the mother, the child learns more and he enjoys it as well."

What became clear was that much of this vocabulary emphasizing active parental involvement reflected the influence of Cole's parent support specialist. She was Latina

herself and tried to be an advocate for Latina immigrants, and she spent substantial time working with teachers to connect them to mothers. Still, the role of this one figure aside, the consistency and intensity of this brand of involvement talk at Cole was striking given past research suggesting that Latina immigrant parents are intimidated by school personnel, who, in turn, are often ambivalent about working with such parents. Consider, for example, educación, the parallel conception of involvement mentioned earlier that positions children's moral and social education as a parent's duty and academic education as a teacher's duty. The Latina immigrants at Cole rejected this idea and claimed that academics were also in their domain, requiring that they work with teachers across home, community, and school settings.

Yet, digging into the substance of interactions between parents and teachers who said that they were working together revealed something different from partnerships based on mutual collaboration and respect. Instead, they were more like parents working *for* teachers, with mothers helping children with teacher-assigned schoolwork with little room to extend that schoolwork with new activities or different learning experiences. For example, if children were practicing reading at Cole, teachers required mothers to practice reading with them at home on the same level, and they did not encourage mothers to take kids into new reading activities or working on something else, like numbers, or recognize the benefits when mothers did. What was done at home was within the confines of what was being done at school. Helping with homework at home was the primary way that teachers wanted to involve parents, and it was the primary way that parents thought that they were encouraged (or even "allowed") to be involved. One mother noted what she thought a good teacher would do: "Like send homework, so you can have something to do with them." Another explained:

"When she started the school year, [she] sent us all a list about everything they were going to see throughout the year...she sent it at the beginning of the school year...you know what they're going to learn all year long and nothing else. So, all I'm saying to you is that it's a way to help the teacher since you already know what they're going to be learning the entire year."

How parents got involved outside or inside the school was not coordinated but directed (teacher to parent), in part because that is what teachers wanted and in part because parents did not think that they had the agency to go beyond. Indeed, the most common parent-teacher meeting involved teachers telling parents what they wanted them to do, with little opportunities for mothers to tell teachers what they wanted them to do. As one Latina mother explained what she needed from teachers: "Like having conferences amongst teachers, parents, and principals. Conferences where you talk more about the child, what he/she needs to learn and what they're going to send home." Because Latin American immigrant mothers were less familiar with the U.S. system, they appeared to be more responsive to teacher direction, but, given the foundational role of early education in the system, this initial stance could be self-propagating over time, which means that teachers would also not be getting socialized into what true family-school partnerships mean.

Conclusion

The purpose of this special issue is to explore how immigrants adapt to diverse cultural settings. We argue that the interactions of Latin American immigrants with their children's early education teachers are a meeting point of cultures. Conflict and alienation around this meeting point may undermine the future educational prospects of immigrant children and the future interactions of parents with societal institutions, which is the downside, but this meeting point can also be an opportunity for natives and immigrants to socialize and support each other in mutually beneficial ways, which is the upside (Adair & Tobin, 2007). We also argue that a mixed methods strategy is a useful way to explore this cultural intersection. Pairing statistical cross-group comparison in extant national data with the qualitative exploration of within-group processes in locally collected data is not common in psychology, but it can be a powerful tool. It allows for the basic population parameters of inequality to be established in a generalizable way but then unpacks those population parameters into insights about special vulnerabilities and resiliencies that are difficult to see in surveys. What did this strategy reveal?

First, the ECLS-B findings were generally in line with expectations about group disparities in the frequency of involvement behaviors. Latina immigrants scored lower than other mothers on measures of community and home involvement (echoing research on parents of school-age children; Crosnoe, 2015) but higher preschool-based involvement (see Turney & Kao, 2009, who showed a similar pattern for school-aged children once socioeconomic status was taken into account). The selectivity of immigrant families who enrolled children in early childhood education could have been a factor, but our statistical efforts to address this selectivity did not change the quantitative results. Early education programs might be better at outreach to immigrants than elementary or secondary schools. After all, cultural responsiveness is central to developmentally appropriate practices, the dominant organizing philosophy of early childhood education. As a result, early educators might be more adept than K-12 teachers at drawing out the strengths of immigrant parents, and immigrant parents might be less intimidated by the former than the latter. Because school-based involvement includes concrete behaviors at specific times (e.g., teacher conferences, school events), it might be more easily structured by school outreach than involvement behaviors that require a more diffuse use of time and effort, such as home-based learning activities (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Souto-Manning, 2010). Notably, these disparities in parental involvement in ECLS-B were related to the school readiness of children, which we know forecasts long-term educational inequality (Alexander et al., 2014).

Second, the Cole results shifted away from disparities themselves to focus on the most vulnerable group in these disparities—Latin American immigrants—and turned from considerations of the frequency of involvement activities to their substance. On first glance, the Latina immigrants at Cole appeared to be exemplars of family-school partnerships. They viewed themselves as integral to the education of their children and thought that they and their children's teachers were on the same team. On closer inspection, these partnerships appeared to be more unidirectional and shallow. This disconnect between partnership talk and actual involvement activities is problematic because it suggests that the many resources and strengths of immigrant parents were not being capitalized on, that children were not

receiving the full scope of diverse learning experiences across settings made theoretically possible by the meeting of cultures, and that immigrant mothers were being socialized into a more passive and less empowered stance vis a vis societal institutions. Thus, even when Latin American immigrants were involved, they appeared unlikely to realize the full benefits of involvement (for their children or themselves).

The need moving forward, therefore, is not just to increase the involvement of Latin American immigrants in children's early education but also to work on what that involvement entails—on the part of both parents and teachers. Many community organizations and advocacy groups are working on this need (e.g., Lee y Seras from the National Council of La Raza; Goldenberg & Light, 2009). Progress can have a legacy in several ways: 1) making the introduction of immigrant parents to U.S. institutions a positive experience that helps them take advantage of the services and organizations available to them in the future, 2) modeling for children how cultural exchanges can be respectful and mutually beneficial, and 3) ensuring that parents and teachers are on the same page early on so that immigrant children succeed during a critical stage of schooling.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables

	U.S.-Born Whites	Foreign-Born Whites	U.S.-Born Blacks	Foreign-Born Blacks	U.S.-Born Latinas	Foreign-Born Latinas	Sig. Diff.
Family socioeconomic status							
Maternal education	14.60 (2.34)	15.20 (2.41)	13.18 (2.02)	13.82 (2.58)	13.13 (2.27)	11.83 (2.96)	***
Household income	9.20 (3.07)	9.53 (2.81)	5.70 (3.51)	7.62 (3.25)	7.25 (3.40)	6.35 (3.05)	***
Family characteristics							
Maternal age	33.93 (6.24)	35.36 (5.85)	29.67 (6.37)	34.26 (5.50)	30.85 (7.04)	32.08 (6.01)	***
Maternal employment							
Full Time	37%	29%	51%	64%	47%	34%	***
Part Time	25%	23%	17%	7%	17%	13%	
Unemployed	38%	48%	32%	29%	36%	53%	
Marital status (married)	82%	93%	34%	73%	58%	65%	***
Household size	4.49 (1.17)	4.33 (1.06)	4.38 (1.51)	4.86 (1.58)	4.61 (1.47)	4.84 (1.42)	***
Number of siblings	1.46 (1.06)	1.31 (0.92)	1.47 (1.18)	1.66 (1.42)	1.39 (1.20)	1.43 (1.08)	***
Region							
Northeast	16%	29%	14%	26%	17%	18%	
Midwest	29%	14%	14%	13%	11%	6%	
South	37%	30%	67%	54%	34%	33%	
West	18%	27%	5%	7%	38%	43%	
Urbanicity							
Suburban	64%	88%	76%	95%	79%	86%	***
Urban	14%	3%	13%	1%	13%	11%	
Rural	22%	9%	12%	4%	8%	3%	
Child characteristics							
Gender (female)	49%	45%	50%	50%	45%	43%	†
Assessment age	52.85 (3.77)	53.34 (3.87)	52.96 (4.17)	53.84 (4.44)	53.75 (3.99)	54.12 (4.11)	***
Cognitive skills	128.27 (10.84)	124.82 (11.05)	122.52 (10.87)	117.63 (11.50)	123.72 (10.97)	121.00 (9.58)	***
Parenting behavior							
Cognitive stimulation	9.42 (1.78)	9.43 (1.64)	8.45 (1.97)	8.78 (1.87)	8.78 (2.02)	8.15 (1.99)	***
Extracurricular activities	1.09 (1.22)	1.08 (1.28)	0.72 (1.10)	0.79 (1.18)	0.73 (1.17)	0.49 (1.04)	***

	U.S.-Born Whites	Foreign-Born Whites	U.S.-Born Blacks	Foreign-Born Blacks	U.S.-Born Latinas	Foreign-Born Latinas	Sig. Diff.
Preschool involvement	2.32 (1.54)	2.50 (1.60)	2.32 (1.52)	2.21 (1.60)	2.13 (1.52)	2.42 (1.35)	<i>ns</i>
Sample size	2,250	100	750	100	350	350	

Notes.

p < .001.
**
p < .01.
*
p < .05.
†
p < .010.
ns = not significant

Table 2

Results of Regression Models Predicting Parenting Behavior

	Unstandardized <i>b</i> (SE)					
	Cognitive Stimulation		Organized Activities		Preschool Involvement	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Race/ethnicity (vs. U.S.-born Whites)						
Foreign-born Whites	-.12 (.21)	-.11 (.20)	-.07 (.16)	-.06 (.16)	0.15 (.20)	0.17 (.20)
U.S.-born Blacks	-.67*** (.12)	-.51*** (.12)	-.07 (.07)	0.05 (.07)	0.26* (.10)	0.40*** (.11)
Foreign-born Blacks	-.20 (.31)	0.06 (.34)	0.01 (.16)	0.17 (.17)	0.21 (.26)	0.40 (.26)
U.S.-born Latinas	-.35* (.16)	-.24 (.17)	0.01 (.09)	0.08 (.08)	-.02 (.10)	0.05 (.11)
Foreign-born Latinas	-.86*** (.14)	-.51*** (.15)	-.40*** (.07)	-.17* (.08)	0.25* (.12)	0.50*** (.13)
Family socioeconomic status						
Maternal education		0.13*** (.02)		0.07*** (.01)		0.07*** (.02)
Household income		0.04** (.02)		0.04*** (.01)		0.05*** (.01)
<i>R-square</i>	.12	.14	.16	.19	.05	.07

Note. All models included a propensity score covariate as well as the covariates listed in Table 1.

 $p < .001$.

**
 $p < .01$.

*
 $p < .05$.

†
 $p < .010$.