



## Review

# Understanding the Role of Parental Control in Early Childhood in the Context of U.S. Latino Families in the 21st Century

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**Abstract:** This review focuses on the role of parental control in the sociocultural context of U.S. Latino families with young children in the 21st century. The review begins with a historical overview of the concept of parental control and a summary of theoretical approaches to the study of parenting in context. Associations between different forms of parental control and children's adjustment are summarized, with special attention to cultural considerations and the role of maternal warmth in research involving Latino families. Variability and inconsistencies within the literature on parental control within this population are discussed. The review concludes by discussing future directions for research on this topic, and implications of this literature to move the field toward a better understanding of parenting behaviors and its effects on child functioning in families from different ethnic backgrounds in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** parenting; parental control; Latino families; culturally responsive approaches



**Citation:** Benito-Gomez, Marta. 2022. Understanding the Role of Parental Control in Early Childhood in the Context of U.S. Latino Families in the 21st Century. *Social Sciences* 11: 96. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11030096>

Academic Editors: Christy Buchanan and Terese Glatz

Received: 1 November 2021

Accepted: 21 February 2022

Published: 23 February 2022

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## 1. Introduction

The 21st century has been characterized by demographic shifts in the United States (U.S.), with Latino individuals constituting one of the fastest growing ethnic groups. Latinos make up over 18.7% of the total U.S. population and Latino children make up 25.7% of the nation's total child population (U.S. Census Bureau 2020a). Within this ethnic group, a total of 57.5% are married parents of children younger than 18, and most children have been born in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). It has been estimated that by 2065, 24% of the U.S. population will be Latino (Pew Research Center 2015). The term Latino refers to a diverse ethnic group that includes individuals from different origin backgrounds, with people of Mexican origin accounting for nearly 62%, those of Puerto Rico origin for 9.7%, and Cubans (3.9%) comprising the next largest origin group (Pew Research Center 2021). Given the considerable projected growth of U.S. Latinos in the 21st century, there is a need for increased understanding regarding the nature of parenting behaviors, taking into consideration the unique cultural and sociohistorical context within which Latino families are embedded.

Although all parents face stressors, Latino parents are more likely to live under conditions of poverty, to have poor access to medical care, and face educational disparities compared to other ethnic groups (Ornelas et al. 2009). Due to exposure to a variety of contextual stressors, such as poor-quality neighborhoods, language barriers, and cultural stressors, they are more likely to experience family and acculturation stress, all of which might ultimately compromise parenting quality (White et al. 2009). As a result, one of the challenges for Latino parents in the new century is the ability to create a safe environment that allows their young children to thrive.

Parenting is a critical environmental factor for young children, who are rapidly developing regulatory capabilities that are thought to set the stage for later social-emotional development and overall adjustment (Vohs and Baumeister 2016). Given that Latino children are at increased risk for behavior problems and maladjustment (Bámaca-Colbert et al.

2012; Calzada et al. 2012; Flores et al. 2002), understanding to what extent and under what conditions parenting behaviors influence Latino children's adjustment has important implications for optimizing early preventive and intervention efforts.

Research has consistently indicated that young children who experience sensitive parenting are more likely to develop secure attachments, better emotion regulation, and positive social and emotional adjustment (Leerkes et al. 2009). In contrast, young children who are exposed to intrusive and harsh parenting are more likely to develop avoidant attachments, low effortful control and self-regulation, and emotional and behavioral problems (Carlson and Harwood 2003; Gueron-Sela et al. 2017; Taylor et al. 2013). However, the current literature on early caregiving often fails to recognize the role of culture as shaping parenting behaviors and the extent to which the expression, functionality, and impact of parenting may differ across cultural groups. Instead, most studies have used conceptualizations of parenting initially developed based on observations of European American and middle-class families that may or may not apply across cultural groups (Ispa et al. 2004, 2013). Specific to studies that have examined parenting behaviors in Latino families, it has been suggested that the effects of parental control may not always be harmful, depending on factors such as context, culture, and outcomes of interest (Carlson and Harwood 2003; Ispa et al. 2004). The current review aims to make sense of inconsistent findings in the literature on parental control within the sociocultural context of U.S. Latino families in the 21st century.

## 2. Historical Overview of the Concept of Parental Control

The construct of parental control was initially developed based on observations of European American and middle-class families (Barber 1996; Carlson and Harwood 2003; Ispa et al. 2004, 2013; Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2009). Within this literature, there is a lack of consistency regarding how parental control has been conceptualized across research studies. For example, researchers who refer to "control" may be referring to harsh discipline and punishment, physical control, or to intrusive and directive behaviors. Given recent findings suggesting differences in the distributions of parental controlling behaviors within different cultural groups, and the extent to which such behaviors are associated with more or less optimal developmental outcomes (Carlson and Harwood 2003; Domenech Rodríguez et al. 2009), reexamination of these constructs and how they have been conceptualized is particularly important.

Historically, Baldwin (1948) was one of the first researchers to define control as emphasizing "the existence of restrictions upon behavior which are clearly conveyed to the child" (p. 130). In contrast, Becker (1964) defined control as having "restrictions and strict enforcement of demands in the areas of play, modesty behavior, table manners, toilet training, neatness, orderliness, care of household furniture, noise, obedience, aggression to siblings, aggression to peers, and aggression to parents" (p. 174). Whereas Baldwin viewed the limits and restrictions placed on children's behaviors as a positive dimension of parenting, Becker perceived control as negative.

Some of the most influential work focusing on the conceptualization of parental control involves the four typologies developed by Baumrind, based on levels of warmth and control (Baumrind 1966). In her initial work, Baumrind distinguished between authoritative and authoritarian types of control, later reframed in terms of a two-dimensional conceptualization of parenting style based on levels of demandingness and responsiveness (Baumrind 1966). Other perspectives on parental control have distinguished between psychological control and behavioral control (Barber 1996). Parental behavioral control refers to parental control over the child's behavior, whereas parental psychological control refers to manipulation of the child's thoughts and emotions (Barber 1996). Even though there is a general consensus that psychological control is associated with less optimal child developmental outcomes, there is some inconsistency regarding the effects of behavioral control on child adjustment (Barber 1996; Grolnick 2002).

Similar to parental psychological control is the construct of parental intrusiveness. In early childhood research, the concept of parental intrusiveness has been used to describe parental behaviors that exert control over children in a way that is overwhelming and undermines the development of autonomy (Ainsworth et al. 1978). In studies that have used Ainsworth's definition, parental intrusiveness is considered to involve parental behaviors that interfere with children's efforts (Adam et al. 2004; Ispa et al. 2004) and the use of noncontingent physical behaviors and verbal directives that limit children's activity (Clincy and Mills-Koonce 2013). Generally, parental intrusiveness has been theorized to be detrimental for children's development because it undermines opportunities for autonomy development and engagement with their environments (Graziano et al. 2010).

In the new century, several scholars have highlighted the need to refine the different approaches to parental control to move the field forward and yield a set of conclusions. For example, Grolnick and Pomerantz (2009) suggested that only parenting behaviors that are intrusive, dominating, and coercive should be considered as controlling, whereas parenting behaviors that provide guidance should be considered as structure. Similarly, revisions of Baumrind's work distinguished between coercive and confrontive control styles that had been conflated within the authoritative and authoritarian parenting typologies (Baumrind et al. 2010; Baumrind 2012). Both authoritative and authoritarian parents assert some level of power and control; however, parents who are authoritative assert power that is confrontive (i.e., reasoned, outcome-oriented, and regulatory), whereas authoritarian parents assert power that is coercive (i.e., arbitrary, absolute, maintains hierarchical status, and involves use of threats). Baumrind suggested that high coercive control, but not confrontive control, places children at increased risk for maladjustment (Baumrind 2012). In fact, she suggested that confrontive power assertion might be beneficial when not confounded with coercive power assertion. Even though Baumrind's understanding of parental control has evolved over the years, many researchers still use ideas from her initial views of parenting without making further distinctions among parents who assert confrontive versus coercive types of control. Additionally, scholars have suggested that whether parental control is associated with optimal or poor developmental outcomes may depend on the cultural backgrounds of families being considered. Lack of attention to the cultural context in which families are embedded may limit understanding regarding the nature of parental control and its impact on children's adjustment.

### 3. Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Parenting in the 21st Century

In order to understand the role of parenting in the 21st century, we must integrate ideas from theoretical approaches that conceive culture as directly influencing parenting behaviors. Several models originating in the past century have described culture as directly influencing parenting through its impact on parental beliefs about normative and non-normative parenting practices, perceptions of children's developmental needs, and socialization goals. For example, Harkness and Super (1996) used the term "parental ethnotheories" to refer to the culturally-based belief systems about parenting and child development that play a crucial role in shaping parenting behaviors. In contrast, more traditional contextual models, such as the bioecological framework (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998), consider culture as a part of a macrosystem in which parenting is affected through more proximal factors. A recent revision of the bioecological model has moved culture from the macro- to the microsystem and conceptualized culture and ethnicity as a proximal factor that is part of family systems' daily practices, schools, and other learning environments (Vélez-Agosto et al. 2017).

In the new century, theoretical models that have moved away from deficit approaches have gained attention. Such models include perspectives that focus on adaptiveness and resilience within diverse populations (García Coll and Pachter 2002; Perez-Brena et al. 2018). Over the last 20 years, the integrative model for the study of minority children has been considered by many scholars to represent a landmark shift in the ways in which the parenting and development of ethnic minority children is understood. This model

considers social class, culture, ethnicity, and race as the “core” rather than the “periphery” of a theoretical understanding of child development (García Coll et al. 1996). One of the greatest contributions of this model is that it challenges deficit perspectives of child development among ethnic-racial minority children and families and offers a resilience perspective that underscores the “diversity and strengths” within these groups (Perez-Brena et al. 2018). A revision of this model has incorporated additional social positional variables such as immigrant status, documentation status, and migrant status to better understand developmental processes in the context of Latino families living in rural, emerging immigrant communities (Stein et al. 2016). Additionally, a recent qualitative review of studies using the integrative model highlighted the need to pay attention to sociohistorical contexts, cascading and bidirectional influences, and moderating factors (e.g., gender and acculturation) to continue understanding the concept of adaptive culture and the experiences of ethnic-racial minoritized families (Perez-Brena et al. 2018).

Recent models of parenting have also theorized about the unique contexts in which families from different ethnic and racial backgrounds are embedded. For instance, in the context of Latino families adjusting to life in the U.S., Calzada et al. (2010) developed a framework that incorporated acculturative status and ethnic socialization of *respeto* to better understand Latino parenting from a cultural perspective (Calzada et al. 2012). Similarly, Rodriguez-Jenkins (2014) developed a contextual parenting framework for Latino families with young children. Within this framework, culture, environment, and parenting are understood as reciprocal processes that are directly influenced by institutional and structural inequalities, such as access to and quality of education, healthcare, employment, discrimination, and socio-political climate.

#### 4. The Role of Parental Control in Early Childhood

Studies that have included predominantly European American samples have suggested that parental control that is intrusive, dominant, and coercive in nature has negative implications for child development, including emotional and behavioral problems, low effortful control, defensiveness, non-compliant behaviors, avoidant attachments, and other indicators of adjustment problems (Carlson and Harwood 2003; Guzell and Vernon-Feagans 2004; Ispa et al. 2004; Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2004; Taylor et al. 2013). For example, findings from a large national study using an observational assessment of harsh-intrusive parenting behaviors during a mother-child structured play task indicated that harsh-intrusive parenting behaviors at age 5 were associated with more internalizing behaviors when children were 6 and 7 years old (Gueron-Sela et al. 2017). Similarly, Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2004) found that mothers’ and fathers’ parental intrusiveness at 24 months was negatively associated with children’s language and cognitive development at 36 months. Researchers have explained these findings by suggesting that this type of parenting undermines children’s opportunities for autonomy development and behavioral and emotional regulation (e.g., Graziano et al. 2010). As a result, it has been suggested that children with controlling parents are likely to have fewer opportunities to learn from the environment and engage in self-regulatory behaviors. Additionally, if parental controlling behaviors are perceived as hostile by the child, they may compromise children’s ability to physiologically regulate, undermining learning and socialization experiences (Eisenberg et al. 2015).

However, studies involving families from diverse racial and ethnic groups have displayed mixed or null results, suggesting that the effects of controlling behaviors may differ across cultural groups. Given that parenting behaviors are culturally constructed and may have different functionalities, it has been suggested that parental control may have different meanings across cultures (Deater-Deckard et al. 2011; Ispa et al. 2004). Specific to Latino families, some scholars have suggested that, due to the normative nature of these behaviors within this cultural group, children may perceive these behaviors as expressions of love and care (Halgunseth et al. 2006), whereas others have suggested that very young children may not be able to distinguish culturally normative versus non-normative parenting behaviors (Barajas-Gonzalez et al. 2018).

#### 4.1. Parental Control in the Context of Latino Families

Research examining the relationship between parental controlling behaviors and young children's adjustment in Latino families has been scarce and results are mixed. For example, whereas trajectories of increasing intrusiveness have been associated with negative child behaviors towards mothers across ethnic groups, the strength of this association is smaller for Mexican American children compared to European American and African American children participating in Early Head Start programs (Ispa et al. 2013). Using a racially and ethnically diverse sample, Diemer et al. (2021) found that greater parental intrusiveness at age two was associated with increased behavior problems and decreased emotion regulation at age three within White and Latino families, but not within Black families. In contrast, higher levels of maternal physical control during play, feeding, and teaching have been associated with secure attachment in Puerto Rican toddlers and insecure attachments in White toddlers (Carlson and Harwood 2003), and mothers who engaged in "abrupt-interfering pick-ups" were more likely to have securely attached infants in a sample of Puerto Rican and Dominican immigrant families (Fracasso et al. 1994).

Given that many Latino parents are also immigrants, it is especially important to understand the unique conditions within which parenting by immigrant families occurs. For example, differences in parenting behaviors have been documented in relation to acculturation status, which refers to the extent to which cultural practices have shifted as a result of exposure to a host culture (Hill et al. 2003; Fuller and García Coll 2010). Among immigrant Latino parents in the U.S., it has been suggested that differences in levels of acculturation might contribute to differences in mean levels of parental intrusiveness and its effects on children's adjustment (Hill et al. 2003; Ispa et al. 2004). Even though findings are mixed, some studies have indicated that among less acculturated mothers, controlling behaviors, such as intrusiveness and physical and verbal discipline, may have fewer negative or positive implications for children's development, compared to more acculturated mothers (Barajas-Gonzalez et al. 2018; Ispa et al. 2004; Wood and Grau 2018).

In a recent study by Wood and Grau (2018), associations between maternal control and child dysregulated defiance were examined among Puerto Rican adolescent mothers and their toddlers. Person-centered analyses indicated four different parenting profiles: enculturated/controlling, bicultural/guiding, bicultural/controlling, and acculturated/controlling. Children in the acculturated/controlling subgroup demonstrated greater defiance toward their mothers than children in the enculturated/controlling subgroup. Children in both the enculturated/controlling and bicultural/guiding subgroups displayed the lowest levels of defiance, compared to the other two subgroups. These findings suggest that for highly enculturated Puerto Rican mothers who engaged in higher levels of control, lower levels of guidance, and low positive affect, the effects on child defiance were similar to those for bicultural mothers who engaged in higher levels of guidance than control and higher levels of positive affect. In other words, different parenting strategies can lead to similar levels of child adjustment dependent on the context in which parent-child interactions occur. In sum, some studies suggest that parental control may be less detrimental for children's adjustment among Latino immigrant families with strong cultural orientations; however, other studies have not found associations between control and child adjustment within this cultural group.

#### 4.2. The Role of Maternal Warmth

Several scholars have proposed that the nature of parental control within Latino families may be different than within other ethnic groups due to parents' use of controlling behaviors in combination with warmth. Parental warmth refers to expressions of love, affection, support, and positive regard for the child (Maccoby and Martin 1983). It has been suggested that within collectivistic cultures, parental control is not necessarily accompanied by low levels of warmth (Grusec et al. 1997). For example, within European American families, correlations between parental warmth and intrusiveness tend to be negative. In contrast, intrusiveness and parental warmth tend to co-occur within Latino families

(Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2009). Additionally, Latino parents are more likely to engage in affectionate behaviors (i.e., hugging and kissing) and display high levels of warmth even in the presence of controlling behaviors (Halgunseth and Ispa 2012). This has led to some researchers defining Latino parenting as “protective” (Domenech Rodríguez et al. 2009) and “no-nonsense” rather than controlling or authoritarian (Mahrer et al. 2019). As a result, it is not surprising that, within these groups, different forms of parental control are not consistently associated with less optimal child developmental outcomes. A growing body of research suggests that maternal warmth may moderate the associations between parental control and children’s adjustment (McLoyd and Smith 2002) and that the affective context within which parenting occurs may be a key determinant of its short and long-term impact (Ispa et al. 2004).

Only a few studies have considered parental warmth as a moderator of associations between controlling behaviors and indicators of child adjustment. A number of studies have indicated that the negative impact of parental controlling behaviors is ameliorated among Latino families in the context of parental responsiveness or warmth. In a study of children 4–5 years of age from European American, African American, and Latino backgrounds, spanking was associated with an increase in behavioral problems over time across all ethnic groups, but only in the context of low maternal emotional support (McLoyd and Smith 2002). In a recent study, Benito-Gomez (2020) examined how maternal intrusiveness, as measured by a culturally informed observational assessment during a free play task, related to internalizing and externalizing behaviors in Latino children at 14 and 24 months, and whether maternal warmth moderated this association. Findings indicated that parental intrusiveness was associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors, but only for children whose mothers displayed low levels of warmth. Similar findings have been reported in samples involving adolescents, in which associations between harsh discipline and externalizing behaviors became nonsignificant for Mexican American mothers who displayed high levels of warmth (Germán et al. 2013).

However, not all research has found this buffering, moderating effect within Latino families. Ispa et al. (2004) reported that within African American families, maternal intrusiveness, as defined by Ainsworth et al. (1978), was associated with toddler’s display of negativity towards their mothers only for mothers who displayed low levels of maternal warmth. However, this effect was not observed within European and Mexican American families. Barajas-Gonzalez et al. (2018) examined whether parental warmth and *respeto* moderated associations between spanking and verbal punishment, and Latino children’s adjustment. Findings indicated that greater use of verbal punishment was associated with higher levels of externalizing behaviors and that this association was not moderated by parental warmth or *respeto*. The authors propose that very young children may not yet have the cognitive skills to interpret harsh and controlling behaviors as caring rather than punitive. In sum, whereas some studies have indicated that maternal warmth moderates associations between different forms of parental control (i.e., intrusiveness and physical discipline) and children’s adjustment, others have not found empirical support for this premise. Variability in findings has led some researchers to conclude that parental control among Latina mothers is not always harmful, and can even be beneficial, depending on the context and child developmental outcome considered (Carlson and Harwood 2003; Ispa et al. 2004; Wood and Grau 2018).

## 5. Understanding Variability in Findings

In line with recent theoretical frameworks that underscore the role of culture as directly shaping parental beliefs and behaviors, some scholars have attributed variability in findings to differences in the meaning and expression of parental control across cultural groups (Davidov 2021). Among Western families, the development of self-expression is key to becoming a successful member of the family system. Thus, socialization strategies include a focus on the support of psychological autonomy from early ages (Keller 2002). For example, infants are treated as individuals whose wishes, preferences, and intentions

need to be responded to and respected by sensitive caregivers (Ainsworth et al. 1978). In contrast, among non-Western families, conformity with family values, obedience, respect for the elderly, self-control, good behavior, and maintenance of parental authority are central socialization goals (Keller et al. 2004). In line with a collectivistic orientation, Latina mothers are more likely to use directives and controlling behaviors in their interactions with children (Grau et al. 2009). Given that the meaning behind discrete parenting behaviors is defined by the culture within which such behaviors are embedded (Harkness and Super 1996), it is possible that the use of directive and controlling behaviors within Latino families may be a strategy to foster the culturally relevant socialization goals of *familism* (in which children's prioritization of the family system is emphasized) and *respeto* (in which children's obedience and good manners are stressed; Calzada et al. 2012).

Similarly, it has been suggested that teaching young children to be respectful, well-behaved, and attentive may require greater use of controlling strategies (e.g., use of physical manipulation and directives) than is required for teaching children to be autonomous and independent (Carlson and Harwood 2003). Within Latino families, parenting practices characterized by high levels of control are frequently observed and considered by parents to be the best practices for child rearing (Ispa et al. 2004; Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2009). Some researchers have suggested that given that parental control is normative within this cultural group, children may not perceive these behaviors as intrusive but rather as expressions of love and care (Halgunseth et al. 2006), particularly when they are combined with high levels of warmth. The normative hypothesis is an important explanation to consider when trying to understand the influence of controlling behaviors on older children's adjustment. However, it is possible that children who are very young may not be able to interpret controlling behaviors as normative and caring rather than coercive due to their lack of cognitive skills, suggesting that the normative hypothesis may not be as relevant earlier in childhood (Barajas-Gonzalez et al. 2018; Grusec and Goodnow 1994).

Although recent conceptualizations of parental control have emphasized qualitative differences between coercive and directive types of control (Baumrind 2012; Grolnick and Pomerantz 2009), researchers have tended to consider any type of control as negative without paying attention to how behaviors are displayed and the function of such behaviors. Some research has indicated that Latino parents are more likely to use direct verbal commands and physical manipulation compared with European American parents (Livas-Dlott et al. 2010). It has been suggested that the function of such behaviors might be to correct the child's behavior and provide guidance and structure, rather than to control and undermine the child's development of autonomy. As a result, it is possible that findings suggesting different forms of parental control are less strongly associated with child adjustment problems within Latino families may be due to the inclusion of both positive and negative aspects of parental control within the same construct. There is a need to distinguish parental behaviors that are intrusive and coercive in nature from those that aim to provide guidance and structure within the parent-child interaction (see Benito-Gomez 2020). Studies that fail to distinguish between positive and negative forms of control (i.e., intrusiveness versus guidance) might not be capturing Latino parenting behaviors in accurate ways, which may lead to inaccurate findings. Additionally, traditional observational coding systems and questionnaires used to assess parenting behaviors are based on underlying constructs that reflect Western perceptions of parenting (Kerig 2001). The use of such measures might lead to misestimations of cultural differences and reinforce conclusions based on deficit models of ethnic minority parenting. The use of culturally informed measures that capture the variability of parenting behaviors across groups within a given cultural context is critical.

Even though cultural factors, ethnicity, and context are interrelated, much of the work on cultural variations in parenting has confounded ethnicity with contextual factors. Some scholars have suggested that differences in parenting across ethnic groups are due to socioeconomic status disparities, suggesting that socio-demographic factors are more salient than cultural factors in predicting parenting behaviors (Mesman et al. 2012). In contrast, others have indicated that culture predicts parenting differences above and beyond

socioeconomic status (Harwood et al. 1996; Hofferth 2003). It is important to understand how culture, ethnicity, and contextual factors operate both individually and in combination as predictors of variability in parenting behaviors in general, and parental control in particular (Le et al. 2008).

Finally, discrepancies in findings may also stem from differences in the historical time of assessment, samples, and other moderating variables such as characteristics of children and parents (Davidov 2021). Given the within-group heterogeneity of U.S. Latinos, findings may vary as a function of moderating variables, such as the country of origin, personal and historical circumstances for U.S. arrival, level of acculturation, generation status, and exposure to structural and institutional inequalities (Rodriguez-Jenkins 2014).

## 6. Future Directions and Implications for Parenting in the 21st Century

Compared to the 20th century, the U.S. population is more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before (U.S. Census Bureau 2020b). However, most of the extant literature on “normative” parenting is based on European American, middle-class samples, and few studies have examined how parenting behaviors are shaped by cultural factors or within diverse ethnic groups. Most studies that have included culturally diverse samples have involved comparisons to the standard group, based on Western assumptions of parenting. Specific to studies involving Latino families, researchers are increasingly questioning whether the prevalence and expression of different forms of parental control and its effects on young children’s adjustment is reflective of true differences, cultural differences, or methodological issues. Understanding how parenting behaviors are shaped by the larger sociohistorical and cultural context within which families operate is critical for understanding parenting, parenting interventions, and research on parenting in the 21st century.

Future research on parenting that aims to represent the realities of Latino families should be framed by theoretical and culturally driven frameworks. The conceptualization of constructs should be guided by a sensitive and accurate understanding of cultural orientations and associated socialization goals within a given ethnic group. Given work suggesting that the use of directives and physical manipulation are more likely to be used by Latino parents to teach the socialization goals of *familism* and *respeto*, future studies should distinguish between behaviors that are coercive and parental driven and those that are child-oriented and intended to provide guidance (Benito-Gomez 2020). Given the critical importance of early caregiving behaviors for later child adjustment, the development of culturally informed measures that are guided both by relevant theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence will result in a better understanding of the nature of parenting within the context of U.S. Latino families in the 21st century.

It is important that future work in this area include measures of parental affect and warmth during parent-child interaction observations so that researchers can consider the emotional context within which parental control is displayed. Future studies should examine forms of parental control that are not aggregated into composite scores that also include harsh and other parenting behaviors (McFadden and Tamis-LeMonda 2013). Additionally, it is important to not only examine whether and how maternal warmth may alter the effects of parental control on child adjustment, but also under what conditions the benefits of maternal warmth might be attenuated by the presence of controlling behaviors (Tamis-LeMonda et al. 2009). Both examination of parental warmth during the same moment that controlling behaviors are displayed (Ispa et al. 2013) and consideration of the affect displayed by children when perceiving parenting behaviors might provide a better understanding regarding the role of parental control in Latino families. Given that most of the literature of parenting focuses on mothers, the inclusion of fathers and examination of their presence or absence (e.g., transnational families) in future research might yield additional insights related to whether components of Latino parenting differ in relation to young children’s adjustment when they are exhibited by mothers versus fathers.

Given the expected growth and demographic changes of the U.S. Latino population during the 21st century, studies should examine variation within Latino subgroups based on country of origin, language proficiency, generation status, acculturation, income and education levels, and immigration experiences to name a few. This is an exciting time for practitioners to value and recognize such diversity through the development of culturally informed parenting programs that better reflect the nature of parenting behaviors within the cultural and emotional context in which Latino families are embedded. As U.S. Latino parents in the 21st century continue to navigate institutional inequalities and socio-political challenges, this work can guide early preventive and intervention efforts to promote nurturing behaviors and support optimal child development. Given that Latino parents in the U.S. are more likely to underutilize community and social services due to these challenges, parenting programs that are offered in Spanish and incorporate cultural values of *respeto* and *familismo* have the potential to increase engagement and retention of Latino families and the possibility of sustained positive parenting outcomes overtime.

Latino children account for over one quarter of all children in the U.S., with this number growing. They and their parents experience systemic disadvantage as a consequence of factors that include residence in poor-quality neighborhoods, access to education and health care, language barriers, and cultural stressors. Such disadvantage has tremendous implications for the family system and has the potential to compromise parenting quality. Yet, even in the presence of multiple challenges, Latino parenting is characterized by numerous strengths that include strong family-oriented values and warmth. It is critical to recognize such strengths and incorporate them into a nuanced and thoughtful perspective on Latino parenting that account for the unique needs and experiences of these families in the U.S. Moving beyond generalizations and stereotyped representations of ethnic-racial minoritized families and toward an understanding of similarities and differences as well as the strengths and challenges that characterize Latino parents is critical to understanding and supporting parenting in the 21st century.

**Funding:** This research received not external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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