# Social Policy Report

# Transforming Policy Standards to Promote Equity and Developmental Success Among Latinx Children and Youth

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## ABSTRACT

The main goal of this social policy report is to propose a holistic approach for promoting developmental success among Latinx children and youth. This report highlights the need to 1) redefine success and 2) account for intersectional inequalities. First, the current demographic landscape of Latinx students is presented to showcase the variability in experiences among Latinx children and youth. We review past policies (across the last two and current U.S. Administrations and within the state of California), educational programs (e.g., McNair scholars' program, AVID), and theoretical frameworks (within developmental and sociocultural disciplines). Next, we introduce a nuanced holistic approach for promoting Latinx children and youth's developmental success, underscoring the integration of factors within the sociocultural, family, and individual domains. Finally, this report provides accessible recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to effectively promote equity and developmental success among diverse groups of Latinx children and youth.

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# "FROM THE EDITOR" INTRO TO ACEVES, CROWLEY, RINCON AND BRAVO

This *Social Policy Report* brings forth a wealth of information about Latinx youth in the United States, with a focus on their demographic growth and a holistic approach to supporting their well-being. The authors make a compelling case that we must challenge traditional standards of success for Latinx youth, which tend to focus solely on educational attainment, and instead they provide a more nuanced and comprehensive model that focuses on "developmental competencies" as the outcome of interest, which includes ways in which youth navigate the social-emotional, cognitive, and behavioral tasks of growing up and becoming adults. That is, there is a significant emphasis on youth's overall well-being in addition to their educational and career attainment.

This *SPR* includes four major areas of focus. First, the authors provide substantial data on the size and growth of the Latinx child and adolescent population, which is the fastest growing and largest segment of the non-white U.S. population—currently about a third of youth under 18 years of age. Moreover, the authors note that there are important differences in life experiences and support for Latinx youth depending on demographic differences such as their family's country of origin (Mexico, Cuba, Caribbean, Puerto Rica, South America, etc.), whether they are first, second, or third generation in the U.S., and their age, gender, and family economic resources.

Second, the authors argue for an approach to examining Latinx youth that considers the intersectionality of their identities, including personal characteristics of the individual, family circumstances such as financial resources, the social capital the family and youth's community offer towards their development, and the environment in which they are growing up. The authors also suggest examining the youth's historical experiences as an important context to consider; for instance, one cannot ignore the impact the coronavirus pandemic is having on families and children alike.

Third, they offer several theoretical perspectives on how to examine Latinx youth's successful growth into competent adults, including Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and Latinx Critical Race theory, among others. Based on these existing theories and theoretical frameworks, the authors propose their own integrative holistic approach to studying Latinx youth that includes six key factors—socio-cultural domains, educational environment, family resources, the individual, time, and developmental competencies—along with concrete examples and recommendations for considering each factor in the model.

Fourth, they review the federal policies that have been offered (or in recent cases removed) by the past several presidential administrations, dating back to George W. Bush, to increase educational success especially for Latinx youth. The authors go on to provide several policy recommendations at both the federal and state levels (with California as a model state they discuss), as well as for local policymakers and school boards, that are guided by the proposed developmental competencies model of supporting Latinx youth's success.

The authors conclude by offering suggestions for how researchers and practitioners can be more successful in studying and aiding Latinx children, adolescents, and families with very thoughtful, nuanced suggestions for engaging these populations. This is indeed a compendium of information about a growing and important population of American society.

# Transforming Policy Standards to Promote Equity and Developmental Success Among Latinx Children and Youth

The overarching goal of this report is to challenge research and social policy to redefine the standards of success among U.S. Latinx children and youth through critical considerations for multilevel intersectionality. The standards of success should expand beyond the singular focus on educational attainment (e.g., academic performance, graduation rates) to include supporting *developmental competencies* (i.e., navigation of social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral tasks) and promotive settings (e.g., physical and psychological safety, opportunities to belong, positive social norms), and long-term adjustment (e.g., physical/ mental health, social mobility, debt/homeownership). Importantly, transforming policies will require enforcing equitable provisions of opportunities and resources within structures and systems servicing Latinx student communities (e.g., schools, social services, healthcare; Núñez, 2014). Because Latinxs are the fastest growing and largest non-White population in the United States (Pew Hispanic Research, 2018), with 32% of Latinx youth under 18 years of age, a significant portion of the nation's workforce (Patten, 2016), policies must be modified to promote and ensure the success and collective well-being of this majority–minority population.

Latinx is a nonbinary term that refers to people of Latin American descent (for a description of term origin see Pew Research Center tabulations of 2017, [Pew Hispanic Research, 2018]). The term *Latinx* is meant to be functionally inclusive (i.e., gender-neutral); however, it can be misleading of the diverse experiences among Latinx populations (e.g., immigration vs. forced displacement vs. asylum seeking). Before presenting descriptive statistics on Latinx subgroups, it is important to note that these statistics are not representative of Latinx individuals' indigenous backgrounds or those who may identify through intersecting multiracial identities, such as Afro-Latinx individuals.

The majority of U.S. Latinx children and youth include those with national/regional origins from Mexico (69%), the Caribbean (15%), and Central America (8%) (Patten, 2016). Data also show that 94% of Latinx children under 18 are U.S. born. Further, subgroup figures show that 96% of Mexican, 91% of Peruvian, 87% of Cuban, 84% of Dominican, 84% of Guatemalan, and 79% of Honduran children under the age of 18 are U.S. born (de Brey et al., 2019). Importantly, the social background or categories of Latinx youth (e.g., national origin, race, gender, class, immigration status, religion) play a distinctive role in their individual and collective experiences and adjustment in the United States, especially regarding postsecondary opportunities and attainment (Núñez, 2014). For example, despite comprising the largest population of Latinx students in the United States, Mexican Americans attain lower education and report lower income, compared to their non-Mexican counterparts (e.g., Cuban, South American, Puerto Rican; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Although education has been regarded as a key mechanism to stimulate the prosperity of U.S. Latinx populations (e.g., social mobility, career prospects, income), the *developmental competencies* and long-term well-being of this population must also receive high priority.

Developmental competencies in this report are defined as not only educational attainment but also expanded to include children and youth's well-being (e.g., emotional, physical, mental, financial, etc.). This social policy report provides a nuanced conceptualization for Latinx children and youth's developmental success and recommendations through which research and policy can be adjusted to incorporate effective holistic supports, underscoring the role of intersectional inequality. First, we describe the current demographic landscape of Latinxs in the United States and highlight important social demographics that demonstrate the need to support Latinx students' developmental competencies and adjustment.

Second, this report assesses past federal policy gaps to determine how policies, particularly in education, support Latinx students' overall well-being. We also incorporate a brief assessment of state-level policy in California, a state with the largest population of Latinx children and youth population. Third, we review and evaluate important developmental and sociocultural theoretical perspectives and synthesize this review with policy and programs that exemplify the functional implementation of these theories. Fourth, we propose a restructured holistic model for promoting Latinx children and youth's developmental success. Finally, the report provides recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners supporting U.S. Latinx children and youth's adjustment.

## The Educational Demographic Landscape of Latinx Students in the United States

In the United States, Latinx populations are experiencing increases in population and educational attainment. Educational attainment is defined as the highest level of education an individual has completed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Data projections indicate that the proportion of Latinxs in the United States is rapidly rising and by the year 2065, Latinxs will be the largest minority group (24% of the total population) (Cohn, 2015). In educational attainment trends, data documents that 89% of Latinx students completed high school, compared to 63% in 2000 (de Brey et al., 2019). Although Latinx youth are attaining higher levels of education, this increase is not commensurate with the population growth (Elliott & Parks, 2018) and also varies markedly by the Latinx subgroup. For instance, 23% of Guatemalan, 17% of Honduran, and 13% of Salvadoran students leave or withdraw from high school, compared to 9% of Mexican and Puerto Rican and 5.4% of Cuban students, demonstrating the diversity of Latinx students' educational experiences based on origin (de Brey et al., 2019).

As of 2016, approximately 15% of the overall Latinx population have obtained a 4-year degree, and 8% obtained a professional or doctoral degree (de Brey et al., 2019). Of those who have obtained a 4-year degree among specific subgroups, this included: 31% of Peruvians, 27% of Cubans, 21% of Nicaraguans, 18% of Puerto Ricans, 18% of Dominicans, 11% of Mexicans, 10% of Hondurans, 9% of Guatemalans, and 9% of Salvadorans (de Brey et al., 2019). In the United States, Latinx students who obtain postsecondary education largely include those of Cuban descent with recognizable affordances (e.g., income, status;

de Brey et al., 2019). Because of such notable gaps in educational attainment, research should move beyond between-group comparisons (i.e., Latinx vs. non-Latinx), and instead, center on within-group understandings of Latinx populations (e.g., language use, immigration/generational status, income, network support), to account for significant variabilities in attainment.

The U.S. Latinx population is young; therefore, they will comprise a significant proportion of the U.S. educational systems and future workforce (Educational attainment and occupation groups by race and ethnicity in 2014: The Economics Daily, 2015). For instance, 81% of Latinxs are under the age of 35 and 26% of the total K-12 school population is Latinx (Lopez et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important to prepare and support the educational trajectories of the children and youth who will become the future majority workforce of the United States. All children and youth in the United States are required to attend school and this is one of the main contexts through which they are socialized to build their future educational goals. In order to advocate for the developmental success of Latinx children and youth, policy needs to consider how to support the K-12 population of Latinx students, in order to promote their success in education, the future workforce, public health, and beyond.

### Generational status

Another crucial data figure to consider in understanding Latinx children and youth's educational experiences is *generational status*. Of the total population of Latinx individuals in the United States, it is estimated that 38% are first generation (foreign born), 34% are second generation (at least one parent is foreign born), and 28% are third generation or higher (both parents and children are born in the United States) (Lopez et al., 2017). Generational status is important to consider in policy due to the unique experiences endured by each generation. For instance, among first- and second-generation Latinx students, education can enable youth social mobility and career prospects beyond parental attainment (i.e., immigrant paradox), whereas the third generation and older have been found to report lower attainment (Aretakis et al., 2015; Elliott & Parks, 2018).

One of the major issues with education in the United States is that the system was not designed to support the holistic success of Latinx students and their families. This system often does not account for the experiences children and youth undergo in their contexts (i.e., communities, families, etc.). Moreover, new modifications in the education system do not necessarily support the diversity and the unique supports that are needed by Latinx children and youth to succeed in school (Bernal, 2002; Sólorzano et al., 2005; Villalpando, 2004). For instance, approximately 52% of the school-aged Latinx students are navigating the education system with foreign-born parents (Lopez et al., 2017), whose primary language is Spanish (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). This demonstrates the need for educational institutions to support effective dual language and cultural programming to support both Latinx students and parental involvement.

### Family socioeconomic status

Family socioeconomic status (SES), whether assessed by economic, occupational, and educational constructs, is one of the strongest predictors of children and youth's developmental competencies (Conger et al., 2010; Gándara, 2017). One of the cited reasons

why Latinx children and youth often lag behind in developmental and educational attainment is due to limited resources (e.g., educational, physical and mental health, and financial resources) in the United States directed at the growing and changing needs of Latinx students (Gándara, 2017). Research on links between SES and Latinx children and youth's educational attainment is mixed. Because it often documents that diverse forms of capital, such as *social capital*, are just as important for promoting educational attainment and developmental success (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources that help youth navigate society's institutions (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Yosso, 2005). SES can be indicative of access to resources that can promote Latinx students' developmental competencies (e.g., mental and physical well-being, educational attainment). SES often determines where families can afford to live and therefore where youth attend school. It is common for Latinx and immigrant children to attend low performing schools where they do not have access to diverse capital that aids their developmental success (Ee & Gándara, 2020).

The lack of access to guidance in navigating the education system perpetuates the production of students that are underprepared and lack opportunities to succeed in post high school plans (e.g., college, workforce, etc.) (Gándara, 2016). Data reveal that around 16% of Latinx parents have college degrees and that overall 28% of Latinx children and youth under 18 are living in poverty. These numbers are even more dire among Guatemalan (38%), Honduran (36%), and Dominican (30%) children and youth (de Brey et al., 2019; Child Trends Databank, 2015). Given that Latinx families experience significant disparities in family SES indicators, largely due to systemic factors (e.g., ethnic–racial and gender discrimination and wage gaps), it is critical to tap into additional forms of social capital that contribute to lived experiences (Coleman, 1990), such as community cultural wealth (i.e., aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant; see Yosso, 2005 for further detail). By assessing how educational systems grow by endorsing community cultural wealth among Latinx children and youth, stakeholders can holistically promote developmental competencies (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017).

Finally, although educational attainment has been commonly regarded as an indicator of "success," policies must be modified to incorporate Latinx students' overall well-being (e.g., physical and mental health, financial security). For instance, although Latinx undergraduate enrollment has increased exponentially, the quality of educational experiences is dampened by the financial strain and access to costly mental health. Indeed, national indicators demonstrate that 16% of the total U.S. Latinx population reported having mental health issues (e.g., depressive episodes, persistent stress, anxiety) in the past year (Pew Research Center, 2018); and in 2016, 20% of Latinx families had acquired educational debt (Unidos US, 2016). To add, Latinx children and youth experience significant barriers in education systems, such as attending schools in segregated education systems, where there are often limitations in terms of dual language programing, advanced course placement opportunities, and access to college-going culture and guidance (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017).

> Statistics on mental health and socio-economic status among Latinx groups are staggering and demonstrate why policies aiming to improve successful outcomes among this population must provide settings that endorse positive mental and physical health and provide ample financial support to Latinx families, children, and youth navigating U.S. school systems at all levels.

More efforts and policies must be put in place to better serve the U.S. Latinx population, who will become a majority-minority in the United States, but who are highly underrepresented in school and higher education settings, as the majority of teachers and full-time professors are white (American Council on Education, 2016; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; McDaniel et al., 2017). Having discussed the current state of Latinx children, youth and families, in the next section, we review past federal and state policy to continue to establish the necessary policy context that shaped the conceptualization of the proposed *Holistic Approach for Latinx Youth's Developmental Competencies*.

## Gaps in Federal Education Policy

One of the goals of this social policy report is to understand past education policy that informed the proposed conceptual model because children and youth spend a larger proportion of their lives in the education system; therefore, educational experiences play an important role in shaping their developmental competencies (Brighouse et al., 2018). In this section of the social policy report, we provided background information on federal education policy, more broadly, and California, more specifically as an example of a state-level policy. These education policies provide an understanding of what issues are being addressed at the national and state levels and how theory and research can potentially address gaps that could bolster developmental competencies. Through this review, we make systematic connections to theory, research, and policy that not only inform the conceptualization of Latinx children and youth's success via developmental competencies but also address broader areas of policy that influence Latinx children, youth, and families.

### Federal education policy

In the last two decades, we witnessed federal education policies evolve across the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. In 2002, the Bush Administration signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB was born out of the concern that the U.S. Education system was falling behind in comparison to other countries (Klein, 2015; Linn et al., 2002). The main role of the act was to increase the role of the federal government in order to ensure schools' academic progress nationwide. The federal government's main form of evaluation of schools through NCLB was the use of standardized testing to produce "Adequate Yearly Progress" reports that would detail if a school was up to set national standards. Although NCLB gave special attention to underrepresented student groups, such as minoritized individuals, English language learners, and students with disabilities, standardized benchmarks did not allow schools the space to address the unique needs of each of these groups. Notably, the consequence for not having an "Adequate Yearly Progress" report was a reduction in school funding (Klein, 2015).

**Bush administration.** During the Bush administration, the NCLB set the goal of improving the educational experiences of historically disadvantaged populations, such as Latinx students (Thomas & Brady, 2005). NCLB attempted to do this by holding state and local school systems accountable for all students' academic success by raising the bar on academic standards through standardized testing. The general approach appeared sufficient in theory; however, the direct effects it would have on minoritized populations, particularly Latinx students, was not taken into account (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). Decades of research now demonstrates that standardized tests are indeed biased in terms of assumptions in understandings of culture, context, and language, leading to overt disparities in testing performance among immigrant and students of color (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006).

The precedent set by NCLB challenged Latinx students' success because in order for schools to meet the benchmarks set by NCLB, Latinx students were expected to conform to predetermined standards of success, which made assumptions of equality in access to educational resources and largely favored White student counterparts (Altshuler & Schmautz, 2006). As research indicates, standardized testing is not an accurate assessment of knowledge or educational skills, and importantly, is not a determinant of success in higher education and careers. Instead, scholarship has moved toward underscoring the role of limited resources (e.g., high-quality teaching, parent–school partnerships, school and college counselors, advanced placement courses) that are necessary for supporting Latinx student's academic and developmental success (Gándara, 2001; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017).

**Obama administration.** In 2009, the Obama Administration funded Investing in Innovation Fund, Race to the Top, TRIO, and GEAR UP programs as ways to support students' academic preparation that could help address the nation's dire achievement gap (Santiago et al., 2010). These efforts centered on preparing students early for higher education and for entry into a workplace, targeting high demand careers. In addition, the Obama administration acknowledged the importance of language in education by releasing a policy statement highlighting the need for programs that foster children's bilingualism early on (Gándara, 2017). Finally, another important milestone of the Obama administration was the passing of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program in June 2012. DACA was created for youth who arrived in the United States before the age of 16, had resided in the United States without legal status, enrolled in school or have graduated high school, and have not been convicted of a felony/do not pose a threat to public safety (Singer & Svajlenka, 2013). The program does not provide applicants permanent lawful status, but it implements a temporary suspension of deportation and authorization to work in the United States. DACA is important to highlight because it allowed many undocumented Latinx students (94% of DACA recipients) have access to higher education (Patler & Cabrera, 2015; Lopez & Krogstad, 2017).

In 2015, the Obama administration signed into law The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which sought to relax the role of the federal government in deciding the methods of evaluation for U.S. schools (Klein, 2016; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). ESSA's main goal was to address diverse students' educational needs. Similar to NCLB, through ESSA states still had to submit performance and progress reports, but now states had more freedom in determining their 1) goals, 2) accountability systems and standards, 3) school interventions, and 4) testing. This flexibility provided states opportunities to assess the particular needs of their schools and student populations to determine how to best assess proficiency on tests, English-language proficiency, and

graduation rates. Major changes made through ESSA included prioritizing the needs and success of English language learners, funding blocks allocated for crucial education programs—such as the Preschool Development Grant program, Investing in Innovation programs, Ready to Learn television, and allocating student funding that takes into account state, local, and federal funds to effectively support low-income students and those with special needs (Klein, 2016; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). Further, within the ESSA, there were specific provisions that targeted supporting Latinx students.

Under ESSA, schools were required to break down annual testing by specific student groups (i.e., ethnic–racial identity) to understand the trends and needs of diverse student groups (Sanchez & Turner, 2017). Due to states' freedom in implementing policies and programs targeting Latinxs, as well as the improvements for English language learners, of which 28.9% are Latinx (the largest population) (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), changes that came with ESSA have largely been considered a successful approach for supporting Latinx students' developmental competencies and educational attainment.

**Trump administration.** In 2016, the Trump administration repealed many of the policies that prioritized allocating resources (e.g., funding for inclusion and diversity in classrooms) directed toward Latinx and underrepresented (e.g., low income, differently abled, nongender binary) student populations. For instance, the Trump administration withdrew Obama-era documents that encourage the use of race in college admission to promote diversity on college campuses (Arnett, 2018). The Trump Administration also repealed the "Stronger Together" grant program, which aimed to help schools combat segregation by student SES (Campisi, 2018; McIntyre, 2016). Finally, the Trump administration attempted to eliminate DACA, which research later found negatively impacted Latinx students' and families mental health and sense of stability (Zeiders et al., 2020).

Beyond these policy changes, research shows that the experiences of minoritized children and youth were impacted by the inauguration of the Trump Administration. In fact, research showed that Latinx children and youth, in particular, felt fear and anxiety due to the anti-immigrant rhetoric pushed by this administration. For instance, a research study found that among 224 (out of 562) participants who shared immigration fears due to the Trump election, 52% of those also reported fear and anxiety (Wray-Lake et al., 2018). These fears and anxiety were due to Latinx youth feeling like their livelihood and families were threatened by the potential implementation of anti-immigrant policies, mass deportation, and the anti-immigrant political climate. Youth also experienced indirect effects as a result of immigration policies; a separate study sheds light on the loss experienced by youth as classmates went missing after nearby immigrant raids (Gándara, 2018). Finally, due to the divisive climate encouraged by the Trump administration, Latinx youth also reported increases in experiences of racism. Latinx youth felt consistently targeted, stereotyped, and marginalized in their everyday contexts (Wray-Lake et al., 2018). These experiences have been found to cause long-term harm for marginalized children and youth due to the eraser of security and stability in their lived experiences; therefore, creating significant gaps in developmental competencies and education attainment (Edyburn & Meek, 2021), compared to non-Latinx counterparts.

> Education policy across the last three administrations has been evolving in nonlinear ways, such as increasing initiatives in support of the U.S.'s diverse student population and then repealing this progress that was aiding in addressing the needs of Latinx students.

The proposed conceptual model, detailed later in this report, is a crucial step toward advancing supportive resources to ensure the developmental success of Latinx students.

### State-level example: California

It is important to highlight what individual states, like California, with large Latinx populations are doing to support Latinx students because, in recent years, federal education policy has placed a lot of power in states' hands to implement education policies. The state of California has a long history of large Latinx student populations. In 1970, the Latinx children and youth population under 20 made up 16% of the state population, but in 2020 Latinx children and youth were projected to make up 51% of the state population (State of California Department of Finance, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These numbers indicate that the state of California has had to be ahead of other states in putting supports in place for helping Latinx students succeed.

Examples of policies that have been implemented in the state of California targeted to support Latinx students include: 1) Proposition 58, which passed and overturned Proposition 227, which only allowed English instruction (e.g., California now encourages bilingual education), 2) California Dream Act (e.g., gives undocumented residents access to financial aid for California public colleges and universities), and 3) resolutions, public statements, and legislation to protect Latinx, Muslim, LGBT, undocumented, and other vulnerable students and families (Cano, 2020; The Education Trust—West, 2017). California has placed considerable effort in implementing policies that support Latinx children and youth due to their large presence in the state. Other states may have not made as much progress due to differing education priorities and slower growth of Latinx children and youth in their school systems. Next, the report synthesizes policy, past research, and theory to conceptualize a new approach for addressing Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies.

## Synthesizing Theory, Policies, and Programs

Before unveiling the proposed conceptual model, it was also important to outline the disciplines that informed our conceptualization: development and sociocultural theories. Alongside the review of the selected theories, we also presented policies and programs that have been informed by the selected theories to demonstrate their applicability in contexts beyond the research sphere. This synthesis allowed us to draw from theoretical perspectives and exemplary policies and programs that highlight the role of the individual, development, and broader institutional and sociocultural processes.

### Developmental theories

Developmental theories that have been used to understand children and youth's development emphasize the role of the individual (Andersen & Ward, 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). These frameworks discuss how internal processes drive achievement-related choices (i.e., aspirations),

and occasionally extend to include how contexts (i.e., neighborhood, family) and external individuals (i.e., parents) can influence these internal processes. Most importantly, developmental theories consider the role that developmental period (e.g., childhood, early adolescence) plays in how individual-level processes may transpire. This perspective is important for understanding Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies because it emphasizes individual-level processes, such as ethnic identity and self-efficacy, that are present within all individuals. Although our review uncovered numerous developmental theoriesm, we selected the two that appeared to emphasize developmental processes and individual-level factors that are crucial in the conceptualization of Latinx children and youth's experiences, expectancy value theory (EVT) and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, and highlighted AVID and the California Dream Act as examples of the applicability of these theories.

**Expectancy value theory.** Eccles' EVT framework proposes that children and youth's beliefs about how well they can do achievement-related activities, and the extent to which they value education, influences their achievement persistence, and performance (Andersen & Ward, 2014; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). EVT also elucidates the importance of key socializers' beliefs and behaviors, gender and cultural stereotypes, and children and youth's perceptions of all these outside influences as the starting point that feed into the specific individual-level factors that directly influence achievement-related choices (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). It is important to acknowledge that this model was developed with White children and youth, and therefore may not capture all the processes and factors that may be relevant for Latinx children and youth.

An example of a program that implements an expectancy value approach is the nationally recognized Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program. AVID takes on a student-centered learning approach, where teachers, parents, and students all mutually participate in the program to help the student succeed. One of the key premises of AVID is that "average students" can succeed in a rigorous curriculum that makes them college-ready if they have additional supports that foster students' beliefs in their capabilities through the setting of expectations that challenge students' misconceived core beliefs about their abilities (Watt et al., 2011). AVID is a good example of how a nationally implemented program has not only increased the presence of Latinx students in higher education (and not only focuses on high-performing Latinx students but considers the importance of students' as individuals and parents and teachers in supporting the students' academic success; Mendiola et al., 2010).

**Bioecological model.** Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model generally proposes a framework to understand the evolving development of people both as individuals and in groups, as well as in consideration of biopsychological characteristics and contextual factors in forming developmental outcomes. This framework specifically posits that individuals are at the center of their development and are influenced both directly and indirectly by multiple layers of the environment, including both proximal (e.g., family, school) and distal (e.g., federal institutions) environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner also notes that individuals share ongoing reciprocal interactions with their environments (i.e., proximal processes) and other individuals. These interactions are embedded within the dimension of developmental (e.g., childhood) and historical (e.g., Covid19) times, which contributes to the developmental nature of this framework (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1994).

For the bioecological model, we would like to highlight the state of California's Dream Act as an example of a state-level policy implementing this approach. The California Dream Act is a law that allows undocumented students to apply for and receive state-based financial aid and institutional scholarships (Raza et al., 2019). This act demonstrates to be an example of the bioecological model because of the important connection made between individuals' well-being and broader environmental forces (i.e., a policy) that together provide venues for a group's optimal educational outcomes while also promoting the prosperity of the broader context. That is, the California Dream Act's investment in undocumented students' educational journeys was because the team behind this act valued the broader impact that undocumented students' success can have on California's workforce in the future. As can be seen, EVT and the bioecological model are informative developmental theories that merge individuals' developmental experiences alongside proximal and distal contextual influences. For this reason, developmental theories were necessary for our conceptualization of Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies.

### Sociocultural perspectives

Due to the U.S. Latinx population's history of disenfranchisement, it is of utmost importance to consider sociocultural perspectives for understanding Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Theories within this discipline provided an understanding of the sociocultural processes that developmental frameworks often do not emphasize, such as the role of policies, societal climate, race, discrimination, and so on. Given that Latinx children and youth are consistently minoritized due to their countries of origin and their ethnic/racial/ cultural background, sociocultural perspectives were critical to informing our conceptualization of Latinx children and youth's developmental success. Below, the three selected theories that exemplify a sociocultural framework, multilevel intersectionality, Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit), and the integrative model for the study of minority youth are briefly explained. We also highlight Head Start, the California Education for a Global Economy, and White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics as examples of initiatives that exemplify the applicability of these theories.

**Multilevel intersectionality.** This framework is critical because it serves as a guide for conceptualizing the complexities that exist within Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences and how these intersect with social and institutional structures. Multilevel intersectionality includes three important constructs within its framework: social categories and relations, multiple arenas of influence, and historicity. The social categories and relations component of this model refers to examining how social categories relate to one another and how these categories influence the development of social positions, divisions, and hierarchies. The multiple arenas of influence component address practices within specific domains of society or parts of society that contribute to inequality across social categories. Lastly, historicity focuses on positioning social categories associated with concrete relations and areas of practices within a broader temporal or spatial context. Historicity's mechanism works through how the interlocking systems (e.g., economic, legal, political, media, social, power contexts, etc.) in individual's lives work together to evolve to create changes that may influence developmental experiences. This model of intersectionality aims to explain how the individual level of intersectionality includes people's multiple identities, as well as the social and institutional factors and processes, that shape the developmental experiences of disenfranchised groups in the United States (Núñez, 2014). Given the diversity of Latinx

children and youth's experiences, it was critical to consider this framework as a source of knowledge for the proposed model.

An application of multilevel intersectionality is the federally funded Head Start program. Head Start is a program that was born out of the 1965 War on Poverty with the goal of boosting school readiness among low-income children. The foundation of Head Start was based on a whole child model that provides comprehensive services that "include preschool education; medical, dental, and mental health care; nutrition services; and efforts to help parents foster their child's development" (Puma et al., 2010). With this whole child model approach, Head Start in its current form has considered all aspects of children's developmental experiences (approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, physical development, culture, and individual experiences) that impact school readiness. Head Start is an example of multilevel intersectionality because it considers all the different factors and levels of experiences that impact children's outcomes and also includes the families to help support the success of the child. Also, Head Start has considered how early childhood experiences may differ among migrant and seasonal and American Indian and Alaskan Native children and families, as well as being very conscious of the diversity in experiences among children whose first language is not English, from diverse cultural backgrounds, and with disabilities (Office of Head Start, 2015).

**LatCrit.** This theory focuses on framing how "race-neutral" laws and policies perpetuate racial/ethnic and gender subordination for Latinx populations in the United States and draws from CRT, which elucidates the heterogeneity of Latinx communities and multidimensionality of Latinx identities (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 1994). LatCrit emphasizes the significance of examining laws and law making within the proper historical and cultural contexts to deconstruct their racialized content. LatCrit's main goal is to explore and reveal how racial thinking can change society to be more just. LatCrit consists of five key elements within its framework to understand the experiences of Latinxs and how to create systematic changes: 1) the importance of transdisciplinary approaches, 2) an emphasis on experiential knowledge, 3) a challenge on dominant knowledge, 4) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, and 5) a commitment to social justice. This framework often challenges the dominant discourse on race, gender, and class and how it relates to education due to the theories, policies, and practices that subordinate racial and ethnic groups in U.S. education systems. Also, LatCrit acknowledges how educational structures, processes, and discourses can operate to oppress and marginalize Latinxs instead of emancipating and empowering this population (Bernal, 2002; Sólorzano et al., 2005; Villalpando, 2004).

An application of LatCrit in education policy is the California Education for a Global Economy Initiative. This initiative overturned past legislation that allowed English only instruction. With this new initiative, California's public schools can implement and have more control over dual language acquisition programs (Taylor & Udang, 2016). California sought to make this shift due to a large number of Spanish-speaking students in the state and the consensus among education leaders about the need to prepare students to be competitive in the global economy. The future workforce needs to be able to compete in the globalized world, which requires current students to be proficient in English and other languages (Taylor & Udang, 2016). To add, past research finds that being bilingual is economically advantageous, especially in southern California, where those who speak two languages earn almost $2000 to

$3000 more per year than their monolingual counterparts (Rumbaut, 2014). This initiative is an application of LatCrit because it challenged dominant discourse as this initiative was passed in 2016 when there was an anti-inclusion climate being broadcasted around the United States. Also, this initiative highlights the importance of transdisciplinary approaches by highlighting how embracing other languages not only benefits the Latinx students in California but also broadly benefits the economy.

**Integrative model for the study of minority youth.** This framework was the first to consider how both social position and social stratification should be at the center of child development, rather than as additional factors. Social position and stratification include factors such as race, social class, ethnicity, and gender. These factors contribute to segregation and differences in the treatment of minority youth, which influence developmental competencies. The integrative model also includes constructs that are only salient to populations of color, but still includes developmental processes that are universal to all individuals (Garcia Coll et al., 1996). Overall, the integrative model for the study of minority youth examines how the direct and indirect associations among social position variables, social stratification factors, promoting/inhibiting environments, adaptive culture, children and youth characteristics, and family factors all lead to developmental competencies of youth. This model was the first in its time to propose how culture and diverse lifestyles that are different from White populations are not deficient, but instead valuable in youth's development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996).

A federal initiative that takes on an integrative model for the study of minority youth approach is The White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics (Initiative) (previously known as the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics). The Initiative was originally established by President George H. W. Bush in 1990 to address the educational disparities faced by the Hispanic community. On October 19, 2010, President Obama signed Executive Order 13555, renewing the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics and most recently was renewed with its new name in 2021 by President Biden. The Initiative's objectives are to advance educational equity and economic opportunity for Latino and Hispanic students, families, and communities. The lead author of this social policy report (Aceves) interned for the Initiative. In her immersive experience, she learned that the initiative reviews research and data, learns from practitioners and policymakers at all levels, and Hispanic students to determine which issues to focus on and develop a plan to address (President Obama Signs Executive Order, 2010). For instance, in the summer Aceves spent at the Initiative she helped develop policy briefs on the importance of engaging Hispanic students in STEM and the implications of this for the future U.S. economy. The reason this initiative is a reflection of the integrative model is because it considers students to be the center of their educational experiences and draws from different levels to understand Hispanic students' experiences and how these can be improved. The selected sociocultural theories, Latinx critical race theory and integrative model for the study of minority youth, are necessary because they emphasize the role of sociocultural factors in promoting and inhibiting Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Due to the Latinx population having a history of being treated as a minoritized population, it is necessary to consider broader social-cultural processes that impact their educational experiences.

## A Holistic Approach for Latinx Children and Youth's Developmental Competencies

Many diverse factors, such as family values, parental support, access to resources, and motivational processes (Ceballo et al., 2017; Hill & Torres, 2010; Raffaelli et al., 2005; Rivas-Drake, 2011; Serrano-Villar & Calzada, 2016; Stein et al., 2015) contribute to Latinx children and youth's development. Although these factors are critical, past theoretical models have not taken an interdisciplinary approach to incorporate factors that past research on Latinx students has highlighted as instrumental in promoting developmental competencies (Ceballo et al., 2017; Tinto, 1975; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Given the importance of recognizing the diverse experiences of U.S. Latinx students, our main goal in this report was to introduce a holistic approach for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies (see Figure 1) that captures key factors to consider when studying, developing, and implementing policies and programs that target Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies.

> A holistic framework is necessary for understanding the diverse factors that shape Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences.

Latinx children and youth will experience development uniquely depending on the characteristics that define them, the experiences they endure, and their context. Latinx students' experiences can be unique due to diversity in the country of origin, being of first generation vs. second or later generations, skin tone, immigration status, their geographic locale, intersecting identities, and so on. The holistic approach for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies (see Figure 1) includes six key factors: 1) sociocultural domains, 2) educational environment, 3) family, 4) individual, 5) time, and 6) developmental competencies. The following sections defined each of these factors, how they are conceptualized to fit into the model, and their purpose in the overarching processes in the model.

A holistic framework is necessary for understanding the diverse factors that shape Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences. Latinx children and youth will experience development uniquely depending on the characteristics that define them, the experiences they endure, and their context. Latinx students' experiences can be unique due to diversity in the country of origin, being of first generation vs. second or later generati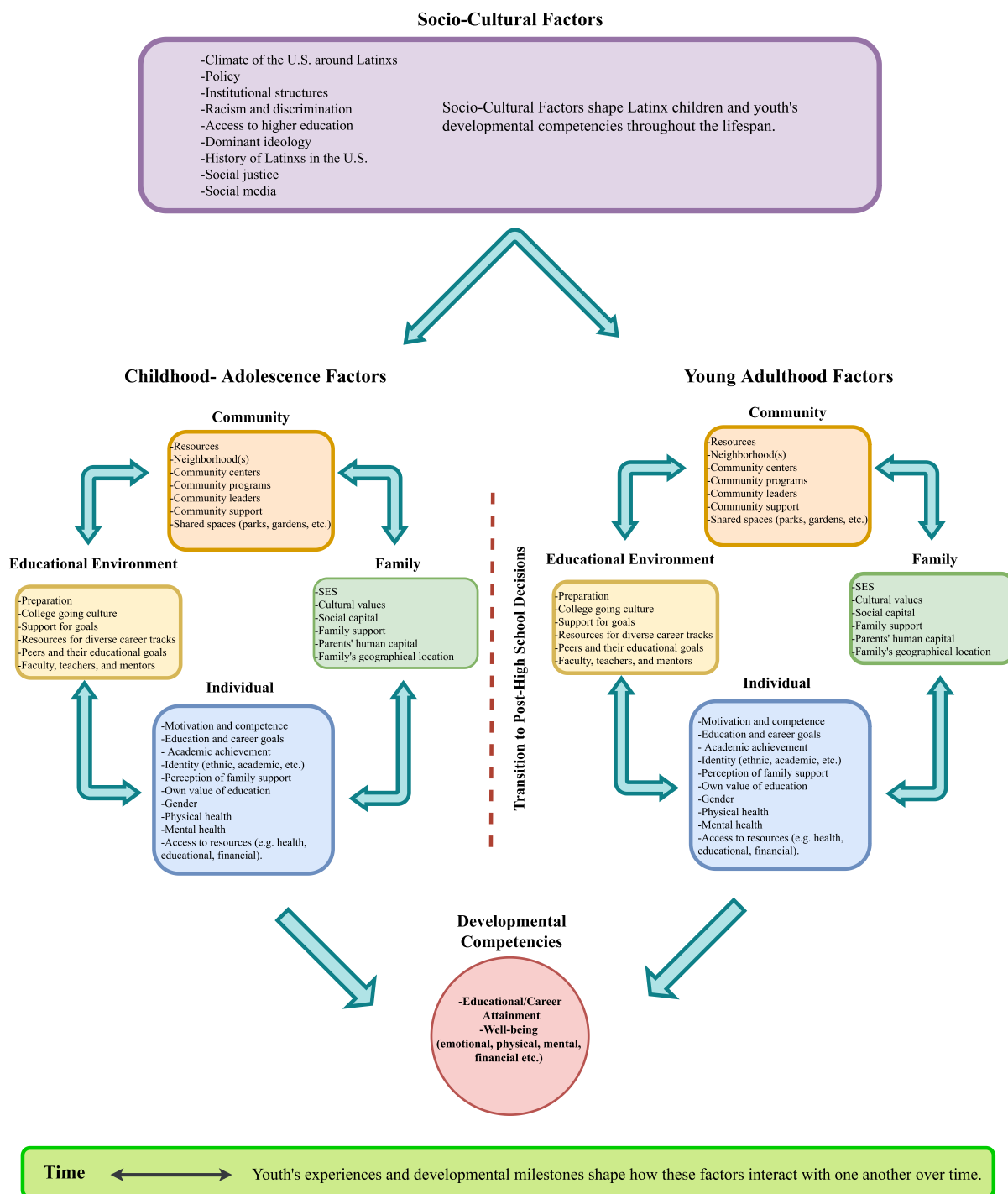ons, skin tone, immigration status, their geographic locale, and so on. The Holistic Approach for Latinx Children and Youth's Developmental Competencies (see Figure 1) includes six key factors: 1) sociocultural domains, 2) educational environment, 3) family, 4) individual, 5) time, and 6) developmental competencies. The following sections define each of these factors, how they are conceptualized to fit into the model, and their purpose in the overarching processes in the model.

### Sociocultural factors

The proposed holistic model begins with socio-cultural factors. The inclusion of sociocultural factors was inspired by Latino critical race theory, the integrative model for minority youth, and common cultural wealth model. These frameworks argue the importance of socio-cultural factors such as historical events, cultural values and traditions, race/racism, social position, and minority group history in the United States as factors, which are not always apparent, but

**Figure 1. A holistic approach for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. The figure depicts the model described in the paper.**

**Socio-Cultural Factors**

-Climate of the U.S. around Latinxs
-Policy
-Institutional structures
-Racism and discrimination
-Access to higher education
-Dominant ideology
-History of Latinxs in the U.S.
-Social justice
-Social media

Socio-Cultural Factors shape Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies throughout the lifespan.

**Childhood- Adolescence Factors**

**Community**

-Resources
-Neighborhood(s)
-Community centers
-Community programs
-Community leaders
-Community support
-Shared spaces (parks, gardens, etc.)

**Educational Environment**

-Preparation
-College going culture
-Support for goals
-Resources for diverse career tracks
-Peers and their educational goals
-Faculty, teachers, and mentors

**Family**

-SES
-Cultural values
-Social capital
-Family support
-Parents' human capital
-Family's geographical location

**Individual**

-Motivation and competence
-Education and career goals
- Academic achievement
-Identity (ethnic, academic, etc.)
-Perception of family support
-Own value of education
-Gender
-Physical health
-Mental health
-Access to resources (e.g. health, educational, financial).

**Transition to Post-High School Decisions**

**Young Adulthood Factors**

**Community**

-Resources
-Neighborhood(s)
-Community centers
-Community programs
-Community leaders
-Community support
-Shared spaces (parks, gardens, etc.)

**Educational Environment**

-Preparation
-College going culture
-Support for goals
-Resources for diverse career tracks
-Peers and their educational goals
-Faculty, teachers, and mentors

**Family**

-SES
-Cultural values
-Social capital
-Family support
-Parents' human capital
-Family's geographical location

**Individual**

-Motivation and competence
-Education and career goals
- Academic achievement
-Identity (ethnic, academic, etc.)
-Perception of family support
-Own value of education
-Gender
-Physical health
-Mental health
-Access to resources (e.g. health, educational, financial).

**Developmental Competencies**

-Educational/Career Attainment
-Well-being (emotional, physical, mental, financial etc.)

**Time** ⟷ Youth's experiences and developmental milestones shape how these factors interact with one another over time.

continuously work to shape Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences (Bernal, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Sólorzano et al., 2005; Villalpando, 2004). These factors are placed at the top of the model due to their significant direct and indirect influence on how Latinx children and youth perceive and experience their educational trajectories (Bernal, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 1996). For instance, sociocultural factors such as racism and discrimination can have direct or indirect negative effects (Sólorzano et al., 2005; Villalpando, 2004), while others such as cultural values and traditions can positively promote Latinx children and youth's development (Yosso, 2005). As we have experienced in the current year, racism can have many impactful effects on children and youth, and therefore future research on Latinx children and youth can benefit from a conceptualization that emphasizes both the promotive and inhibiting role of sociocultural factors. This conceptualization is important because of the prominence of these factors in a white-dominant society and how they can permeate at all levels (i.e., societal, systems, family, individual), at varying rates depending on the social climate or prominent social issues.

In addition to the aforementioned socio-cultural factors, we also extended our conceptualization to include social media as it has shaped Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences (Stevens et al., 2016). Social media is defined as online platforms that children and youth engage with regularly such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snap Chat, YouTube, and so on. The widespread access to social media has transformed how children and youth engage with news mediums, social networks, their friends, school, and family (Selwyn, 2012). Children and youth have access to social media 24/7, which shapes their views of society and policies and how these may impact them (Wood et al., 2016). Social media has also created virtual spaces, which can be used for both negative and positive experiences. On the negative side, these spaces can pose a threat to widespread racism, discrimination, and bias, which can negatively impact Latinx children and youth at any time of the day and in any context, as an example (Gin et al., 2017). On the positive side, social media can be a place to create support networks and safe spaces for Latinx children and youth to express themselves and connect with other Latinx children and youth across the country (Gray et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2016). These networks can become a platform for sharing educational resources and spreading awareness of the social issues that Latinx children and youth may face. Thus, how social media permeates the broader experiences of Latinx children and youth is important for understanding the progression of their developmental competencies.

Children and youth have widespread access to social media. In the current times, it is almost necessary to stay virtually connected in order to be informed and have access to important information (e.g., such as school schedules, news, etc.). For this reason, it is essential to take our theoretical conceptualization a step further to understand how these virtual spaces and their accessibility, shape Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. The inclusion of sociocultural factors highlights how sociocultural experiences, which are present in the backdrop and forefront in Latinx children and youth's lives, directly and indirectly influence their developmental competencies.

### The role of supportive community

The community component of the model focuses on situating the role of community in the healthy development of Latinx children and youth. Community in this report is defined as the

physical and non-physical space where individuals reside, engage with those that also reside in the same space, and where cultural and social capital are fostered and shared. The inclusion of this component is based on theories like Bronfenbrenner bioecological model and Yosso's cultural wealth model, which describe the critical role of community across development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Yosso, 2005). Research has also noted that Latinx communities have historically succeeded through collectivism, which means they thrive through being connected and socially supported within their communities (Davis et al., 2018). The community component of the model consists of community resources (e.g., environmental, safety, health, economic), support (e.g., law enforcement), centers (e.g., educational, therapeutic, cultural, vocational, etc.), programs, leaders (e.g., local government and activists), neighborhoods, and shared spaces (e.g., parks, recreational). The inclusion of community as an asset to developmental success is captured within the holistic nature of the model. First, it is important to capture all critical contexts that shape the lives of Latinx children and youth. Community is one of the contexts that daily shapes children and youth's developmental competencies. Second, limited work has highlighted the promotive role of supportive communities in both research and policy work.

Communities are both physical space and social networks where individuals and families begin their connection with external systems to learn about themselves and the world they inhabit and thus require investment and support. Community has been noted to be both a positive and negative influence in the lives of Latinx children and youth. Research has shown that supportive community can serve as a buffer from experiences of racism and prejudice (Denner et al., 2001; Stein et al., 2020). Community has also been shown to be an important source of social connections, capital, support, and resources, which positively shape Latinx children and youth's experiences in their educational, family, and individual contexts (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). Past research has also noted the adverse effects unsupportive communities can have on the developmental competencies of Latinx children and youth, which can lead to internalizing and externalizing behaviors (e.g., drug use, sexual risks, health disparities; McBride Murry et al., 2011). This negative effect of community is rooted in structural and systemic inequities that often push Latinx families into under-resourced, under-funded, and highly policed physical community locations. It is also important to highlight the nonphysical barriers, such as the lack of representation in political leadership, policies that support Latinx populations, and positive relationships with institutions (e.g., police departments, local governments, colleges/universities, etc.). Therefore, it is important to underscore the promotive and protective role of supportive community as a critical resource for supporting developmental competencies.

### Educational environment

The educational environment component of the model focuses on understanding the role of educational institutions in relation to Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. The educational environment consists of the school context, college, or setting in which children and youth receive their education during their childhood, adolescent, and young adulthood stages, which is important to consider because of the drastic differences among elementary versus high school versus higher education settings. Other factors included in the model also become more critical depending on the type of educational environment in which children and youth are embedded. The educational environment can also include the

social interactions that occur within that context such as relationships with teachers, faculty, school leaders, and peers that can inhibit or promote educational outcomes.

These social interactions are included in this part of the model because school relationships can promote or hinder Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies (Hill & Torres, 2010). Finally, the educational environment was given its own place in the model because although experiences in this context will be connected with sociocultural factors and the family context, children and youth spend a lot of their time in school and how they interact in school will differ from their other developmental contexts.

### Family

The model's family component is particularly important for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Past empirical work demonstrates that family has been one of the contexts of development that has been most widely studied among Latinx samples (Hill & Torres, 2010; Stein et al., 2014). The family component included in the model (and not limited to) are cultural values (e.g., familism, value of education), family SES, family's geographic location, familial support, and parents' human capital. For instance, familism values are critical for shaping Latinx children and youth's educational achievement as these values can buffer against experiences that negatively impact youth's education (Cupito et al., 2015; Stein et al., 2014). Although it is also important to acknowledge that some research notes that familism values may not always be promotive of Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies because these values through familial obligations can deter from well-being and academic success (Desmond & Lopez Turley, 2009; Ovink, 2014).

Alongside the educational environment, children and youth spend a large portion of their time with their families; therefore, it is crucial to highlight the family's central role (Lansford et al., 2001; Murry & Lippold, 2018). Due to the central role of family for children and youth's developmental competencies, it is important to highlight the need for policies and programs to not only support students but also their families. The family is the first context in which children and youth are socialized around how to value and envision their life trajectories. For instance, a recent study focused on Mexican-origin youth followed from seventh grade to eleventh grade revealed that mothers' and father's educational expectations for their youth were critical in shaping youth's own competence and educational expectations across adolescence (Aceves et al., 2020). In our model, we envision that family is bidirectionally related to the educational environment, directly related to the individual component, and indirectly related to the sociocultural components.

These proposed associations are hypothesized to be positive or negative depending on how children and youth are experiencing their educational environment, family, and sociocultural factors. For instance, children and youth who experience positive peer relationships in school are likely to have a promotive family environment (Benner, 2011; Leidy et al., 2010), which in turn leads to positive individual-level outcomes and buffers from the negative effects of sociocultural factors (Reyes & Elias, 2011). On the other hand, children and youth who experience a stressful family environment can feel disengaged in the school context (Phillips, 2012), which in turn can lead to negative individual-level outcomes because depending on the familial level stressors (e.g., immigration status, financial stressors, etc.), this can heighten the impact of sociocultural factors (Gonzalez &

Morrison, 2016). Finally, within this component, it is also critical to consider how family factors may shape educational experiences uniquely dependent on children and youth's family's generational status and country of origin because these specific factors can shed light on immigration status and language barriers families may face, which can impact their access to educational resources that promote children and youth's developmental competencies.

### Individual

Most empirical research on Latinx children and youth tends to focus on cultural mechanisms that support developmental competencies (Hill & Torres, 2010; Raffaelli et al., 2005; Rivas-Drake, 2011; Stein et al., 2015), but we must highlight the important role that individuals hold in shaping their own experiences (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The individual component consists of and is not limited to motivation, competence, educational and career goals, academic achievement, identities (e.g., ethnic identity, gender identity, indigenous identity, biracial identity, etc.) children and youth's own value for education, and their gender. These factors shape children and youth's individual experiences and developmental competencies. In addition to these psychological aspects, it is also important to include socioemotional, mental, and physical health in the individual factor of this model.

All the aforementioned components are critical in shaping developmental competencies, but we believe that Latinx students as individuals play an important role in directing their educational attainment and well-being. For instance, some Latinx students successfully navigate the education system and obtain doctorate degrees, while others do not make it through high school. No one-size-fits-all mechanism exists for why some students succeed, and others do not, but the answer may lie in individuals' experiences, coping mechanisms, and the resources they have available to them. Although the contextual and sociocultural factors can be part of the explanations for why the attainment of developmental competencies can be difficult, the role of the individual may be a key mechanism for why some children and youth still persevere and succeed.

### Developmental competencies

In this newly developed model's conceptualization, developmental competencies focus on educational attainment and well-being. On the educational attainment side, this competency is twofold. Educational attainment can include the traditional levels of attainment such as high school to doctorate completion, but we expand to also include nontraditional paths such as military enlistment, vocational careers (e.g., those that may not require a formal degree), and any other paths that Latinx students may pursue that still lead them to fruitful lives. On the well-being side, this competency can include and is not limited to diverse facets of well-being such as emotional, mental, physical, financial, and so on. It is important to distinguish between these two major developmental competencies because educational attainment does not necessarily equate to overall well-being.

### Time as a developmental context

Finally, similar to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, the proposed holistic model has a place for time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Time is important for children and youth's

developmental competencies because the way children and youth perceive the included components will depend on whether they are children, adolescents, or young adults as well as their daily experiences and the historical context. For instance, educational experiences, as they have been impacted by COVID 19, will be internalized differently dependent on whether a student is a child versus an adolescent, the daily experiences they are facing with their families (e.g., completing their semester online in a small apartment, with limited internet access, with siblings around, and parents who lost their job was not a farfetched experience for Latinx students during COVID 19), and the broader impacts that this historical event is having on their lives. Therefore, time should be conceptualized as the developmental stage (i.e., childhood or elementary, adolescence or middle/high school and young adulthood or college stages for the model), the experiences that children and youth undergo daily, and historical experiences (such as in the COVID 19 example). This conceptualization of time is important because developmental, daily, and historical experiences that influence developmental competencies could be driven by sociocultural factors that are shaping the familial context, educational environment, social climate of the United States, and individual experiences Latinx children and youth endure daily. This proposed conceptualization of time also intersects with Elder's life-course framework (Elder, 1998), which describes that youth who were adolescents in the Great Depression, for example, had distinct life trajectories than youth who were children, due to how this historical context intersected with the implications of developmental stage (Elder, 1998). Therefore, time is important to consider because the developmental stage and the historical context in which Latinx children and youth are embedded in are critical for shaping developmental competencies.

To further the conceptualization of time, it is also important to consider the dimension of time as capital. Time as capital can be conceptualized as viewing time as a resource to attain education and well-being. For instance, in childhood-adolescence, if Latinx students are expected to help their family with household chores or watch younger siblings, this can reduce the time that they invest in their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, which could be detrimental for future educational attainment (Flook & Fligni, 2008). Another applicable example at the young adulthood stage is if students have to work while attending school, this can slow down their progress in school, which can increase debt across time and slow down the pace at which students reach a point when they actually accrue income to support their well-being (i.e., physical, mental, and financial) (Darolia, 2014; Oviatt et al., 2017). Therefore, it is also important to extend the conceptualization of time as capital because time is critical for Latinx students' developmental competencies.

### Integrating all the parts

The proposed model is innovative as it underscores the complexity of how different components work together to shape Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. We would like to highlight three contributions that are constantly evolving due to the plasticity of children, youth, and families. First, past models only allude to the importance of family, but our model gives it its own place because family is critical for shaping Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Second, another important contribution of our model is the aspect of time. The model's conceptualization of time is a novel way of thinking about how time intersects with all the included components. Time can help explain why there may be differences across Latinx children

and youth's developmental experiences because it not only integrates the importance of their developmental stage, experiences happening daily, monthly, and yearly but also the historical context and time as a form of capital. Finally, the individual component, as conceptualized in the model, is critical in promoting Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Individuals, despite all the external influences, can be critical drivers of their experiences. This conceptualization is not often made by research that focuses on Latinx children and youth. We cannot discount how despite all the influential sociocultural factors that shape life experiences, Latinx children and youth are still active authors in their development.

## Recommendations to Support Latinx Children and Youth's Developmental Competencies

The conceptualization of the proposed holistic approach for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies provided a synthesis of critical information, which was used to inform the following recommendations that can support Latinx children and youth's developmental experiences. All the information that was synthesized by the proposed model highlighted aspects of Latinx children and youth's experiences that are necessary to consider when developing ways to serve this student population. In this section of the social policy report, we sought to propose recommendations. These recommendations are intended for use in future policy and among researchers and practitioners to develop and implement effective ways to support Latinx children, youth, and families.

### Policy recommendations

1. **Improve states' abilities to address diversity of needs among Latinx students**
   States across the nation have diverse Latinx student populations within their schools. This diversity is a byproduct of not only the school environment and climate but also Latinx students' family's generational status, migration patterns, access to resources, social capital, intersecting identities, and so on. The proposed holistic approach for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies highlights the education environment and family factors as important sources for the diversity in Latinx children and youth's experiences. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) needs to provide states with more guidance in addressing not only the needs of students but also accounting for how these needs may vary due to the specific experiences of Latinx students in their states due to history, countries of origin, generational context, and intersecting identities (e.g., indigenous, Afro-Latinx).

   For instance, the experiences of indigenous and Afro-Latinx children and youth are nonexistent in education statistics and policies. Another important example to highlight is being a Latinx student in California is vastly different from being a Latinx student in Pennsylvania due to California having more experience supporting Latinx students over decades, versus Latinxs being a more recent population to Pennsylvania (Stein et al., 2016). In addition to the diversity within Latinx students, it is important to consider students' diverse educational needs (e.g., language proficiencies). It would also be critical for ED to guide states in considering how to support educational attainment beyond higher education to include vocational careers, technical trades, military

careers, starting higher education at community colleges, and so forth. Many Latinx individuals may pursue these nontraditional routes and it would be important to have resources to support their well-being in these paths and for their life post degree/training. Federal policy gives states the power to decide how to address students' needs. ED needs to guide states in serving Latinx student populations by creating and promoting partnerships among researchers, state departments of education, and practitioners so that states have the information they need to understand the varying diversity among Latinx student populations and their needs.

2. **Implement cultural competency and educational equity training**
   The proposed model showcases the complexity of Latinx children and youth's educational experiences. The model specifically highlights the connections among sociocultural, time, educational environment, family, and individual factors as a way to begin to grasp the complexity in Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. Due to this complexity in Latinx students' experiences and the continued growth in the diversity among U.S. students, state departments of education need to implement cultural competency and educational equity training for all their staff, particularly educators. These trainings are important for issues surrounding Latinx student's developmental competencies and any student population because they can make staff at state departments of education aware of the importance of considering the unique experiences and circumstances of the diverse student populations in their states. The implementation of these trainings could be done through research to policy collaborations, such as Research to Policy Collaboration housed at the Pennsylvania State University and led by coauthor Daniel Max Crowley, which seeks to bridge research and policy by emphasizing partnerships between research experts and legislative staff. These types of partnerships could help State Departments of Education in carrying out effective state-level education policy, research, training, and practice that best supports Latinx children and youth.

> In line with the proposed model for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies, it is critical to consider the influence and connection between students' success and the family context.

3. **Refocus attention on contexts beyond school**
   Years of research have documented the importance of family in many forms (e.g., parental involvement, parental support, familism, family obligations, family values, etc.; Ceballo et al., 2017; Hill & Torres, 2010; Rivas-Drake, 2011; Stein et al., 2015) for promoting developmental competencies. Some of the basic skills necessary for school achievement are first learned in the family context; therefore, it is necessary to include family engagement support not only in early childhood education but also throughout students' years in school. Family engagement programs would need to be developed and implemented to adapt to families and students' changing needs throughout their years of education. For instance, Latinx families with children versus adolescents would be seeking different resources (e.g., preschool vs. college attendance supports). In addition to educational resources, these family engagement programs would also need to consider the overall family's needs (e.g., immigration status, SES, employment status) and how these needs impact children and

youth at each stage of their education. By taking this approach, we are engaging both key players in students' success and considering the interplay between the school and family contexts. This interplay would also suggest that policy should be more interdisciplinary, such that education and family policy makers should work closely together to determine how they can inform each other's initiatives.

4. **Improve visibility and access to databases of evidence-based education programs**
Given the documented importance of many factors as proposed in our holistic model for supporting Latinx children and youth's success (Arbelo Marrero, 2016; O'Neal, 2018; Taggart, 2018), it would be necessary to increase visibility and school districts access to databases of evidence-based programs that could be used to better support Latinx children and youth. Past research has documented the presence of many programs and interventions that have shown to be successful in supporting Latinx children and youth's educational experiences (McElroy & Armesto, 1998; Renbarger & Beaujean, 2020). Many of these programs have been evaluated and have a history of success, which could be instrumental in nationwide efforts to support Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies. It would also be advantageous to disseminate these databases to school districts in a curated manner, by suggesting programs and interventions by geographical area in which they have been implemented, student characteristics (e.g., immigrant students, specific subgroups of Latinx students), and student needs (e.g., preschool, college enrollment, remedial education, access to resources, skills to succeed). The accessibility of these databases could provide school districts with a crucial resource for implementing evidence-based approaches, while also supporting Latinx students' diverse needs.

### Practitioner and researcher recommendations

Finally, we wanted to provide recommendations for practitioners and researchers. Given what we have learned from our conceptualization of Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies, it is important to continue to push forward all the agents of change that seek to support Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies.

1. **Adapt your approach to working with Latinx student populations**
As noted by the model for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies, Latinx students' experiences consist of many layers. In the model, we highlight the indirect and direct influence of sociocultural factors (e.g., social climate, discrimination, social media, etc.) for shaping developmental competencies (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Stein et al., 2016; Villalpando, 2004; Yosso, 2005). Given that these sociocultural factors are always at play, practitioners and researchers working with Latinx students should spend time simply getting to know the Latinx community they will work with in the early stages of developing the collaboration. There is evidence that Latinx communities are more likely to engage in research when personal contact is made at each stage of recruitment and study participation (Roosa et al., 2008). Similar to the holistic model, practitioners and researchers should spend time understanding what sociocultural factors are impacting this community, what is the relationship between the school and family contexts, and most importantly how do Latinx students view themselves in this community. As outsiders or even insiders to a group, it can be easy to make assumptions about how to serve a population. For this reason, it is important to

consider all the areas highlighted by the proposed model to adapt our understanding of a community based on their experiences and what they hope to gain through the relationship. The approach should always be to understand who the community is and their needs before we impose our own ideas, programs, and research.

> Being able to recognize and dismantle your biases requires reflection and conscious awareness of automatic preferences that you have that you may not even recognize.

2. **Recognize and dismantle individual bias**
   Years of research generally demonstrates that bias is a factor that shapes how individuals interact with diverse contexts. Research also shows that a majority of individuals tend to have a positive bias toward White individuals and a negative bias towards people of color, particularly those who are Black (Nosek et al., 2007; Warikoo et al., 2016). This observation is important to note in this report because for practitioners and researchers that work closely with Latinx communities it is important to recognize and reduce the biases that you may be inevitably bringing with you to work every day. Being able to recognize and dismantle your biases requires reflection and conscious awareness of automatic preferences that you have that you may not even recognize. For instance, even when you identify as a Latinx individual, you may still have a White preference simply because that is the unconscious conditioning you have had within your family, school systems, and the broader society. The first step to recognizing your biases is to understand what biases you have. You can start here: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest. html. After you are aware of the biases you do have, you can begin to actively dismantle how you engage in situations that may bring out your biases. The work does not stop with this assessment. You have to consistently check yourself. For instance, are you automatically making a bad judgment about an individual who is of a different race or ethnicity than yourself? Stop and get to know the person and understand their circumstances before your bias pushes you to assume the worst. This is a practice that takes time, effort, willingness to accept feedback, and curiosity to continue to learn how you can be more accepting of those who may be different from you. Together, we can work together to dismantle injustice biases that have pervaded our society.

3. **Elevate the voices of Latinx students**
   As emphasized by the proposed model and past theories (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Yosso, 2005), sociocultural factors such as the social climate, discrimination, racism, and social media among others are indirectly and directly at play in shaping Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies (Gray et al., 2013; Wood et al., 2016). These factors can also impact Latinx students' ability to feel empowered to advocate for their educational needs. For these reasons, practitioners and researchers with the privilege to work closely with Latinx students should elevate the voices of these students. This privilege plus your expertise in your role and area can be critical in voicing effective mechanisms of change in the local community, state, or even federal education policy initiatives. Take opportunities to effectively elevate Latinx students' experiences through research, dissemination of information, and by connecting with individuals who take knowledge and information to the next level where it can serve as an agent for change in supporting Latinx children and youth.

4. **Revamp collaboration efforts to support Latinx students**

Similar to the issue about not having an all-inclusive model that addresses Latinx students' developmental competencies, this recommendation calls practitioners and researchers to revamp ways to collaborate with each other. New research and practices are consistently being developed; for this reason, it is important that we continue to learn from each other's respective disciplines. The proposed model for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies considers factors that range from the individual to broader society level factors (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1994; Garcia Coll et al., 1996); therefore, it is especially critical to expand efforts even more to support Latinx students' developmental competencies. These efforts can be revamped by connecting with disciplines and practices that we would not traditionally connect with for addressing issues specific to Latinx students. This means that researchers and practitioners should create opportunities to share their efforts by not only attending national conferences (because some local and state-level practitioners may not have access to these meetings) but also by engaging with local school districts and parent-teacher associations, attending state-level meetings on education policy, and connecting with initiatives across local–state–national levels from which you can learn from and also contribute. These efforts can also be extended to ensure that the research and practice methods being implemented by these professionals create opportunities for Latinx children and youth to experience financial, mental, and physical well-being starting in early childhood education that is sustained through higher education. Practitioners and researchers should be proactive by creating innovative ways to promote Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies through the ways proposed and beyond!

5. **Develop a growth and equity mindset**

The last recommendation for practitioners and researchers is to develop a growth and equity mindset. The proposed model for Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies and past theories highlight the adaptability of the populations that we study to their everchanging experiences and environments (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1994; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Yosso, 2005). This understanding that we have about Latinx students' adaptability to their school experiences and contexts is one that must be taken beyond the research (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). As researchers and practitioners, it is important to develop a growth and equity mindset because research and practice are not constant, they will evolve with the changes that Latinx students also undergo in their life experiences. Therefore, developing a growth and equity mindset is critical in addressing Latinx children and youth's developmental competencies, due to the United States's rapidly changing social and demographic landscape.

## Concluding Remarks

The proposed model and policy recommendations are vital to promoting Latinx children and youth's success and well-being. This report underscores the need to redefine the standards of success for Latinx children and youth by accounting for intersectional inequalities faced by this diverse population and prioritizing institutional accountability, equitable access, developmental competencies, supportive contexts, and long-term adjustment.

First, we proposed a model for Latinx children and youth and allude to how this model may be applied uniquely for diverse Latinx subgroups. In the application of this model, researchers should account for and prioritize how proposed factors vary among Latinx subgroups, with consideration for intersecting identities and histories in the United States (Fuller & García Coll, 2010). Second, it is crucial to consider how children and youth's intersecting identities and social categories (e.g., generational and immigration status, indigenous populations, Afro-Latinxs, etc.) shape associations proposed by the holistic model. We would like to note that a large limitation in past work and this model is the focus on homogeneous Latinx experiences, while only barely touching on the intersectional experiences of some Latinx subpopulations. Finally, this report calls for future efforts to provide equitable access to educational opportunities and to expand standards of success, beyond educational attainment, to include the well-being and long-term adjustment of Latinx children and youth.

> The model and accompanying recommendations are accessible and can be used by researchers, policy teams, administrators, education leaders, practitioners, teachers, mentors, advocates, or groups committed to better serve Latinx children and youth.

This report introduces a model for holistically understanding the developmental experiences of Latinx children and youth, underscoring the need to expand views of success through considerations for developmental competencies and long-term adjustment. Recommendations are made to advance equitable support for Latinx children and youth. The report began by describing the demographic landscape of Latinx students in the United States, past education policy, and theories that informed the conceptualization of the model and recommendations. The proposed model can serve as a starting point for a more holistic view on how to improve the success of Latinx children and youth, buffering against the effects of intersectional inequalities. The model and accompanying recommendations are accessible and can be used by researchers, policy teams, administrators, education leaders, practitioners, teachers, mentors, advocates, or groups committed to better serve Latinx children and youth. Accounting for intersectional experiences to promote Latinx children and youth's success is crucial to ensuring the economic future of the United States.

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# Author Bios

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**Brenda Rincon** is a first-generation Latina scholar who completed B.S. degrees in Human Biology and Psychology at the University of California, San Diego. Her undergraduate studies were advanced by the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program. Brenda is currently a second-year doctoral student of Developmental Psychology at the University of California, Riverside. Brenda is the fellowship recipient of the Eugene Cota-Robles Award (ECRA). Brenda's research investigates the promotive and protective role of social support and mentorship in relation to academic achievement and motivation among marginalized students. Brenda aims to pursue a career in academia to enhance student mentorship and strengthen the academic pipeline for students from underrepresented and marginalized communities.

**Dr. Diamond Y. Bravo** is an Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of California, Riverside. She is a first-generation Latina scholar who completed a Ph.D. in Family and Human Development from Arizona State University and an M.A. in Experimental Psychology from California State University, Northridge. Dr. Bravo was also the recipient of the Harvard Dean's Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Dr. Bravo's work investigates how cultural resilience and risk factors collectively inform motivation and wellbeing among immigrant and ethnic-racial minoritized youth and families. This work seeks to advance social justice initiatives within developmental science and inform anti-racist and inclusive programming.