

Literature Review: A review of daily conversations and practices at home: Exploring practices that promote early literacy in Spanish-speaking homes and home-school interactions

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Latinx¹ students are a racial minority growing quickly in the United States, and it is estimated that they will represent 50% of the U.S. public school population by 2050 (Tang, Dearing, & Weiss, 2012). However, these students have the lowest educational outcomes (Tang et al., 2012) and have twice the risk to display poor literacy skills than non-Hispanic white peers (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003). Data from the National Center for Education Statistics for Reading highlighted that 56% of the Latinx children in fourth grade scored below “basic” in the test mandated by the U.S. Department of Education (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005). This is alarming because literacy impacts children’s short and long-term educational outcomes (Hammer & Miccio, 2006; St. John, Manset, Hu, Simmons, & Michael, 2000); their social, mental, and emotional well-being (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018); and their ability to navigate society in adulthood (Snow, 2017). In today’s world, making meaning from written symbols becomes a foundational skill, critical to (a) interact with everyday information, (b) use technology and social media, (c) participate in public discourse, and even, (d) find employment (Snow, 2017).

Additionally, recent reports from the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) posit that 16.9% of the Hispanic families live below the federal poverty line (i.e., the poverty threshold for two adults and one child is \$19,730). Furthermore, the National Center for Education Statistics (2017) found associations between family risk factors and poor educational outcomes. Coming from a low-income family and living in a household where the primary language is not English are examples of risk factors related to lower academic outcomes in third grade. About 15% of Hispanic kindergartners have these two risk factors. According to this study, these students score lower on reading tests compared to their peers with no risk factors.

Due to the importance of literacy in supporting academic outcomes, multiple studies have been conducted to identify factors that support literacy skills from early years (Farver, Xu, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2013; Loera, Rueda, & Nakamoto, 2011). Literacy development is enabled, for example, when parents read to their children (Boyce, Innocenti, Roggman, Norman, & Ortiz, 2010) or

¹ Latinx is used instead of Latino/a as an inclusive term for people who identify themselves as Latino/a descent (The Word History of Latinx | Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

when family-school collaboration is enhanced (Tang et al., 2012). Studies have identified that effective interventions are the one that connects and coordinate family and school efforts and beliefs especially in low-income and immigrant environments (Connor & Morrison, 2019; Sawyer, Cysyk, Sandilos, & Hammer, 2018). Furthermore, literacy interventions are even more effective when conducted earlier in life, also referred to as early literacy, reporting improvements on academic achievement (Hernández, 2012; Jones, 2018) and lowering retention rates in first grade (St. John et al., 2000).

However, despite the urgency of the situation related to the low literacy outcomes of low-income Latinx students, and the fact that 85% of Hispanic families declare speaking in Spanish to their children (Pew Research Center, 2015), few studies have been conducted to identify early literacy practices among bilingual Spanish-speaking families (Farver et al., 2013; Hammer et al., 2003; Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Most studies conducted overlook the heterogeneity of Latinx culture and socioeconomic differences (Arzubiaga, Rueda, & Monzó, 2002; Galloway & Lesaux, 2017) or show deficits perspectives (Boyce et al., 2010; Farver et al., 2013; Hoerner, 2001; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). This presents numerous issues; for instance, by overlooking Latinx heterogeneity and their specific strength, research fails to inform the design of effective interventions for all Latinx groups. Initiatives weaken when do not connect with practices and belief of each group within a community (Kermani & Janes, 2001; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003).

To fill this gap, new studies have focused on early literacy development of low-income Latinx families from a non-deficit perspective (Farver et al., 2013; Loera et al., 2011), meaning from a perspective that acknowledges the challenges a specific group—in this case, Spanish-speaking, low-income families—must overcome. Non-deficit perspectives particularly reject the deficit approach commonly used in research on Latinx families while incorporating the assets-based perspective to research. Such studies are designed to examine the actual strengths and practices Latinx families have to offer (Gonzalez et al., 1995; Moll et al., 1992). Furthermore, these studies also promote building early literacy interventions upon the strengths and uniqueness of these families as a more successful and respectful—culturally sensitive—way to support them (Arzubiaga et al., 2002; Boyce et al., 2010; Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992; Gonzalez et al., 1995; Moll et al., 1992). A good example of this is the co-creation of a family book filled with narratives and elements of daily home experiences (Boyce et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, there is still a debt regarding studies and home-school interventions conducted and designed from a non-deficit approach. It is noteworthy that non-deficit, early literacy home-school interventions are even more relevant for immigrant families. They help to align expectations (Suárez-

Orozco, Onaga, & de Lardemelle, 2010), foster positive and respectful relationships (Fagan & Wise, 2007; Soutullo, Smith-Bonahue, Sanders-Smith, & Navia, 2016), and improve English proficiency (Naughton, 2004), among other benefits. Therefore, filling this gap—understanding early literacy practices and advocating for collaboration between home and school—is fundamental to support Latinx families more effectively and sustainably (D’Agostino, Lose, & Kelly, 2017; Jones, 2018).

Finally, it is worth saying that studies have identified the transferability of literacy skills between Spanish and English. Strong evidence underscores the transference of metalinguistic knowledge, namely learning that a text represents the oral world in Spanish is useful for English literacy, too (Wang, 2017); however, there is mixed evidence that supports the transference of phonological awareness, vocabulary, and print knowledge (Goodrich, Lonigan, & Farver, 2013; Wang, 2017).

The purpose of this research is to explore, from an ecocultural perspective, the literature related to the early literacy practices of low-income Spanish-speaking families’ and early literacy home-school interventions. The following questions guide the review:

- According to the literature, what early literacy practices have been observed among low-income Spanish-speaking homes in the United States?
- What is the nature of home-school early literacy interventions that have been carried out among students from Spanish-speaking homes and their schools, according to the literature?

Positionality

I am a child psychologist and I believe in children’s agency to overcome challenges and their parents’ efforts to help them thrive. Additionally, I have witnessed how critical it is to engage parents in the educational process of their children to support them and enable them to flourish. However, I also am aware of how necessary and nurturing school support can be. That is why I am not only interested in early literacy practices at home, but also in home-school interventions.

Additionally, I am Latina. As a Latina, I know and value the richness and diversity that characterizes Latinx culture. I know that our family and community motivate us; we make meaning from our history and with our family. That is why I am interested in studying home interaction related to early literacy development and home-school interventions from an ecocultural perspective—meaning using daily routines as a tool to understand family expectations, goals, and cultural messages, as well as teachers’ expectations and values.

I identify myself proudly as a Latina and I live in the United States in the privileged position of a graduate student. Also, I do not look like as the stereotypical phenotype of Latina, but I speak like a native Spanish-speaker. Because of this, I have experienced different treatment from others depending on whether they hear me speak or not. In sum, I know how rich the “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) of our community are, but I also know that this knowledge is not always perceived as an asset, but rather, a deficit. Considering this, the ecocultural approach is an adequate lens to analyze this literature review, because it “removes us from a deficit thinking approach that brings us to empirically derived, not static ways of understanding, measuring and approaching diversity” (Arzubiaga et al., 2002, p. 240).

Finally, as a Latina student that had access to high-quality educational environments, I am saddened and alarmed by the situation other Latinx students are living in. I support the “17 Sustainable Goals” developed by the United Nations (2016), where education is presented as a universal right to acquire the required tools to break from the cycle of poverty and reduce inequality. This complex and severe situation has driven me to focus on early literacy practices and home-school interventions in low-income Spanish-speaking Latinx families (i.e., low-income families with Spanish as the native language, where children receive formal education in English or bilingual contexts).

Theoretical Framework

As Vygotsky (1978) states, making meaning from readings is a co-construction socially situated. Thus, language and literacy are socially shaped according to the interactions we have with the environment. Individuals are agents in the construction of the meanings in language and literacy. Literacy is a human creation; humans developed it and humans transform it.

Furthermore, children’s literacy learning is a developmental process that, when guided by an adult or a peer, evolves to a higher level within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As Vygotsky (1978) discussed, there are some tasks -according to each child’s developmental state- that can only be accomplished with support, especially from a parent or teacher. This is what Vygotsky calls the ZPD, the set of tasks that a person cannot achieve alone but that they will achieve in the near future after receiving support. More specifically, the ZPD underscores the significance of the scaffolding of literacy precursors that parents and other family member do.

The family is one of the most significant influences in a child’s life and development (Boyce et al., 2010; Wang, 2017). Because of this, I have chosen to examine this literature review through both an anthropological and ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), as both of these lenses take into account the

role of the family. Furthermore, this review will be guided by two overlapping ecocultural approaches that lie under the ecological umbrella.

I will use the general ecocultural approach that states that every cultural community teaches developmental pathways to their children based on daily routines (Weisner, 2002). These routines are filled with meaningful activities in which ecological, cultural and institutional values, goals and emotions are embedded. Furthermore, these practices produce Zones of Proximal Development where meaning is shaped in the interaction with parents, siblings, teachers and so on (Weisner, 2002). For instance, the way parents tell stories, read or expose children to literacy experiences, illustrates cultural meaning, expectations and goals transmission. Moreover, the way parents implement school activities at home can also be unpacked to analyze the influence of co-existing systems in early literacy development.

To complement this approach, I will use developmental niche theory, also under the ecocultural umbrella. As Harkness and Super (1995) posited, the child is the center of a constantly evolving system embedded in cultural systems and child's daily routines are shaped by three components. The first is the everyday physical and social setting, like home resources and behavioral patterns related to oral communication and book reading. This component offers a transparent source of information about the family and, in this case, about early literacy. The second component is the customs of child care, which represent cultural rationalizations of the practices: we will analyze how stories are told and how activities are implemented. The third component is the psychology of the caretaker that refers to beliefs, meanings, and expectations. At this level, we unpack parents' beliefs and expectations regarding literacy. These three components will guide the presentation of the findings of this literature review.

Conceptual Framework

Literacy is the ability to make meaning from text and transform the speech into print—that is, understanding how symbols are used to write, which sounds are related to those symbols, and how to decode and make meaning from the surrounding world (Snow, 2017). The goal of becoming literate is to understand what words represent and what they mean in a socially situated way, making meaning from the text and with the text (Snow, 2017).

There are three main processes underlying literacy development: oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge (Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Farver et al., 2013). These three interconnected processes illustrate that literacy development does not start with formal education. Critical learning opportunities for developing precursors to literacy occur in early childhood—the period from birth to eight years old—and though informal education (Snow, 2017). Early

literacy skills are fundamental to thrive in formal education and the modern world (Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Goodrich et al., 2013).

Finally, it is essential to consider that children that come from Spanish-speaking homes are learning two languages at the same time. By doing this, they are developing literacy skills in English and Spanish at the same time. There is evidence that bilingual children follow similar literacy paths than monolingual children, yet at a different acquisition pace (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017). Some studies show that bilingual children show a lower performance in kindergarten, a gap that becomes trivial in fourth grade (Farver et al., 2013). It is also important to discuss the leverage of linguistic knowledge from one language to another (Wang, 2017). There is evidence that the metalinguistic knowledge of literacy—the understanding that text represents the oral world—is transferred (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017). However, limited evidence supports other literacy skills—namely vocabulary and print knowledge—as clearly transferable from Spanish to English in preschool Latinx children (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017; Goodrich et al., 2013). Additionally, there is contradictory evidence related to the transferability of phonological awareness (Farver, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2009; Goodrich et al., 2013) for preschool students.

Methods

Educational Source and ERIC (via the UCLA Library) were selected as the search engines to start the search for this literature review. These databases are leading search engines giving access to numerous and reliable educational sources. PsycINFO was also used to complement all searches conducted, offering a more psychological approach to the review.

For this literature review, all these sources were considered because they offer relevant and meaningful information to address the research questions. Based on the first research question, three crucial topics were identified: early literacy development, Spanish-speakers and family. Based on this, three key terms were constructed for the systematic review: “early literacy,” “Spanish-speak*,” and “parents.” The search was conducted in the three databases looking for articles with the three keywords in all the text. As this search yielded just 21 results, an additional search with keywords in the title or abstract was not necessary. A second search with the keywords “early literacy,” “Spanish-speak* or Hispanic* or Latin*,” and “parent* or home” in all text, yielding 101 results. The articles were cut down following one criterion: how relevant the article (by looking at its abstract) is to address the first research question. After using the outlined criteria, 33 articles were considered to address the first research question.

Regarding the second research question, a search in the three databases using the keywords “early literacy,” “Spanish-speak* OR Hispanic OR Latin*,”

and “home-school OR school-home” and “intervention* OR program*” yielded 9 results, all of them relevant to address the second research question. To find more sources, a final search was conducted from a broader approach using the keywords “early literacy,” “Spanish* OR Hispanic OR Latin*,” and “program OR intervention OR initiative” yielding 207 results. A final search was conducted based on the keywords of the first search and adding “teacher OR school OR preschool” and “parent* OR famil*,” yielding 76 results. There was a substantial overlap in the results yielded by both searches. After removing the repeated articles, I used the same criteria followed with the first question to narrow down the selection: 20 of these articles were considered.

Additionally, a selective search was conducted to find more information related to the theoretical framework. After reading Arzubaga and Rueda (2002), I became interested in the ecocultural model presented in their article to use it for this literature review. In this context, a new search was conducted with the key terms “Ecocultural” (all text) and “Weisner” (author) yielding five results. This search did not include the initial key terms, because it was driven by the need to understand the theory before looking for intersection points with the review.

Finally, it is essential to underscore the guidance of Dr. Alison Bailey, who is an expert in language development, and my faculty advisor. She recommended Robert Rueda’s and Stephanie Eppe’s work because they are currently conducting research related to the purpose of this review from a non-deficit approach. The search conducted using the keywords “early literacy” and authors “Eppe OR Rueda” yielded 10 relevant articles. Additionally, she recommended me the developmental niche theory to narrow down the Ecocultural approach. A second expert suggested me to include *The Routledge International Handbook of Early Literacy Education* (2017), a respected book that presents a review of the state of early literacy in the United States.

As a result of this systematic search, I started the analysis of 63 relevant documents that address my theories and research questions. To approach this robust literature, I categorized the information in three main topics: early literacy precursors, early home practices, and home-school initiatives supporting home literacy practices. As the Literature Map (see Figure 1) illustrates, these three topics are highly interconnected and continually influence each other. Therefore, I will start by presenting a brief overview of the phenomenon of transference of literacy skills.

As the literature confirms, home literacy practices play a critical role in the development of early literacy precursors (Boyce et al., 2010; Wang, 2017). Thus, then I will analyze the literacy practices observed among low-income Spanish-speaking families organizing them under the three components that shape child’s daily routine (Harkness & Super, 1995): Everyday physical and social settings, customs of child care, and the psychology of the caretakers.

Finally, I will present home-school interventions implemented to developed early literacy precursors through the promotion of home literacy practices. I will categorize the interventions considering the design and the components of the routine addressed. It is important to note that the customs and the psychology of the caretaker also shape the effects of the interventions.

To sum up, this Map illustrates how deeply rooted the development of early literacy precursors is to the culture, beliefs, and specific characteristics of each home and daily routine.

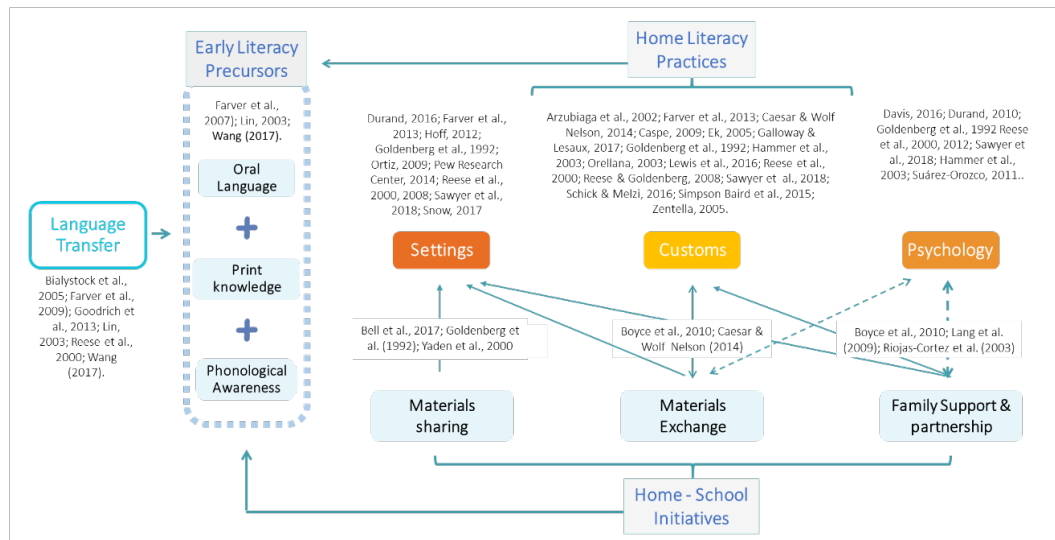


Figure 1. Literature Map: Home Literacy practices and home-school interventions for low-income Spanish-speaking families to promote early literacy precursors from different levels.

Literature Review

Literacy Precursors and Language Transference

As mentioned before, research confirms the relevance of early literacy precursors—mainly oral language, print knowledge, and phonological awareness—to the development of literacy among Spanish-speaking families (Farver, Nakamoto, & Lonigan, 2007; Lin, 2003).

Regarding Spanish-speaking families, it is essential to understand which skills are transferred from one language to another. There is evidence that metalinguistic knowledge is transferred: children learn that text represents sound and meaning just once (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017). Thus, developing some literacy precursors in Spanish is useful for Latinx students' acquisition of English literacy precursors. However, there is no consensus regarding the transfer of all

literacy skills. For instance, some studies underscore the transference of phonological awareness (PA) among preschool bilingual students (Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000) while others argue that there is not enough evidence to support this (Farver et al., 2009). This discrepancy could be related to the way “transference” is defined. For instance, Farver et al. evaluated whether the PA in one language would enhance the gain in the other language PA, rather than using the classic evaluation of the co-occurrence of the skill in both languages. As the definition of PA in Farver et al. is more complex, these discrepancies do not necessarily deny some PA transference. Moreover, Goodrich et al. (2013) and Galloway and Lesaux (2017) report limited evidence of transference of vocabulary, word meaning, and text decoding. Finally, studies suggest that transference is possible only for children above a certain bilingualism level of reading comprehension (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017).

Early Literacy Practices

Home and family represent the most influential environment for early literacy development (Goldenberg et al., 1992; Snow, 2017). Therefore, analyzing the home routine is a powerful tool to identify specific settings, practices, and beliefs that promote literacy skills.

Physical and social settings. There is agreement that an environment with various printed materials such as books and an adult who reads them is critical to promote early literacy skills (Goldenberg et al., 1992; Snow, 2017). These elements are the starting point to determine the possible literacy interactions that the child can be part of (Farver et al., 2013; Snow, 2017). According to the literature, low-income Latinx families tend to have fewer children’s books and printed materials at home compared to middle-class white families (Sawyer et al., 2018). More precisely, Davis et al. (2016) found that 50% of Spanish-speaking homes have 15 children’s books in English and just 5 in Spanish. The difference observed between English and Spanish books could be related to the efforts that doctors and teachers have made to promote the availability of printed materials in English at home. As this study focuses on differences within Latinx families, the authors do not contrast the data to a recommended number of books, leading to a less clear evaluation of the literacy setting. However, this information can be compared to the U.S. Department of Education recommendations (based on NAEP, 2015) that highlights that just 15% of the children with fewer than ten books at home scored proficient in reading test, while 50% of students with more than 100 books in their homes did. Additionally, in a study that identifies the educational effect of the number of books per household, on average, 14-year-old American students have 112 books in their homes (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010).

Based on the idea that the quantity of available books and exposure to printed material are related to literacy acquisition, some authors suggest that Latinx homes do not provide enough learning opportunities to support children's literacy (Boyce et al., 2010; Yaden, Tam, & Madrigal, 2000). However, for others this conclusion overlooks unique interactions in Latinx families (Reese et al., 2000). In particular, Reese et al. highlight how the availability of other printed materials (not books) is also relevant to promote early literacy skills. For instance, an array of different materials are developed daily by parents and children such as household expenses and grocery lists. Similarly, the Bible—a non-child book—is central: most families read Bible adaptations to their children regularly. These findings shed light on relevant and untraditional literacy materials available in Latinx homes.

Hoff (2013) points out that research has not disentangled low-income from ethnic and linguistic background to understand what is behind the scarcity of printed materials or behind the lower phonological awareness and print knowledge found in Latinx low-income children. Studies have shown that language, specifically vocabulary size and early literacy are negatively impacted by low income (Farver et al., 2013; Snow, 2017; Wang, 2017). Yet, research has not parceled out whether the cause is related to SES or their dual language exposure or other factors (Hoff, 2013). On the other hand, Reese and Goldenberg (2008) explain that this scarcity could be related to issues of access: communities with higher Latinx representation are less likely to have libraries and bookstores in their neighborhood.

Additionally, according to the Pew Research Center (2014), 71.6% of Hispanic families live in households with three or more people, and 67% of Latinx older than 18 are working. These findings underscore protective factors of Latinx low-income community (Farver et al., 2013; Gonzalez et al., 1995): having a sibling or more adults at home increases literacy experiences and having working parents can buffer poverty risks on academic outcomes. Ortiz (2009) posits that Latinx families are defined by *familism*: they are driven by mutual support, loyalty, and solidarity within the extended family. The author then critiques the tendency of past research to emphasize the role of mothers in literacy promotion while overlooking other actors, such as siblings and extended family in a group where these actors play an essential role in Latinx child rearing.

In sum, there is scarce official or robust research regarding the social environment of low-income Spanish-speaking homes. Moreover, the data often problematically overlooks cultural differences within the Latinx community, which could lead to less effective and inaccurate interventions.

Customs and literacy practices. Robust research has established that story-telling—practice of telling stories to a child—and directed conversation—a

conversation directed to a child that intends to engage them—are essential elements to facilitate oral communication and literacy development in children from Spanish-speaking homes (Farver et al., 2013; Galloway & Lesaux, 2017; Lewis, Sandilos, Hammer, Sawyer, & Méndez, 2016). These two practices support oral language acquisition, a critical early literacy precursor, as well as language comprehension.

Oral tradition and storytelling. However, different studies highlight that Latinx low-income children are exposed to fewer child-directed conversations with adults, less complex vocabulary, fewer readings in English than their white peers and do not follow a co-constructing story-telling style (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017; Goldenberg et al., 1992). Some authors reacted to this conclusion, criticizing its shallow understanding of Latinx literacy practices (Arzubiaga et al., 2002; Casper, 2009; Ek, 2005; Reese et al., 2000). Therefore, as a reaction against deficit approaches, some authors have conducted new research to learn about Spanish-speaking home practices, celebrating the diversity within the Spanish-speaking community. For instance, studies reported that Spanish-speaking families highly prefer the oral tradition (instead of reading) to pass traditional and parenting stories (Arzubiaga et al., 2002; Brice, 2002 as cited in Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Casper, 2009). Casper suggests that Latinx mothers’—primarily Dominican and Mexican— possess a strength in storytelling style that fosters children’s skills to understand the social aspects of narratives. They focus on the comprehension of socio-emotional cues of the stories. Similarly, telling folk stories and reading the Bible are common oral practices and are used to pass social and moral messages such as loyalty and respect (Casper, 2009; Ek, 2005; Reese et al., 2000). All these practices facilitate language development, the understanding of social cues and prosody, and vocabulary acquisition (Boyce et al., 2010; Casper, 2009), essential for literacy development.

Book-sharing and other traditional literacy practices. Story-telling, complemented with printed materials, is considered one of the fundamental practices to directly support literacy development (Galloway & Lesaux, 2017). However, few studies have focused on book-sharing styles—the way parents read book stories to their children and shared book images and printed tokens with them—among Spanish-speaking families from a non-deficit approach (Casper, 2009; García, 2000, in Schick & Melzi, 2016; Sawyer et al., 2018), and all are focused on mothers.

These studies have found that low-income Latinx mothers of preschool children adopt a narrator role, de-emphasizing asking children questions (Casper, 2009; Sawyer et al., 2018; Schick & Melzi, 2016). Moreover, Latinx mothers (mostly Dominican and Mexican) value that children observe and *intend to participate* during teaching experiences. Yet, Latinx mothers narrate book stories

without promoting a co-construction style, meaning that they do not share the role of narrator or writer of the story with their children nor promote their children's continuous participation during the book-sharing process. Even when these mothers show enriching practices, they do not use the most valued book-sharing style by the American schools: co-construction. This could lead to children's unfamiliarity with school-like book-reading, and consequently, to some initial adaptation difficulties (Casper, 2009). However, Schick and Melzi (2016) underscore that a discontinuity between school and home practices may help children to acquire a more advanced comprehension of the story and narration structure.

Moreover, Casper (2009) portrays three styles of book-sharing among mothers: the *storyteller*, that acts as sole narrator of interesting stories; the *storybuilder-labeler*, focused on asking questions to promote vocabulary; and the *abridged-storyteller*, who provides short stories with less child interaction. The *storyteller* and the *abridged-storyteller* styles (with children with more years in Head Start programs) are related to better print-literacy scores. The author suggests that mothers under these two profiles tend to have a rich and evaluative use of vocabulary and prosody, helping their children to better discriminate speech and literacy cues. Additionally, some *storybuilder-labeler* mothers mimicked the style of teachers, so they were more socialized in schooling styles and academic expectations, emphasizing these mothers' efforts to support their children's education and follow American recommendations.

Similarly, Sawyer et al. (2018) examines how Puerto Rican mothers used effective strategies like print-referencing (pointing to words while reading) and dialogic reading (engaging children in the discussion) during book-reading. Most of the mothers promoted social interactions centered on books and wanted to support literacy development. Still, some used strategies inadequate for their children's age (e.g., asking preschoolers to decode words). This could be explained by the unfamiliarity with literacy processes expressed by some mothers, and their well-intentioned efforts to mimic school-like practices (Sawyer et al., 2018).

Regarding other traditional literacy practices, Davis et al. (2016) underscore that Spanish-speaking families declare an interest in going to the library, even when research says they are less likely to do so. Reese and Goldenberg (2008) highlight the obstacle that one's Social Security Number is required to access the full resources of libraries, impeding undocumented and some mixed-status families from participating.

Finally, important is to mention the role of acculturation and the schooling effect on home literacy practices of specific Latinx groups, scarcely reported in the literature. Casper (2009) correlated mothers' high educational levels with explicit literacy practices such as doing homework and reading school books.

Similarly, another study among Puerto Rican Head Start families found that children exposed to both Spanish and English from birth had mothers who engaged more in literacy behaviors—teaching the alphabet, letter names, library visits, and more—than mothers in exclusively Spanish-speaking families (Hammer et al., 2003). In sum, these findings shed light on the schooling effect and exposure to American educational values over cultural and home literacy practice. It is also important to mention that limited research has emphasized the impact of the immigrant generation or indirect exposure to U.S. education—older siblings in school, for instance—on home literacy practices and styles. Moreover, not much is known regarding the process of change and the time it requires to influence home practices. Therefore, longitudinal analysis is required to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the influences that are continuously shaping home literacy cultural practices.

Untraditional practices. Latinx families make children part of their adult routine while engaging in unconventional literacy practices (Orellana, 2003). For instance, children fill out grocery lists and forms, participate in the follow-up of household accounts (Reese et al., 2000), engage in conversations about recipes (Schick & Melzi, 2016), and play *Lotería* with printed tokens (Zentella, 2005). All these experiences involve the manipulation and use of printed information, oral language and phonological awareness—fundamental early literacy promoters.

The role of siblings. Finally, the literature highlights the role of siblings (Farver et al., 2013), fathers and extended family (Sawyer et al., 2018) as literacy promoters within the Latinx environment. More precisely, both Orellana (2003) and Simpson Baird et al. (2015) found that Latinx siblings shared storybooks, helped with homework, and socialized school-like practices within their families. Still, not much has been said about the interactions of other relevant actors, and the literature has primarily focused on the role of mothers. As previously discussed, Latinx children grow in families with at least three or more people (Pew Research Center, 2014) and *familism* characterizes the rearing process in this community (Ortiz, 2009). Therefore, it is critical that the literature includes siblings, fathers, and the extended family as promoters of home practices to better understand the strengths and real weaknesses of the home literacy practices from a comprehensive and realistic perspective.

Psychology of the caretaker. Most research has been focused on parent's beliefs behind education. Immigrant parents are active promoters of education to ensure socioeconomic mobility (Reese et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Moreover, the literature highlights a critical difference between to *educate* [*educar*] and to *teach* [*enseñar*] for Spanish-speaking families (Durand, 2010). These parents believe that their role is to educate their children, while teachers are

responsible for teaching them. Hammer, Rodriguez, Lawrence, and Miccio (2007) posit that parents feel that they are unfit to teach academic skills. This traditional belief leads Puerto Rican parents to teach to respect teacher authority without questioning (Hammer et al., 2007). Also, a study among Mexican-American families found that mothers who consider literacy and reading a school activity (rather than a home one) tend to engage less in literacy practices because they expect the school to promote them (Davis et al., 2016). Similarly, Reese et al., (2000) posit that some Central American and Mexican immigrants from rural areas justify not reading to their children as they are too young to understand. The authors suggest that they believe that children must meet the age of reason [*edad de la razón*] to be able to learn school-like skills.

Additionally, Goldenberg et al. (1992) show that literacy practices engaged by Central American and Mexican parents are based on how they were taught, especially the strategies of repetition and practicing increasing complexity (letters, syllables, words, and text). Therefore, the educational beliefs of the parents' home country play a critical role in the beliefs guiding literacy practices that seem natural for these parents to replicate. In future research, it would be interesting to understand how acculturation transforms this and whether these are beliefs that even the acculturation process cannot modify.

Finally, Latinx mothers are committed to their children's education. Thus, they are receptive to teacher recommendations (Sawyer et al., 2018) and adopt new practices to support their children literacy development. Latinx parental beliefs are not rigid; rather, they are open to improving for their children well-being (Hammer et al., 2007; Reese et al., 2000).

Home-School Interventions and Initiatives

A family-school partnership has a significant impact on learning and reading achievement of the students (Tang et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Moreover, this relationship helps to enhance continuity between school and home practices, a factor that has been identified as a facilitator of literacy transfer and academic outcomes (Quiroz & Dixon, 2012). This review focuses on the initiatives that involve both home and educational institutions to promote early literacy practices.

Printed materials sharing. As mentioned above, low-income Spanish-speaking homes tend to have fewer printed materials available (Goldenberg et al., 1992; Yaden et al., 2000). Considering this, diverse home-school initiatives have been driven by the intent of closing this gap (Goldenberg et al., 1992) to support literacy acquisition. Thus, the interventions consist of sending books and other printed materials (e.g., calendars and flyers) home to ask parents to read them with their children (Bell, Grant, Yoo, Jimenez, & Frye, 2017). For instance,

Goldenberg et al. created an intervention where 12 short booklets in Spanish were designed and sent home for Latinx children and families. In parallel, the teachers introduced the same booklets and read them with the children in the classroom to reinforce the literacy experience. As results of the intervention, the authors highlight the increased of printed materials at home and higher test scores (phonological awareness, comprehension, and print knowledge) among children that received the intervention. However, the authors underscore the enormous variation within each group based on the interpretation of the interventions by the parents, and the use and frequency with which families engaged the booklets at home.

On the other hand, some of these initiatives are part of a structured program, as in the case of the *Family Book-Loan Program* (Yaden et al., 2000) that aims to establish regular habits of book sharing and story-telling for Latinx families with preschool children. The program considered the loan of children's books and a workshop for parents on reading at home. Thus, the emphasis was on improving Latinx home physical setting. Through classroom observation and the comparison of pre- and post-test scores, the authors report positive effects on print knowledge, word awareness, and the establishment of reading aloud routines at home.

Considering the three components of that influence daily home routine, these initiatives tend to focus on the physical settings. Still, even when schools design these materials with a concrete goal, each family interprets the instructions of the intervention and shape the expected literacy practices according to their context and experience, which consequently shows the importance of considering the customs and psychology of the Latinx families for these interventions. Thus, despite overlooking parents' beliefs and practices in the design of the initiatives, these factors have critical consequences on how the initiatives are implemented: parents re-signify the instructions through their beliefs' lenses (Goldenberg et al., 1992).

Printed material exchange. These initiatives aim for parents to share or develop meaningful literacy materials with their children to be used in the educational context. In some cases, these initiatives are part of a broader project (Boyce et al., 2010) and in other are delimited interventions. A good example of the latter case is an initiative developed by the Supporting the Acquisition of Language and Literacy through School-Home Activities program (Caesar & Nelson, 2014) that asked parents to draw pictures of family activities with their children (e.g., things they like to do) and write messages in each drawing before sending the drawings to the school. Teachers then used these drawings for literacy instruction in the classroom. This intervention showed that parents are interested in supporting their children's education, and their engagement can lead

to positive literacy learning experiences. Moreover, the experimental group showed a significant increase in print knowledge in Spanish and English.

This type of intervention addresses both home settings and customs. Even though the projects did not explicitly declare the consideration of family beliefs, we could hypothesize that this component is addressed at a certain level, too. This type of initiative changes the approach towards parents by empowering them as meaning makers and experts of their children's lives (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). By using a culturally sensitive approach and addressing family's customs, their beliefs are also considered in part, yet not totally.

Family programs and partnership. Lang, Gómez, and Lasser (2009) present the Kindergarten-Providing Academic Skills and Strategies (K-PASS) Program to train Spanish-speaking parents on positive early literacy practices. The program started with three parent workshops before children started kindergarten and then encouraged parents to exercise the practices learned in the workshops at home during the summer and onwards. This type of interventions tends to emphasize on changing family customs (through behaviors and practices), but without giving much attention to the settings nor parent beliefs. For instance, during the workshop, teachers taught parents what activities they should do to promote literacy at home, how to tell stories, and what vocabulary children should gain. The authors considered the program a success because of a significant increase in children's test scores. However, this was not an experimental study—developmental factors and schooling effect could also explain part of this variation. Additionally, the sample was small (n=12), and only 25 percent of the parents attended the three workshops. It could be hypothesized that low attendance is related to the undervaluing of parents' beliefs and strengths in the design.

The storytelling for the Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills (SHELLS) part of the Head Start program was developed to support Spanish-speaking mothers to increase their literacy practices such as parent-child reading (Boyce et al., 2010). The program encouraged parents to create short books based on tales and family stories they usually tell their children. With this initiative, the authors were able to engage parents, increase printed materials at home, and incorporate literacy experiences from a culturally responsive practice. The intervention showed a significant effect on children's literacy skills.

The initiative described by Riojas-Cortez, Bustos, and Rioja (2003) is an excellent example of a family partnership program. The authors present a five-day parent workshop with the aim of sharing knowledge and empowering both Mexican-American parents and teachers as literacy promoters. The workshop was designed as a space to share home daily practices and family interests, and ideas of responsive literacy practices. This initiative represented gains for both

teachers, who understood and valued parents' experiences, and parents, who felt considered and empowered. Nevertheless, the researchers reported no quantitative effects.

Overview of Preliminary Findings & Conclusions

Discussion

This literature review aimed to explore from an ecocultural approach early literacy practices of low-income Spanish-speaking families' that have been reported by the literature and analyze the nature of early literacy home-school initiatives conducted. The literature shed light on home practices of the target group from a non-deficit approach. This perspective highlighted meaningful non-traditional literacy practices such as the strong oral tradition focused on the understanding of social cues (Arzubiaga et al., 2002; Casper, 2009), the engagement of children in household chores involving printed materials (Orellana, 2003; Schick & Melzi, 2006; Reese et al., 2000), the use of board games entailing printed tokens (Zentella, 2005), and the Bible as an inspiration for storytelling and passing values (Casper, 2009; Elk, 2005; Reese et al., 2000).

Similarly, the review was able to underscore the mixed beliefs that low-income Spanish-speaking parents have about education and literacy promotion. On the one hand, parents value education and support the role of teachers as the expert unconditionally (Hammer et al., 2007). On the other hand, they do not feel vested with the knowledge to guide their children correctly through their literacy development (Davis et al., 2016; Hammer et al., 2007). What bridges both beliefs is the dedicated intent of parents to acquire skills that teachers recommend (Farver et al., 2013; Reese et al., 2000; Sawyer et al., 2018), a stance that requires mothers being open to change (Casper, 2009; Sawyer et al., 2018). This finding is critical to education practitioners, enhancing the importance of listening to parents' beliefs and approaching them as allies to support children.

Importantly, there is a gap in the literature related to the role of family members other than mothers on the development of literacy skills. Scarce research has been focused on siblings, and not much has been said about grandparents, aunts or cousins (Orellana, 2003; Simpson Baird et al., 2015). Considering that 71.6% of Latinx children live with more than three people in the same house (Pew Research Center, 2015) and the *familism* (Ortiz, 2009) that characterizes Latinx households, there is an urgent need for research to focus on these other family members.

Regarding the interventions, just a few initiatives have been designed to connect and unify efforts of families and schools to promote early literacy

development among low-income Spanish-speaking children. Most of them relate to Head Start programs.

To be precise, three types of home-school initiatives were found. Printed material sharing was the most common one and tended to focus on addressing a setting issue: the scarcity of books available at home (Bell et al., 2017; Goldenberg et al., 1992; Yaden et al., 2000). However, this approach tends to overlook the relevance of the customs and beliefs of the recipient family as key factors that make meaning from the material. Moreover, this type of intervention tends to create a unidirectional relationship—the school is the guiding expert that sends printed material home. Second, printed material exchange was a culturally responsive approach to engage family members in the development of written materials following their customs (Boyce et al., 2010; Caesar & Nelson, 2014). Although few initiatives of this type were found, all involved family members and built on their strengths, albeit not much of their beliefs were implicitly addressed. Third, family programs were a diverse group of initiatives within a continuum, ranging from interventions focused on the promotion of effective practices and behaviors (Lang et al., 2009) to interventions facilitating a partnership between parents and teachers to build early literacy skills (Boyce et al., 2010) through culturally responsive practices considering parents' beliefs and strengths (Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003). This last group seems the most promising because it recognizes the three components of home routine and underscores a positive way to connect home and school efforts to support literacy development.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, it is critical to conduct more research that recognizes the now-invisible diversity within the Latinx community (Hammer et al., 2007; Loera et al., 2011). To be more precise, research should seek to understand diverse customs, acculturation processes, migration stories, and time in the U.S. (historically) of different Latinx groups. Most research conducted uses the labels of Latinx or Hispanic, with few focusing on different nationalities, such as Mexican (Casper, 2009; Orellana, 2003) and Puerto Rican (Hammer et al., 2007). However, 36.7 percent of Latinxs living in the United States came from countries different than México (Pew Research Center, 2014), and countries such as El Salvador, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Guatemala are part of the top ten sending countries to the United States (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). Therefore, it is critical to understand the diversity within this group to enhance the design of effective home-school literacy initiatives. Researchers should celebrate Latinx diversity and its interplay with time and acculturation. Considering these variations will help effective interventions flourish, which will lead to successful learning processes among children.

Moreover, more interventions must align with family beliefs, culture, and strengths; otherwise, they are less effective and show higher attrition rates (Boyce et al., 2010; Kermani, 2001; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003; Sawyer et al., 2018). In this context, interventions should be designed considering the three components of the daily routine to effectively and positively support low-income Spanish-speaking children's development of early literacy skills. Although it seems tempting to recommend home-school partnerships as the most effective way to support Latinx literacy development, policymakers and educational district leaders should know that other options are also valuable. For instance, building culturally sensitive printed material together with parents and understanding their practices and beliefs (as in Boyce et al., 2010; Caesar & Nelson, 2014; Riojas-Cortez et al., 2003) can be promoted as effective, low-cost, and powerful interventions along with preschool and elementary school. In other words, home and school efforts to support students should connect early and often. To construct a transformative relationship of support between school and parents, Latinx parents should be treated as relevant partners in their children's education. As the literature highlights, Latinx parents are interested and open to supporting their children's literacy development in more effective ways (Casper, 2009; Hammer et al., 2007; Reese et al., 2000; Sawyer et al., 2018). They need a respectful partner that recognizes their strengths and guides them effectively.

Similarly, further research has to ultimately inform teacher-training programs to promote the coordination of home and school efforts. It is critical that teachers know more about each of their student's home beliefs and practices because these factors play a central role in literacy development. From their training, teachers should be focused on bridging the distance between home and school to forge a strong partnership with parents so that together they can support students' efforts to flourish.

Students' education and development should not be the responsibility that teachers receive and manage alone. To enhance the educational experience of our children, home, and school actors must value the efforts made in both environments and together bridge a space of mutual support in the interest of children thriving.

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