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Family Functioning and Early Learning Practices in Immigrant Homes

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Poverty-related developmental-risk theories dominate accounts of uneven levels of household functioning and effects on children. But immigrant parents may sustain norms and practices—stemming from heritage culture, selective migration, and social support—that buffer economic exigencies. *Comparable* levels of social-emotional functioning in homes of foreign-born Latino mothers were observed relative to native-born Whites, despite sharp social-class disparities, but learning activities were much *weaker*, drawing on a national sample of mothers with children aging from 9 to 48 months (n = 5,300). Asian-heritage mothers reported *weaker* social functioning—greater martial conflict and depression—yet *stronger* learning practices. Mothers' migration history, ethnicity, and social support helped to explain levels of functioning, after taking into account multiple indicators of class and poverty.

Dominant conceptual frames—developmental-risk and family-stress theories—emphasize the role played by economic well-being in shaping social-emotional functioning in the home and practices that advance children's early cognitive growth (Conger et al., 2002; Sturge-Apple, Davies, & Cummings, 2010). Yet recent findings for immigrant families question the deterministic force of poverty and social class. This includes work showing that many children of low-income immigrants display strong social behavior, comparable to native-born Whites (Crosnoe, 2006; García Coll & Marks, 2009). Still, cognitive growth lags for children of major immigrant groups, including Mexican-heritage youngsters as early as 3 years of age (Fuller et al., 2009). We also know that positive health, social behavior, and school engagement fades for many children of second-generation immigrants (Escarce, Morales, & Rumbaut, 2006; Kao & Tienda, 2005).

Little is known descriptively about how family functioning may vary among immigrant groups or relative to native-born White peers. We examine the extent to which the mother's *migration history* helps to explain levels of functioning inside the home, including social-emotional dynamics and early learning activities, beyond effects stemming from the family's *social class*. Moving from demographic and qualitative work, we hypothesize that Latino parents' family commitments continue to buoy social-emotional functioning in the home. But less selective migratory patterns, signaled by low maternal education, result in weak early learning practices. In contrast, a historical commitment to literacy and maternal education among Asian subgroups, along with greater migration selectivity (during the 1990s), may result in comparatively strong early learning practices. We also examine the influence of family structure and maternal support, often embedded in cultural heritage, on functioning and test whether relations weaken for mothers who have resided longer in the United States, as immigrant advantages may fade with acculturation, as ecocultural theorists predict (Weisner, 2002).

Our analysis is informed by family-stress theory, especially those factors stemming from economic insecurity that lead to conflict, maternal stress, and

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few structured learning activities in the home (Conger et al., 2002; McLoyd, 1998). But resilient models of parenting—embedded in heritage culture and carried by women who manifest varying migration selectivity—may buffer the corrosive effects of poverty, reinforce family solidarity, and protect the child's developmental niche (García Coll & Marks, 2009; Holloway & Fuller, 1997). At the same time, healthy home practices for acculturating immigrants are far from static, ecocultural theorists emphasize, as parents adapt to local norms and parenting scripts in the United States (Weisner, 2002).

Immigrant Families—Migration History, Heritage Practices, and Social Functioning

Nearly one in four children under 9 years of age, totaling 8.7 million, is being raised by at least one immigrant parent in the United States (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaudry, 2010). Just over two fifths have parents of Mexican origin. Another 14% are born to parents who emigrated from East or South Asia or the Pacific Islands. Demographic features vary greatly: Just 11% of births to foreign-born Asians were to unmarried mothers in 2006, compared to 46% for Mexican parents. Four fifths of Mexican parents were not fluent in English, compared to 34% of South Asian parents. One third of the former group, versus 8% of the latter, lived in poverty.

Given such demographic variability, we cannot assume that families function or parenting practices operate similarly among immigrant groups. To help explain uneven levels of functioning among these groups and vis-à-vis native-born Whites, we briefly review how family-stress theorists identify pathways through which poverty or class may shape children's development, mediated by contemporary supports received by the mother. Second, we review how migration history, selectivity, and cultural heritage condition the class position, social structure, and maternal supports that differentially characterize immigrant families.

Poverty, Social Class, and Social Functioning

The influence of the household's class position on social-emotional functioning and parenting practices has long been emphasized by family-stress theorists (Conger et al., 2002; McLoyd, 1998). This work reveals determinants of functioning that operate within immigrant families, although it pays little attention to the cultural heritage and embedded practices of immigrant parents that may buffer poverty. Developmental-risk theorists assume that families in poverty will be at risk of weak functioning and thin socialization activities, failing to advance the child's early language and cognitive growth, often stemming from early research with African American and Puerto Rican families (for review, see Fuller & García Coll, 2010; Lewis, 1966).

We know that many immigrant parents arrive in poor neighborhoods that manifest low-wage jobs and uneven social institutions (Crosnoe & Cooper, 2010; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994). Consistent with family-stress theory, positive parenting is then undercut by unstable employment, crime, interpersonal conflict, and father absence (McLoyd, 1998). These pressures often spur greater psychological distress for immigrant parents who are struggling to learn a new language and find safe schools and stable jobs (García Coll & Marks, 2009).

Family-stress theorists follow along this causal pathway, detailing how these stressors lead to compromised mental health, low maternal sensitivity and harsh discipline, restricted language, and infrequent learning activities. Yet this perspective largely ignores healthy parenting that may persist for immigrant groups, from strong prenatal practices to steady discipline that reinforces family solidarity (Fuller et al., 2009; Kao & Tienda, 2005; Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten, & McIntosh, 2008).

Family-stress theory does recognize factors that can buffer the otherwise damaging effects of poverty, including family size and demographic structure (Baer, 1999; Tiffin, Pearce, Kaplan, Fundudis, & Parker, 2007), the mother's prior relationships, including with the father (Cowan & Cowan, 2002), and support from kin or friends (Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999).

How Migration History and Cultural Practices May Buffer Poverty

We know that robust functioning in many immigrant families yields comparatively strong social development for young children. The social competencies of Mexican-heritage 5-year-olds, for example, fell just below levels reported for native-born Whites (only about 0.12 *SD*), when rated by kindergarten teachers, despite wide economic disparities (Crosnoe, 2006; Galindo & Fuller, 2010). Yet the functioning of families appears to yield differing effects across developmental domains. We know, for instance, that the early cognitive growth of Chinese-heritage children outpaces White peers, likely

advanced by stimulating activity structures in the home (Li, Holloway, Bempechat, & Loh, 2008).

Rather than deterministically assuming that poor settings constrain family functioning, the recent work emphasizes variability in the *cultural models* of childrearing that persist for certain immigrant groups. Bounded by a particular economic and social heritage, immigrants may reproduce strong family cohesion, collective obligations, and socialization practices that buffer the potentially harmful effects of poverty (Cole, 1986; Harding, 2007; Weisner, 2002). Such practices for Latino immigrants—we know less about Asian subgroups—include parenting that emphasizes the primacy of the family (*familismo*), attachment and affection (*cariño*), behavior that manifests proper comportment and ready engagement with peers and adults (*bien educado*), and religiosity (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006). This serves to advance family functioning and may host early learning activities. Tight parental oversight and emphasis on preliteracy are observed for immigrant Asians, for example (Chao, 1994; Kao & Tienda, 2005).

Cultural norms and migration histories may be associated with differing levels of *social support* for mothers, gained from fathers and kin. Even the basic demographic structure of Asian and Latino families varies dramatically on average. The high rate of two-parent households among certain groups, for instance, suggests advantageous norms and practices that sustain family cohesion (Sandefur & Meier, 2008). We also know that the relatively large size of immigrant Mexican families acts to slow toddlers' cognitive growth (Fuller et al., 2009).

Less is known about the sources of support that benefit immigrant mothers. We do know from the stress and coping literature that psychological distress is mediated by the presence of close individuals who provide emotional aid (Berkman & Glass, 2000). And for immigrants the availability of fathers and kin is related to the mother's migration history, ethnicity, and acculturation (Landale, Oropesa, & Bradatan, 2006). Yet we have much to learn about the relationships experienced by immigrant mothers inside the family, along with levels of support gained from kin and local organizations (Berkman & Glass, 2000).

Two Dimensions of Family Functioning

Family-stress theorists often assume correspondence between the social-emotional dimension of functioning and the prevalence of socialization practices that promote children's early learning. While these tandem processes may be tightly coupled in White middle-class homes or particular low-income groups, it is not clear they covary for major immigrant groups. The discovery of strong social development yet weak cognitive growth among Latino children suggests independence between the two domains of functioning (Galindo & Fuller, 2010).

This divergence may stem from social-historical differences in regions of origins, as ecocultural theorists emphasize. Scholars in various disciplines have detailed how cultural or religious commitments vary in the emphasis placed on the early development of cognitive or preliteracy skills prior to school entry (Harris, Jamison, & Trujillo, 2008). We know that socialization practices and educational traditions differ among Asian and Latino societies in ways that shape early language growth and engagement with print materials (Chao, 1994; McLoyd, Cauce, Takeuchi, & Wilson, 2000).

Selective migration may further explain observed differences in family functioning or early learning practices. We know that U.S. residents of Chinese or Asian Indian heritage have attained 4 years more schooling, on average, than emigres from South-East Asia (Sakamoto, Gazette, & Kim, 2009). Two fifths (44%) of Mexican-origin parents have not completed high school, compared to 14% of South-East Asian and 3% of South Asian parents. Such variation in maternal education may influence social and cognitive dimensions of family functioning.

In summary, recent work suggests that immigrant Latino families may display comparatively robust functioning even when situated in materially poor conditions. But descriptively we do not know how levels of functioning vary among Latino or Asian subgroups, or vis-à-vis native-born Whites. Nor do we know the extent to which the migration history of mothers or families—manifest in nativity, ethnic membership, and length of residence in the United States—may shape functioning, net the influence of poverty and social class.

Hypotheses and Analytic Strategy

This earlier work does show that the functioning of many immigrant families is threatened by poverty or economic insecurity, but culturally situated commitments to family cohesion or particular models of parenting may buffer material exigencies. The selectivity of migratory patterns—which groups from Latino or Asian regions of the world were able to emigrate during the 1990s—varied significantly, revealed by levels of maternal education

and social-class position. And the intensity of maternal support, linked to family structure (e.g., father presence, household size) also varies between Asian and Latino groups, on average.

Given such earlier demograpic or qualitative research inside families, we hypothesize that the premiere centrality of the family, for many Latino parents, will sustain healthy social-emotional functioning in the home, but less selective migratory patterns will result in weak early learning practices (compared to native-born Whites). In contrast, given the historical commitment to literacy and maternal education among Asian subgroups, along with greater selectivity, we expect to observe strong early learning practices. We found insufficient evidence to hypothesize about the vitality of social-emotional functioning inside immigrant Asian families.

We first describe variation in functioning among foreign-born Asian and Latino groups, and when compared with native-born Whites. We then ask how the mother's migration history may contribute to functioning. Next, we test whether elements of migration history—including nativity, ethnic membership, and recency of arrival to the U.S.—remain influential after taking into account the family's class position and poverty status. To test for an ''immigrant advantage'' perhaps experienced by less acculturated mothers, we assessed whether recency of arrival interacts with nativity to further contribute to functioning.

The estimation models are structured to identify locations or mechanisms through which immigrant families may buffer economic exigencies. First, we test whether descriptive levels of functioning are comparable for families with foreign-born mothers vis-à-vis native-born White peers, and secondly whether the effects of migration history on functioning remain significant after taking into account multiple measures of social class. Third, we test whether poverty status interacts with nativity for major immigrant groups to undercut functioning as developmental-risk theory predicts. We hypothesize that:

1. Levels of social-emotional functioning—including levels of conflict between mothers and fathers, and maternal depression—will be comparatively low (healthy) among foreign-born Latino subgroups vis-à-vis native-born Whites.
2. Early learning practices, however, will be comparatively weak among foreign-born Latino subgroups, compared with native-born Whites, while this domain of functioning will be relatively strong among foreign-born Asian subgroups.
3. The family's class position or poverty status will suppress levels of functioning, but effects of migration history and ethnic membership will remain significant after taking into account multiple indicators of social class.
4. Levels of maternal social support—linked to family social structure and cultural heritage—will further contribute to levels of family functioning.
5. The magnitudes with which migration history and ethnic membership positively contribute to functioning will diminish for mothers who have resided longer in the U.S.

After detailing descriptive patterns and differences among groups, we estimate levels of functioning across four measures. We employ a panel design, estimating change scores between the period when the focal child was about 9 months of age, to about 48 months (i.e., $time_{t-1}$ to $time_t$), controlling on the dependent variable's level at $time_{t-1}$, guarding against the risk of endogeniety bias.

Method

Maternal and Family Sample

We utilize the national sample of births drawn in 2001 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), as part of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS–B; Nord, Edwards, Andreassen, Green, & Wallner-Allen, 2006). We analyzed maternal interview data from two waves of home visits, collected when the focal child was about 9 months of age ($time_{t-1}$); the same variables were drawn from interviews at about 48 months of age ($time_t$). For the 9-month wave, 90% of the focal children fell between 7 and 18 months of age. For the 48-month wave, 90% of cases are between 46 and 60 months of age. We used data from the middle wave, when the focal child was about 24 months of age, to estimate mothers' reading behavior with the child, since this age is more meaningful than during infancy.

From their sample of births drawn from 114 primary sampling units (counties or contiguous small counties), NCES completed 10,700 home visits, maternal interviews, and child assessments for the initial 9-month wave. We excluded mothers whose infants suffered from congenital health conditions, or children who did not live with their birth mother

during all three data waves. Sample attrition equaled between 11% and 14% between each data wave. A small portion of data was missing for certain variables, detailed below. After these exclusions and losses, we derived a matched weighted sample (*n*) of 5,300 mothers with completed data at baseline (9-month wave, $time_{t-1}$) and 3 years later (48-month wave, or $time_t$). All sample counts are rounded to the nearest 50 under NCES reporting rules.

Maternal interview questions pertaining to arguments and conflict with the father or partner were only asked when the father resided in the home, and we required data at both principal data waves. So, these analyses had to exclude father-absent households, resulting in a constant sample (*n*) of about 4,400 mother–father pairs. Predictably, we found that father-absent households displayed lower social-class indicators (comparison available from authors). Means are weighted by sampling weights calculated by NCES, depending on the interview instrument. The weights utilized included W3CSTR, W3CPSU, and W3CO. The ''svy'' suite of Stata commands calculated robust standard errors in each regression model, adjusting for the clustering of families within PSUs.

Measures

Social-emotional functioning and reading practices. Self-report and observational measures were used to gauge the social-emotional functioning of adults and children inside the home. The interview items selected by NCES drew from three constructs, including interpersonal conflict and frequency of arguments between mother and father (Sturge-Apple et al., 2010), parents' capacity to resolve arguments, and the mother's mental health, indicated by the level of depressive symptoms (Conger et al., 2002; Maughan, Cicchetti, Toth, & Rogosch, 2002). Responses to multiple items for the first two constructs were highly correlated; we dropped measures of the second, preferring direct reports of the argumentative frequency.

We conceptualized levels of early learning activities tied to the mother's early reading practices as the second component of the family's social vitality. This included the mother's reported frequency of reading with the focal child at the 9- and 48-month waves on an ordinal scale, and frequency of reading a newspaper, reported only at 24 months (cross-sectionally).

The measure of mother–father arguments for in-home problems drew from seven ordinal items, questions such as, ''Do you and your spouse/partner have arguments about chores and responsibilities?'' Or, ''. . . about your child(ren)?'' If yes, then the frequency was asked on a 5-point ordinal scale. A principal components analysis yielded loadings on a single factor. After combining these items, interitem reliability equaled .80 (Cronbach's alpha).

The composite index for in-home arguments was skewed toward lower counts, so a dichotomous version was created (median split). The frequency of reading with the child was well distributed, but the skewness of newspaper reading called for a dichotomous version. We ran either logistic or ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions, the former avoiding violation of the normality assumption.

Out-of-home arguments were queried via two questions, including, ''Do you or your spouse/partner have arguments about other women or men or women [outside your marriage]?'' But the two items showed modest interitem reliability (alpha = .51), and very low frequency, and therefore were dropped.

A short-form of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES–D), which includes 12 items, was used to gauge maternal depression at the 9- and 48-month data waves (Radloff, 1977). We fit estimation models with both OLS and logistic regressions to help explain levels of depressive symptoms at baseline ($time_{t-1}$) and change between $time_{t-1}$ and $time_t$. The CES–D scale typically yields skewed distributions, with about half of all adults not showing discernible symptoms of emotional stress. Consistent with the measure's distributional properties, the logistic model yielded the best fit, after we used the cut-point defined as mild to severe symptoms. At baseline 41% of mothers showed no discernible symptoms.

Migration history, language, and ethnicity. Our initial models examined whether the mother's nativity (foreign or native born), years resident in the United States, home language, and ethnic membership help to account for variation in family functioning at baseline and over time. With regard to length of residency, we defined recent arrivals as those mothers who had lived in the United States for less than 5 years at $time_{t-1}$. Second and third groups were defined as resident between 5 and 10 years, and over 10 years. The value for length of residence was set at the mother's age for those who were born in the United States (relevant only for descriptive statistics, since native-born mothers form the reference group in all multivariate models). Home language proved to be highly correlated with foreign-born status and length of residence, and was dropped.

Family social class, poverty, and demographic structure. To test whether social-class position and social-structural elements of the household were predictive of functioning, we included a dichotomous indicator of whether the family fell below the federal poverty line at baseline ($time_{t-1}$). We included a dichotomous measure of whether the focal child's father resided in the household, and the ratio of resident children per adult. Levels of maternal education were converted to dummy variables: completed high school or less, and some college. The reference group displayed higher levels.

Mother's family planning and relationships. We utilized items pertaining to the mother's intention of becoming pregnant and experience in raising children, as possible stressors. Each mother was asked whether she intended to become pregnant with the focal child. Each was asked about ''how close'' she felt to her own mother and father, when growing up or currently (if the parent was alive). Mothers responded on an ordinal 5-point scale, *very close* to *not at all close*. An index of prior antifsocial behaviors was constructed from the mother's report of earlier drug use, arrests, alcohol abuse, and other behavioral problems.

Maternal support. Fathers reported the frequency with which they provided child-care support (whether residing in the home or not), asked on a 5-point ordinal scale, such as, ''How often have you (father) looked after your child?'' Each mother was asked about whether a kin member was available to lend support in the event of a family emergency (dichotomous).

Community poverty and social class. To test for overall neighborhood effects we merged 2000 census data at the zip-code level in order to describe the communities in which families resided at baseline. We split the 2,850 zip codes in which ECLS–B mothers lived into quartiles, based on the median household income of residents. A dichotomous marker was then created to indicate the quartile in which each ECLS–B family resided.

Analytic Strategy

Our estimation models employ either OLS or logistic regression, depending on the outcome measure and distributional properties. We disaggregate subgroups (e.g., Chinese and Pacific Islanders), given differing migration histories. Baseline levels of social-emotional functioning and early learning practices are estimated when the focal child was about 9 or 24 months of age at $time_{t-1}$. Then, we employ a panel design, testing whether the predictors account for change over time as the focal child aged to about 48 months (i.e., $time_{t-1}$ to $time_t$), controlling on the dependent variable's earlier level (at $time_{t-1}$), minimizing the threat of endogeneity bias.

Missing data emerged as questions related to mental health and family functioning proved to be sensitive, including when mothers declined to answer questions related to depressive symptoms. We used the maximum set of cases when reporting descriptive findings for the four dependent family-functioning and early reading outcomes and predictors for the 9-month and 48-month waves ($time_{t-1}$ and $time_t$). For multivariate estimations, we identified constant analytic samples to allow for comparison across models.

Results

Indicators of Family Functioning Among Immigrant Groups

Table 1 reports mean differences for each indicator of family functioning. Means and standard deviations for continuous or ordinal scores are reported, prior to dichotomizing the measures for the regression models. Mexican-heritage mothers reported significantly fewer arguments with resident fathers regarding in-home conflicts at baseline, compared to the reference group, native-born Whites (12.6 and 13.4, respectively). Although change scores, $time_{t-1}$ (9-month panel) to $time_t$ (48-month panel), were not significantly different.

Maternal depression scores were significantly lower for South Asian mothers and for all mothers resident in the United States 5 to 10 years. All foreign-born mothers resident in the United States between 6 and 10 years showed higher levels of depressive symptoms, perhaps reflecting acculturative stress. Beyond these differences, we observe generally comparable levels of functioning across the two measures of social-emotional functioning for Mexican-heritage and Chinese-heritage Asian mothers.

Between-group patterns look quite different when focusing on mothers' early reading practices. Mothers in each of the three foreign-born subgroups, regardless of their length of residence in the United States, report reading with their toddler much less frequently than White peers. Levels of reading frequency were particularly low for Mexican-heritage, other Latina, and other Asian (primarily Pacific Island) mothers, compared to native-born Whites, whereas frequency of reading with the target child was equal among Whites, Chinese, and

Table 1
Indicators of Social-emotional Functioning and Early Learning Activities by Ethnic Membership and Length of Residence in the U.S. at Baseline ($Time_{t-1}$) and Change Scores between $Time_{t-1}$ and $Time_t$ (Means and Standard Errors Reported)

	Ethnic groups							Length of U.S. residence, foreign-born mothers only		
	White (n = 3,300)[a]	African American (n = 700)	Latino, Mexican (n = 450)	Latino, Other (n = 200)	Asian, Chinese (n = 50)	Asian, South (n = 50)	Asian, Other (n = 100)	In U.S. ≤5 years (n = 350)	In U.S. 6–10 years (n = 250)	In U.S. >10 years (n = 450)
Y1 – Mother–father arguments (n = 4,400)										
In-home issues at $time_{t-1}$ (9-month data wave)	13.4 (.09)	13.4 (.33)	12.6 (.37)*	13.6 (.41)	13.8 (.29)	13.8 (.81)	13.6 (.28)	12.8 (.53)	13.1 (.48)	13.3 (.33)
Change score, $time_{t-1}$ to $time_t$	0.9 (.09)	0.9 (.46)	0.9 (.40)	1.3 (.32)	1.2 (.35)	1.7 (.50)	1.3 (.39)	1.9 (.56)	1.7 (.67)	1.3 (.42)
Y2 – Maternal depression (n = 5,300)										
Maternal depression at $time_{t-1}$ (9-month data wave)	5.4 (.12)	6.6 (.22)***	5.4 (.34)	5.3 (.42)	5.3 (.33)	4.1 (.43)**	5.7 (.33)	5.5 (.48)	4.6 (.32)**	4.9 (.38)
Change scores, $time_{t-1}$ to $time_t$	0.2 (.12)	0.4 (.26)	−0.4 (.36)	0.4 (.69)	0.4 (.45)	0.9 (.39)	0.2 (.37)	0.3 (.52)	1.1 (.51)	−0.2 (.43)
Y3 – Mother's reading with focal child (n = 5,300)										
Reading frequency at $time_{t-1}$ (24-month data wave)	2.4 (.03)	1.8 (.04)***	1.8 (.05)***	1.8 (.09)***	2.3 (.06)	2.4 (.08)	2.2 (.06)**	1.7 (.07)***	1.8 (.08)***	2.0 (.06)***
Change scores, $time_{t-1}$ to $time_t$	−0.1 (.02)	−0.1 (.04)	−0.1 (.06)	0.1 (.08)	0.1 (.07)*	0.1 (.09)	−0.1 (.07)	−0.1 (.08)	0.1 (.07)	−0.1 (.07)
Y4 – Read news (n = 5,300)										
Read news at $time_{t-1}$ (24-month data wave)	2.74 (.03)	2.85 (.06)	2.19 (.08)***	2.48 (.12)	2.77 (.09)	2.94 (.15)	2.71 (.09)	2.03 (.09)***	2.11 (.10)***	2.34 (.08)***

Note. Case counts rounded to the nearest 50 under National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reporting rules. Statistical tests are for mean differences between each ethnic group vis-à-vis Whites.
[a]The sample size of each ethnic group is based on the sample of 5,300.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

South Asian mothers. In addition, Chinese-heritage mothers reported rising levels of reading with the focal child between $time_{t-1}$ and $time_t$. The results look quite similar when turning to the tandem measure of maternal practices the mother's frequency of reading a newspaper.

Predictors of Family Functioning—Variability in Migration History and Ethnicity

Table 2 reports attributes of immigrant and ethnic groups. A large share of Mexican-heritage mothers in the United States is foreign born; this rate equals 56% for our ECLS–B sample. Proportions of mothers foreign born are even higher for Asian subgroups: 80% of Chinese mothers, 59% for other Asians (mostly Filipinos and Pacific Islanders).

Just 37% of Mexican mothers reported that English is their dominant home language, and 39% of Chinese mothers. Home language of course corresponds with how recently mothers have arrived to the United States. About one fourth of Mexican mothers had resided in the United States for 5 years or less when interviewed at $time_{t-1}$, compared to just one tenth of other Asian peers. Among Chinese mothers, 23% reported residing in the United States for 5 years or less.

The share of fathers present was comparatively high for Latino and Asian groups when compared to Whites: 82% for Mexican mothers and 99% for Chinese, compared to 91% for White peers. The ratio of children per adult in the household was significantly lower for Chinese and South Asian families, compared to native-born Whites. This measure is predictive of children's early cognitive growth (drawing from ECLS–B; Fuller et al., 2009).

Family poverty rates were markedly different across ethnic groups. Well over one third of families with a Mexican-heritage mother fell below the federal poverty line, compared to just 2% of Chinese, 18% of other Asian, and 10% of Whites. We also see that Mexican and other Latina mothers were more likely to live in the nation's poorest quartile of zip codes (21% and 17%, respectively), compared to Whites (11%). Each Asian subgroup was less likely to reside in the poorest quartile relative to White, including just 2% of Chinese mothers.

We also see mean differences in levels of interpersonal and organizational supports reported by mothers. Mexican and other Latina mothers reported less frequent support from fathers when it comes to childrearing, compared to native-born Whites. Yet Chinese mothers reported greater levels of support than White peers. The availability of a kin member or friend in the event of emergencies ranged lower for Mexican, South Asian, and other Asians.

Explaining Functioning—Does Migration History Matter After Social Class or Poverty?

We report explanatory results in three steps—at each step estimating levels of family functioning at baseline ($time_{t-1}$), and then for $time_t$ after taking into account earlier levels of the dependent variable at $time_{t-1}$ (i.e., change scores). First, we report the influence of the mother's migration history on functioning, including nativity, ethnic membership, and recency of arrival to the United States. Second, we focus on the core question of how the mother's background and social-class position may shape functioning levels, and whether migration history continues to contribute to functioning levels. Third, we test for residual influences of the so-called immigrant advantage, asking whether recency of arrival interacts with nativity or ethnic effects. We also test to see whether family poverty does interact with nativity for Mexicans and Chinese, or not, possibly indicating the buffering of economic exigencies. We test whether the immigrant advantage may be specific to certain groups, or specific to the social-emotional or cognitive-stimulation dimension of family functioning.

Foreign-born status and ethnicity. Table 3 begins by showing how foreign-born status and ethnicity are related to each outcome, both at baseline and for change over the 3-year period. Native-born Whites form the reference group in all multivariate models.

We see that at baseline foreign-born mothers, after residing in the United States for at least 5 years, reported *stronger* social-emotional functioning than native-born Whites. For example, foreign-born mothers resident at least 5 years reported significantly lower probabilities of surpassing the cut-point for depressive symptoms when resident for 6–10 years (odds ratio = 0.46), or when resident more than 10 years (odds ratio = 0.64) at baseline. A similar pattern is observed for in-home arguments; standard errors are sufficiently high to render the odds ratios insignificant. The level of change for in-home arguments over time is *lower* for Mexican mothers than for Whites, and incidence of depression at baseline and change scores are statistically equal vis-à-vis Whites.

Table 2
Selected Predictors of Social-emotional Functioning and Early Learning Practices by Ethnic Group at Time$_{t-1}$ (Percentages or Means and Standard Errors Reported, n = 5,300)

Family functioning and early learning practices	White (n = 3,300)	Black (n = 700)	Latino, Mexican (n = 450)	Latino, Other (n = 200)	Asian, Chinese (n = 50)	Asian, South (n = 50)	Asian, Other (n = 100)	F-value (Wald-adjusted)
Migration history								
Foreign born (%)	3	8	56	58	80	93	59	$F(7, 83) = 50.47$***
Dominant home language, English (%)	98	98	37	43	39	31	70	$F(7, 85) = 54{,}31$***
Resident in U.S. ≤5 years (%)	1	2	24	18	23	45	10	$F(7, 83) = 28.88$***
Resident in U.S. 6–10 years (%)	1	2	12	11	23	21	12	$F(7, 85) = 19.04$***
Resident in U.S. >10 years (%)	98	96	64	71	54	34	78	$F(7, 85) = 42.48$***
Maternal social class indicators and family social structure								
Mother only completed high school or less (%)	28	51	67	43	6	17	36	$F(7, 85) = 27.89$***
Focal child, planned pregnancy (%)	59	22	39	39	58	62	49	$F(7, 85) = 40.15$***
Focal child's father resides in home (%)	91	41	82	86	99	99	85	$F(7, 85) = 38.39$***
Ratio of children:adult	0.80 (0.01)	1.02 (0.03)***	0.78 (0.03)	0.61 (0.03)***	0.67 (0.03)***	0.63 (0.03)***	0.75 (0.03)	$F(7, 85) = 18.64$***
Count of resident adults earning wages	1.63 (0.02)	1.59 (0.03)	1.61 (0.06)	1.80 (0.07)*	1.70 (0.06)	1.39 (0.07)**	1.68 (0.05)	$F(7, 85) = 13.01$***
Family beneath federal poverty line(%)	10	46	37	17	2	6	18	$F(7, 85) = 51.08$***
Closeness to own mother	3.36 (0.02)	3.43 (0.04)	3.18 (0.05)**	3.29 (0.09)	3.16 (0.08)*	3.57 (0.06)**	3.31 (0.06)	$F(7, 85) = 11.45$***
Mother engaged earlier in antisocial behaviors (%)	23	44	17	23	5	3	20	$F(7, 85) = 16.69$***
Maternal social support								
Frequency of father's support	2.38 (0.05)	0.96 (0.07)***	2.03 (0.12)**	1.73 (0.12)***	2.73 (0.13)*	2.43 (0.17)	2.15 (0.14)	$F(7, 85) = 6.63$***
Kin or friends available in emergency (count)	0.93 (0.01)	0.93 (0.01)	0.86 (0.02)*	0.87 (0.03)	0.81 (0.03)***	0.87 (0.03)	0.85 (0.03)**	$F(7, 85) = 692.97$***
Reside in poorest quartile of zip codes (%)	11	29	21	17	2	3	4	$F(7, 85) = 9.42$***

Note. Statistical tests are for mean differences between each ethnic group vis-à-vis Whites.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 3
Estimating Social-emotional Functioning and Maternal Reading Practices From Migration History – Mother's Nativity, Recency of Arrival, and Ethnic Membership (Odds Ratios or Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Reported)

	In-home argument (n = 4,400)				Depression (n = 5,300)				Reading frequency (n = 5,300)				Read newspaper (n = 5,300)	
Mother's migration history	9 months		48 months		9 months		48 months		24 months		48 months		24 months	
	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)
24-month outcome (panel control)	—	—	6.53	(.72)***	—	—	4.34	(.47)***	—		.41	(.01)***	—	
Foreign born and resident <5 years	.66	(.14)	1.69	(.46)	1.03	(.25)	1.24	(.30)	−.29	(.04)***	−.15	(.03)***	−.68	(.13)***
Foreign born and resident 5–10 years	.71	(.16)	1.37	(.47)	.46	(.13)**	1.00	(.30)	−.29	(.05)***	−.10	(.04)**	−.62	(.13)***
Foreign born and resident ≥10 years	.91	(.14)	1.28	(.28)	.64	(.13)*	.65	(.16)	−.08	(.04)	−.001	(.03)	−.40	(.13)**
Black	1.00	(.12)	.76	(.14)	1.76	(.19)***	1.61	(.22)**	−.59	(.03)***	−.35	(.02)***	.10	(.08)
Latino, Mexican	.80	(.11)	.71	(.12)*	.95	(.21)	1.03	(.19)	−.49	(.03)***	−.27	(.02)***	−.24	(.10)*
Latino, Other	1.18	(.19)	.86	(.22)	1.29	(.24)	.73	(.25)	−.49	(.05)***	−.12	(.03)***	.01	(.13)
Asian, Chinese	1.50	(.36)	1.03	(.28)	1.48	(.35)	1.19	(.28)	.04	(.04)	.18	(.03)***	.45	(.13)**
Asian, South	1.47	(.49)	.96	(.32)	.82	(.29)	.61	(.19)	.16	(.05)**	.16	(.04)***	.68	(.19)**
Asian, Other	1.38	(.28)	.98	(.25)	1.41	(.28)	1.28	(.23)	−.02	(.04)	−.06	(.03)*	.24	(.12)
Other	1.10	(.20)	.94	(.18)	1.34	(.26)	1.76	(.32)**	−.09	(.04)*	−.08	(.03)**	.003	(.11)
Constant	—		—		—		—		2.44	(.02)***	1.35	(.02)***	2.76	(.03)***
Sample N	4,400		3,850		5,300		5,300		5,300		5,300		5,300	
F-statistic	$F(10, 80) = 1.42$		$F(11, 79) = 25.99$***		$F(10, 80) = 4.22$***		$F(11, 79) = 19.57$***		$F(10, 80) = 121.79$***		$F(11, 79) = 514.37$***		$F(10, 80) = 10.34$***	
R^2 (OLS only)	—		—		—		—		.13		.27		.05	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

In contrast to Mexican mothers, we see generally weaker social-emotional functioning in the homes of Chinese-heritage mothers, although these odds ratios are estimated with comparatively greater error. Mothers of mixed ethnicity report worsening levels of depressive symptoms over time, significantly greater than for native-born Whites.

Turning to the cognitively stimulating elements of family functioning—the mother's structuring of early reading practices—the differences between Mexican- and Asian-heritage mothers essentially flip. Foreign-born mothers arriving within the prior 10 years consistently read *less frequently* with the focal child, or read a newspaper less often, compared to native-born Whites. Remember that these are OLS models. The level of change in reading frequency also was lower for foreign-born mothers resident in the United States for 10 years or less.

We see sharply differing patterns for Mexican and Asian-heritage mothers. Mexican (and other Latino) mothers reported a lower incidence of reading with their child, and this gap widened between $time_{t-1}$ and $time_t$ (a 2-year period for the reading-frequency measure), relative to White peers. In contrast, Chinese and South Asian mothers reported significantly more frequent reading with their child or higher change scores relative to Whites. These patterns were similar for maternal reading of newspapers.

Role of class, poverty, and maternal supports. Next, we ask whether these baseline associations and possible causal effects (with panel controls) stemming from migration history remain when we take into account the family's class position and poverty status. We also test for whether contemporary maternal supports, often culturally situated within immigrant communities, further explain the tandem facets of functioning (Table 4).

The incidence of hitting the depressive symptoms threshold continued to be lower for foreign-born mothers relative to native-born Whites. Yet the rising incidence of in-home arguments was significantly steeper over time for foreign-born mothers resident in the United States for less than 5 years. Baseline levels of depression were also significantly lower for foreign-born mothers resident 5 to 10 years with the other covariates in the model. For Chinese mothers, the odds ratios for hitting thresholds for in-home arguments and maternal depression continued to range high above 1.0, but elevated errors render the coefficients statistically insignificant.

Inclusion of social-class and maternal-support covariates did little to modify the suppressed levels of maternal reading reported by Mexican mothers. The higher-at-baseline and accelerating levels of reading reported by Chinese and other Asian mothers remained with all covariates in the model. In this way, unobserved dimensions of migration history or cultural practices operated largely independent of the family's social-class position or poverty.

We see clear effects of class and poverty at baseline on the social-emotional and cognitively stimulating facets of family functioning. Living below the poverty line, lower levels of maternal education, engaging earlier in antisocial behavior, and more children per adult in the household all suppressed social-emotional functioning. These class-related associations were even more consistently observed when estimating the mother's reading practices.

Turning to change scores, after taking into account baseline relations, social-class effects continued to be observed, typically in the direction posited by family-stress and developmental risk theorists. Levels of maternal depression were greater at baseline among mothers living in poverty, and they experienced significantly greater increases in depression when residing in the nation's poorest quartile of zip codes, and for those who reportedly had engaged in antisocial behavior, compared to the change for native-born Whites.

Mothers reported lower levels of depression at baseline when the father was resident in the household, and smaller changes in the incidence of depression when the mother reported stronger support from the father, as well as when the mother engaged in family planning. The baseline level of in-home arguments were significantly greater, and grew at a higher rate, when mothers worked outside the home either part- or full-time.

Next we report on the same models when estimating baseline levels of maternal reading frequencies and change over time. Starting with column 6 (longitudinal OLS results), we see that social-class and maternal-support covariates do not substitute for the effects of migration history and ethnic membership. More recently arriving foreign-born mothers, Mexican, and other Latina mothers all read less frequently to the child, compared to native-born Whites. Chinese and South Asian mothers read more with their child.

Social-class indicators significantly predicted stronger increases in reading frequency, generally consistent with developmental-risk theory. When mothers lived below the poverty line or resided in the bottom three zip quartiles, they reported smaller change scores for reading with the child. Employed mothers reported greater gains in reading frequency,

Table 4

Estimating Social-emotional Functioning and Maternal Reading Practices at 48 Months from Migration History, Social Class, and Maternal Social Support, Controlling for Prior Level at 9 or 24 Months (Unstandardized Coefficients and Standard Errors Reported)

	In-home argument (n = 4,400)				Depression (n = 5,300)				Reading frequency (n = 5,300)				Read news (n = 5,300)	
	9 months		48 months		9 months		48 months		24 months		48 months		24 months	
Variables	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)
24-month outcome	—		6.49	(.72)***	—		3.80	(.41)***	—		.36	(.01)***	—	
Mother's nativity, recency of arrival, and ethnic membership														
Foreign born and resident <5 years	.76	(.17)	1.93	(.55)*	1.18	(.31)	1.38	(.33)	−.32	(.04)***	−.18	(.03)***	−.64	(.13)*
Foreign born and resident 5-10 years	.82	(.19)	1.50	(.52)	.53	(.15)*	1.10	(.32)	−.31	(.05)***	−.12	(.03)**	−.60	(.14)***
Foreign born and resident ≥10 years	.93	(.14)	1.26	(.28)	.79	(.17)	.76	(.19)	−.13	(.04)***	−.03	(.03)	−.40	(.13)**
Black	.91	(.13)	.76	(.14)	.90	(.13)	.99	(.15)	−.34	(.03)***	−.21	(.02)***	.07	(.08)
Latino, Mexican	.76	(.13)	.76	(.16)	.68	(.19)	.67	(.17)	−.32	(.04)***	−.17	(.03)***	−.17	(.12)
Latino, Other	1.16	(.20)	.86	(.22)	1.00	(.21)	.58	(.19)	−.38	(.05)***	−.07	(.03)*	.001	(.13)
Asian, Chinese	1.43	(.36)	.83	(.23)	1.60	(.41)	1.47	(.36)	.11	(.04)***	.07	(.03)*	.40	(.14)**
Asian, South	1.56	(.60)	.87	(.29)	.87	(.30)	.70	(.23)	.03	(.05)	.08	(.04)*	.66	(.19)**
Asian, Other	1.37	(.30)	.94	(.23)	1.27	(.26)	1.28	(.25)	−.01	(.04)	−.07	(.03)*	.23	(.12)
Other	1.09	(.20)	.93	(.18)	1.17	(.24)	1.50	(.30)	−.01	(.03)	−.04	(.03)	.02	(.11)
Family and maternal social-class indicators														
Family below federal poverty line	.77	(.12)	.82	(.14)	1.44	(.24)*	1.20	(.20)	−.17	(.03)***	−.05	(.02)*	.02	(.07)
School attainment, high school diploma or less	.89	(.10)	1.03	(.15)	1.23	(.15)	1.38	(.22)	−.31	(.02)***	−.22	(.02)***	−.17	(.07)*
School attainment, some post-secondary education	.98	(.11)	.85	(.10)	1.45	(.19)**	1.11	(.15)	−.23	(.02)***	−.10	(.02)***	−.03	(.07)
Mother works full-time (35 hours or more)	1.21	(.14)	1.74	(.27)**	1.00	(.13)	1.06	(.14)	−.09	(.02)***	−.10	(.01)***	.10	(.06)
Mother works part-time	1.34	(.17)**	1.51	(.26)*	.79	(.10)	1.20	(.19)	−.02	(.02)	−.07	(.02)***	.01	(.06)
Engaged in anti-social behaviors	1.39	(.14)**	1.21	(.15)	1.41	(.16)**	1.63	(.17)***	−.08	(.02)***	−.03	(.01)	−.03	(.07)
Planned pregnancy	.77	(.07)**	.86	(.08)	.64	(.07)***	.76	(.09)*	.07	(.01)***	.03	(.01)	−.08	(.05)
Count of wage earners in household	1.10	(.08)	.80	(.10)	.94	(.08)	.96	(.08)	−.005	(.01)	−.001	(.01)	.004	(.04)
Poorest quartile of zips	.92	(.15)	.62	(.10)**	1.13	(.17)	1.49	(.27)*	−.19	(.04)***	−.16	(.02)**	−.03	(.08)
Second quartile of zips	.87	(.10)	.83	(.13)	.94	(.12)	1.22	(.17)	−.12	(.02)***	−.06	(.02)	.02	(.07)
Third quartile of zips	1.16	(.12)	.88	(.12)	1.04	(.14)	1.25	(.20)	−.11	(.02)***	−.07	(.01)**	.07	(.07)

Table 4
Continued

	In-home argument (n = 4,400)				Depression (n = 5,300)				Reading frequency (n = 5,300)				Read news (n = 5,300)	
	9 months		48 months		9 months		48 months		24 months		48 months		24 months	
Variables	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)
Maternal supports														
Father at home	—		—		.71	(.11)*	1.09	(.19)	−.06	(.03)*	.01	(.02)	−.10	(.09)
Father's frequency of support	.97	(.02)	.97	(.03)	.98	(.03)	.91	(.04)*	.01	(.01)*	.02	(.004)**	.01	(.02)
Ratio of children per adult in household	1.28	(.13)*	.85	(.11)	1.03	(.10)	.99	(.10)	−.08	(.02)***	−.04	(.01)**	.001	(.05)
Kin member, friend available to help in emergency	1.00	(.14)	.82	(.17)	.85	(.13)	.73	(.12)	.04	(.03)	.03	(.02)	−.04	(.08)
Interactions														
Family poverty × Mexican	1.30	(.35)	.71	(.29)	.99	(.36)	1.14	(.33)	.09	(.06)	−.03	(.04)	−.02	(.17)
Poorest quartile of zips × Mexican	1.25	(.38)	2.31	(.96)*	1.03	(.33)	1.45	(.46)	−.03	(.07)	−.02	(.05)	−.15	(.17)
Family poverty × Chinese	1.00	(1.38)	.82	(.85)	.78	(1.05)	2.41	(2.32)	.36	(.22)	.61	(.06)***	−1.05	(.50)*
Poorest quartile of zips × Chinese	.74	(.72)	4.92	(6.42)	7.57	(7.18)*	.69	(.60)	−.11	(.27)	.03	(.13)	.52	(.62)
Constant									2.78	(.04)***	1.61	(.05)***	2.92	(.13)***
Subpop N	4,400		3,850		5,300		5,300		5,300		5,300		5,300	
F-statistic	2.37**		16.14***		6.31***		11.50***		96.88***		262.64***		4.24***	
R^2 (OLS only)	—		—		—		—		.20		.30		.06	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 5
Estimating Social-emotional Functioning and Maternal Reading Practices From Residual ''Immigrant Advantage'' Effect – Interaction of Foreign-born and Country of Origin for Chinese and Mexican Mothers (Odds Ratios or Regression Coefficients and Standard Errors Reported)

Interaction terms (with all prior covariates in model)	In-home argument (n = 3,100)				Depression (n = 3,900)				Reading frequency (n = 3,900)				Read news (n = 3,900)	
	9 months		48 months		9 months		48 months		24 months		48 months		24 months	
	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	OR	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)	Coeff.	(*SE*)
Family poverty × Mexican	1.39	(.43)	.81	(.34)	.82	(.31)	1.15	(.38)	.04	(.06)	.004	(.04)	−.09	(.18)
Family poverty × Chinese	2.41	(3.92)	.93	(.91)	.91	(.31)	4.44	(4.04)	−.13	(.18)	.69	(.08)***	−.69	(.70)
Foreign born × resident <5 years × Latino, Mexican	.34	(.18)*	1.01	(.67)	.72	(.42)	1.07	(.58)	.20	(.12)	−.05	(.07)	−.18	(.31)
Foreign born × resident <5 years × Chinese	.90	(.57)	1.15	(.97)	3.64	(2.86)	.66	(.49)	.85	(.13)*	−.09	(.10)	.81	(.45)
Foreign born × resident 5–10 years × Latino, Mexican	1.71	(1.05)	.77	(.53)	5.51	(4.86)	2.08	(1.56)	.18	(.11)	.01	(.06)	−.22	(.30)
Foreign born × resident 5–10 years × Chinese	4.90	(3.29)*	2.08	(1.55)	8.35	(4.74)*	1.05	(.93)	.71	(.13)*	−.07	(.10)	.89	(.40)*
Foreign born × resident >10 years × Latino, Mexican	1.17	(.51)	1.85	(.87)	1.73	(1.02)	.93	(.61)	.01	(.08)	.07	(.06)	−.28	(.29)
Foreign born × resident >10 years × Chinese	1.84	(.96)	2.59	(1.84)	2.12	(1.68)	.61	(.44)	.16	(.10)	.07	(.07)	.29	(.35)

*p < .05. ***p < .001.

as did more highly schooled mothers. Maternal supports also helped to predict reading frequency, including fewer children in the home per resident adult and support from the father.

Results were similar when estimating the mother's propensity to read a newspaper (cross-sectional model at 24 months), showing that foreign-born and Mexican-heritage mothers read less frequently overall, and Asian mothers read more, compared with native-born Whites.

Table 4 also reports on the extent to which Mexican and Chinese groups experience discrete effects of poverty (groups with contrasting patterns thus far in the analysis). We see just one effect consistent with developmental-risk theory: greater increases in depression for Mexican mothers in families below the poverty line. Otherwise poverty shows no significantly negative effect on functioning for these two groups. Poor Chinese mothers actually showed greater increases in reading, relative to native-born Whites. Overall, these interaction terms suggest that buffering mechanisms do operate to mediate the otherwise denigrating effects of poverty.

Immigrant advantage? We examined whether foreign-born mothers who arrived more recently in the United States displayed residual advantages or buffering capacity, after all covariates are entered into the estimation model (Table 5). We also brought forward the poverty × nativity interaction terms for Mexican and Chinese mothers, assessing possible substitution effects.

Again we see differing patterns for Mexican and Chinese families, and by social-emotional facets of functioning versus maternal reading practices (the reference group remains native-born Whites). In column 1 we see that the level of in-home arguments at baseline generally climbed for Mexican families the longer they resided in the United States, starting at a much *lower* level for the most recent immigrants, those resident less than 5 years. This suggests an immigrant advantage, along with buffering of the effects of economic exigencies. But for Chinese mothers, the levels of in-home arguments and depression were much higher at baseline and showed no signs of abating over time.

Turning to mothers' early reading practices, the pair of cross-sectional baseline (OLS) models for the two indicators of maternal reading show that more recently arriving Chinese mothers read even more frequently with the focal child than Whites, even after taking into account main effects from nativity and all prior covariates. This also suggests an immigrant advantage, prior to the effects of acculturation: After residing in the United States for at least 10 years, Chinese mothers read with

their child with the same frequency as native-born White mothers. We also see that poorer Chinese mothers accelerated their reading practices over time, compared to a flatter rate of change for native-born Whites. Recency of arrival made no difference for Mexican mothers with regard to reading at baseline or in their change scores.

Discussion

Overall, we found comparatively strong social-emotional functioning inside immigrant families, despite disproportionate shares residing in low-income neighborhoods. Migration history and contemporary maternal supports, often culturally conditioned, acted to protect the social-emotional side of functioning, even after taking into account the family's social-class position or poverty status. At the same time, the extent to which migration history and cultural heritage backstop family functioning depends on particular migration histories—stemming from nativity, ethnic membership, and years resident in the United States. The selectivity of which Asian or Latino families emigrate also contributes to household functioning.

Equally important, we find that the mother's migration history, along with poverty status and maternal support, influence the extent to which cognitively stimulating activities are structured for young children, as indicated by early reading practices. While Mexican mothers showed robust levels of mental health, at times stronger than levels reported by native-born Whites, the Mexican mothers reported weak reading practices. While Asians show weaker social-emotional functioning at baseline and change over time, they display strong reading practices.

We certainly observed weaker social-emotional functioning and early learning activities in households falling below the poverty line overall, consistent with family-stress and developmental-risk frameworks. Yet when focusing on foreign-born Latino mothers—often living in materially poor households—we found robust levels of social-emotional functioning.

Functioning and maternal mental health were generally weaker for Chinese and South Asian mothers at baseline. Conflict in the home and maternal depression remained higher for Chinese mothers resident in the United States for over 5 years, relative to native-born Whites, even with all covariates in the model. This pattern is not explained by poverty or class, as maternal education and class positions were comparatively high. Additional research could inform why Asian mothers adapt to postimmigration pressures less well than Latino peers.

The full regression model also revealed how individual- and family-level predictors help to explain these between-group differences. Mothers reported more frequent arguments when working outside the home for wages and when the ratio of children per adult was greater. Conflicts arose more frequently when the mother had earlier engaged in antisocial behavior. Certain maternal supports contributed to stronger social-emotional functioning, especially the strength of support from the father in childrearing and the availability of a kin member or friend when emergencies occur (Small, 2009).

The picture is quite different when focusing on the second dimension of functioning, mothers' early learning practices. Foreign-born mothers in general read less with their children—most pronounced for Mexican-heritage and other Latina mothers. Mexican mothers reported reading less frequently at baseline (about 24 months of age), and this frequency declined relative to native-born White mothers over the 3-year period. In sharp contrast, Chinese and South Asian mothers read with their children more often, and this frequency rose at a greater rate over the 3 years, compared to native-born Whites.

Maternal education—linked to migratory selection—explains part of the difference in early learning practices between Latinas and Asians. A high school diploma or less was the highest level attained for 67% of Mexican mothers. Only 6% of Chinese mothers ended their formal schooling at this level. Family-level factors further explained weaker reading practices of Mexican mothers at baseline and change over time, including the suppressing effects of living in poverty, a higher ratio of children per adult in the household, and maternal employment.

The residual effects stemming from an immigrant advantage (Table 5) suggest that unobserved attributes of Mexican and Chinese mothers remain at play, likely pertaining to the cultural assets each group brings to the United States or unobservables that stem from migratory selectivity. The fact that Mexican mothers reported strong social-emotional functioning independent of when they arrived suggests that culturally situated practices do buffer economic pressures over time. And more recently arriving Chinese mothers displayed stronger reading practices with the focal child, diminishing among those who had resided in the United States for longer periods of time.

Additional research is required to understand the specific psychological and social action inside families that enable immigrant subgroups to buffer poverty and acculturative stress. Our results locate pivotal processes in the home, including mothers' relationships, support provided by the father, smaller family size, and the mother's mental health. Ecocultural theory helps us to understand how these mechanisms stem from differing heritage cultures, why they differentially benefit or impede social-emotional versus early learning domains of functioning, and how they may change with acculturation (Halgunseth et al., 2006; Zhou, 1997). While comparatively strong social-emotional functioning is good news, the persistence of weak learning activities, especially seen in Mexican-heritage families, is certainly not adaptive to the long-term social ecology through which these children will move, as they now encounter classrooms, neighborhoods, and labor markets that require strong social *and* cognitive competencies.

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