Title: Examining Correlates and Differences in Well-Being, School Partnerships, Knowledge, and Empowerment Among Latino and White Parents of Children with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

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Introduction: Parents of children with (versus without) IDD experience greater stress (Magaña et al., 2015). Further, some parent characteristics buffer parent stress. For example, optimism and mastery are protective buffers to parent stress (Wang et al., 2004). School characteristics may also relate to parent stress; for example, worse family-school partnerships relate to greater maternal stress (Burke & Hodapp, 2014). Unfortunately, most of the extant research about families of individuals with IDD focuses on White families, with under-representation from Latino families (Shapiro et al., 2004). It is important to understand differences in well-being (e.g., stress) between Latino and White families to develop appropriate interventions to reduce parent stress. To this end, in this study, our research questions were: (1) Are there differences between Latino and White parents of children with IDD with respect to: empowerment, family-school partnership, special education knowledge, self-mastery, optimism, and stress?; and (2) What are the parent and school correlates of parenting stress?

Method: Data were collected via a survey from 71 parents of children with IDD; 25 were Latino parents of children with IDD and 46 were White parents of children with IDD. All participants completed the survey to register for a special education advocacy training. Within the survey, participants completed the following measures: Family Empowerment Scale (Koren et al., 1991); Family-School Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005); Special Education Knowledge Scale (Burke et al., 2016); Self-mastery Scale (Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981); Optimism Scale (LOT-R, Robinson-Whelen, Kim, MacCallum, & Kiecolt-Glaser;1997); and Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1990). All scales demonstrated reliability with alphas greater than .6. Data were normally distributed; missing data were imputed according to Harrell’s guidelines (2005). Analyses included t-tests and Pearson correlations for the first research question. For the second research question, stress was the dependent variable with racial background of the participant (i.e., Latino versus White), special education knowledge, empowerment, self-mastery, family-school partnership, and optimism as independent variables in a linear regression.

Result: There were significant differences between Latino and White families with respect to: special education knowledge ($t = 2.41, p = .02$), empowerment ($t = 7.35, p < .001$), self-mastery ($t = 2.32, p = .02$), and parent stress ($t = 2.59, p = .01$). Specifically, Latino families scored lower than White families with respect to: special education knowledge, empowerment, and self-mastery. Latino families scored significantly higher with respect to stress. There were no significant differences with respect to optimism and family-school partnerships. The linear regression was significant ($R^2 = .29, F = 8.18, p < .001$). Only empowerment ($p < .001$), self-mastery ($p = .03$), and quality of the family-school partnership ($p = .028$) were significantly correlated with parent stress.

Discussion: This study indicates that there may be significant differences in special education knowledge, empowerment, and parent well-being between Latino and White parents of children with IDD. Further, school and parent characteristics may contribute to parenting stress. Future research and practice should consider interventions that focus on addressing parent and school characteristics when trying to reduce parenting stress.

References/Citations: