Supporting Positive Language and Literacy Development in Young Language Minority
Children: Research, Policy, and Practice
Roundtable Meeting, April 16 - 17, 2008

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE MEETING

OVERVIEW
The Language Minority Roundtable was a working meeting where invited participants engaged in critical dialogue regarding how research can support efforts of policymakers and practitioners to serve the language and literacy needs of young language minority children (i.e., birth to 5 years of age)[*]. The central goal of the meeting was to gain a better understanding of how available research can or cannot presently inform policy and practitioner concerns.

The present report highlights key research issues and questions that arose from the roundtable meeting on the topic of how research can support positive language and literacy outcomes for young language minority children. The roundtable discussions, held in Washington DC in April 2008, were unique in that they highlighted research issues specific to the needs of programming and policy audiences. Several federal agencies and prominent researchers in the field assisted in planning the content of the meeting. In addition, many efforts were made to ensure that the voices of stakeholders outside the academy were included in the proceedings, which greatly enriched and enlivened the discussions. To this end, half of the attendees at the roundtable consisted of scholars from various institutions (about 40 total), while the other half comprised directors and practitioners in early childhood programs and federal representatives. (See Appendix for Agenda and List of Participants.)

SUMMARY OF MAJOR THEMES AND ISSUES RAISED AT MEETING

The summary below is organized according to the topics discussed and briefly encapsulates central ideas that were expressed in the plenary and breakout sessions. As such, the issues and questions presented do not encompass all research issues or questions that could be asked about the particular topic. Rather, they are what attendees perceived as research concerns that should be addressed in the near future. We begin by reporting the issues that emerged from the plenary and breakout sessions that served to structure the meeting. The plenary sessions focused on the following areas: bilingual language and literacy development, culture and families, effective programming, and measurement and assessment. Then, we summarize broad concerns that cut across the central topics of the meeting. Issues are presented in the form of questions, followed

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[*] In the U.S., the term "language minority children" refers to children from families in which the primary language spoken at home is not English. The term encompasses dual language learners (DLLs) and other terms frequently used, such as bilingual, limited English proficient (LEP), English language learners (ELL), English learners, children who speak a language other than English (LOTE), and children for whom English is a second language (ESL). The reader will note the many terms used for language minority children and families that appear throughout this document, reflecting that no real consensus exists in terms of how to refer to this specific population comprised of many populations in the U.S. who share one common characteristic—speaking a language other than English. For more information regarding HHS definitions and resources pertaining to language minorities, or LEPs, see HHS' website (http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources/specialtopics/lep/index.html). For more information regarding OHS definitions and resources pertaining to DLLs, see OHS' *Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center* (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Dual%20Language%20Learners).

by points of consensus or more specific areas of inquiry. Here again, these questions reflect the meeting's discussions, highlighting how much research is still needed to fill the gaps in knowledge about young children from language minority families.

BILINGUAL LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

What is the impact of learning two or more languages from zero to five on the development and maintenance of those languages?

- **What is normative language development among young bilingual children?** Early second language development is not well understood to the extent that one could state definitively whether development in one language might affect development in another. Young children may learn two languages from birth or may only later be exposed to a second language (as when they enter child care settings) and in either case, some aspects of language may be stalled in comparison to monolingual English speakers. How does learning one language affect learning another language in the early years of life? More information regarding long term language growth (beyond the early years and dependent on various language inputs), the interdependency of multiple languages used, and fluency in English for both kinds of bilingual learners is needed. In addition, more comparative work examining language growth for various subgroups of bilingual learners is needed.

- **How do the different characteristics of home, care and education settings influence language development?** Learning two languages need not impede the fluency of both languages (e.g., Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung & Blanco, 2007). However, young children may progressively lose home language for multiple reasons including: older siblings who speak English; lack of support for the home language in the early childhood setting; perception that English is a prestige language. In addition to siblings, we have little knowledge of the role of extended family in children's language maintenance, development and/or loss. Future research would do well to determine the extent to which these patterns occur and the features of early care settings that would limit or encourage first and second language fluency.

- **How might language proficiency and language use among care providers interact with family choice to shape language development?** Very little is known regarding how and which languages are used in informal childcare settings such as family day care and family, friend and network care. Anecdotal reports suggest that immigrant families may use informal child care providers who speak the same language as the home language. This would likely result in limited exposure to English and maintenance of the home language. Future research is needed to understand the extent to which these child care arrangements exist and potential language trajectories for these children.

- **Bilingualism refers to a range of language experiences.** The term bilingual should be conceptualized in research studies as a spectrum of ability in both languages, taking into account the myriad ways that young children can hear and respond across languages, as well as how skillful children are in producing words appropriate to the context (e.g., Does child use different languages depending on person spoken to?). Understanding when and also *how* young children use languages can be very important in understanding language developmental processes. Also, it is critical for research to consider when and how children are exposed to language upon entering early childhood settings.

- **Research must consider the diversity of languages in order to better understand bilingual language development.** There is a great need to expand second-language research in the U.S. beyond Spanish-speaking populations. Examining how language proficiency is shaped by features of language (e.g., linguistic structure) as well as cultural beliefs across a variety of languages is necessary to comprehend what is specific to a particular language or to bilingual development in general.

What outcomes are associated with being a young bilingual?
- **What is the impact of bilingualism versus other experiences that often co-occur?** Bilingualism among young children does not occur independent of other circumstances. Future work should endeavor to disentangle the role of variables that are often correlated with bilingual status such as socio-economic and minority status.

- **What dimensions of language exposure influence language development?** Some evidence suggests that timing of second language onset (e.g. second language is first introduced at home or at school) has implications for the development of particular language skills during preschool years. Additional work in this area might include longitudinal analysis of language and literacy outcomes for bilingual children that vary along these dimensions and identify additional factors that might be associated with particular language trajectories.

- **What leads to and results from loss of home language?** More research is needed on long-term outcomes related to loss of learning first language. For example, it would be very helpful for research to address whether social relations between parents and children may deteriorate as children begin to lose their first language in the early years. It would also be useful to examine factors that contribute to a child not speaking in the home language (e.g., parenting beliefs, siblings "teaching English", gender, age, child care setting). Also, what are the impacts of losing the first language among special subgroups of bilingual children, such as those who have language disorders?

- **What are the best practices regarding language use for bilingual children with language disorders?** It is unclear how language disorders among bilingual children should be or are being addressed by speech pathologists. Moreover, it is unclear whether language disorders are being under- or overdiagnosed among young bilingual children. In addition, it is unclear what parents of bilingual children are being told about how they can best support the speech development of children with language disorders. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that many parents are told that they should speak to their child in English only. More research on the developmental needs of bilingual children with language disorders is needed in order to develop recommendations for accurate diagnosis, effective treatment and supportive home practices.

What do we know about emergent biliteracy development?
- **There has been very little work done on emergent biliteracy development for children from three to five.** This, no doubt, is attributable to the difficulty of making sense of what young children are doing that link to more conventional forms of reading and writing later on. The need to establish a research agenda and theoretical framework around the topic of emergent biliteracy is considerable and necessary if early care and

education programs seek to support children in transitioning from emergent to conventional forms of biliteracy. This work should be done across multiple languages to understand aspects of literacy that are specific to particular writing systems.

CULTURE AND FAMILIES

Why is a consideration of culture important to understanding how to support language and literacy development among young children?

- **A research agenda that further substantiates how language and literacy practices are embedded in the lives of young children is needed.** Research has consistently demonstrated that children in most, if not all, communities are socialized through language and participate in rich linguistic traditions. Linguistic practices, in addition to how children and families engage in literacy events, vary across cultures, and these are shaped by family and community routines. This evidence makes clear the extent to which culture, language and literacy are interrelated constructs. Indeed, this body of research suggests that understanding how to support language and literacy cannot be fully understood without a cultural frame of reference.

- **Efforts to bridge language practices at home and in care and education settings should be examined rigorously, using mixed methods.** Applied research that has drawn on the body of work described above (primarily with children in grades K-12) has attempted to minimize differences between school and home language practices to improve children's performance in classroom settings. Future research would do well to elucidate these linkages in early childhood settings in ways that can be supported with quantitative and qualitative findings.

- **Studies of efforts to link language practices at home and in early care and education settings should carefully examine the values underpinning these and how they shape children's experiences.** The values and customs associated with language and literacy practices across home and formal academic environments, however, may be too disparate for language minority children to try and link learning in either home or childcare settings. Research on values and perspectives on language and literacy development held by families and early care practitioners could support (or not) this assertion. Early care practitioners may at best, be able to draw on existing home language and literacy routines to build language and literacy skills that are in line with those expected in early childcare settings. Future work can examine these hypotheses in ways that clearly demonstrate the effects of these types of efforts on young children's language and literacy competencies.

- **Investigations of cultural dimensions and influences in language development should avoid oversimplifying**. Future studies that examine the cultural nature of language and literacy practices would do well to use conceptual frameworks that do not over-generalize patterns of family and child behavior. For example, comparative studies may stereotype populations by minimizing within-group differences. Ignoring these issues only serves to increase the difficulty of implementing any efforts that are based on cultural principles. In early childhood settings, cultural competency or awareness does not replace knowing the individual child and their families.

- **How is literacy developed in home and in care and education settings among young children from communities that have held primarily oral traditions?** This is an

especially critical question to address for many indigenous peoples from Mexico and Central America who have recently migrated to the U.S., as well as for many American Indian and Alaska Native tribal communities.

How is family engagement important to supporting language and literacy development?

- **The composition of LEP families and roles of different family members demands careful consideration in research and programming efforts.** When discussing "family" in the context of language minority communities, it is important to be cognizant of the role that older siblings and extended family (in addition to parents) may play in young children's language and literacy development. Research is needed to clarify the impact of young children's interactions with siblings and extended family on their language and literacy skills. More research on father involvement should be considered; in many language minority communities, fathers are the primary contact with institutions.

- **Parent engagement models need more, rigorous evaluation.** The evaluation of parental engagement models (e.g., parent leadership classes, workforce development, parent peer groups) will be important in future efforts to demonstrate their effectiveness and ability to be replicated with families from language minority backgrounds. Specifically, studies should identify what aspects of these models are particularly effective in increasing family engagement in the education and supportive services available for their children and what dimensions are more or less successful among different groups of LEP families.

- **Studies should examine what promotes or hampers the sustainability of effects on early literacy of family interventions.** Research suggests that direct interventions with families to improve young children's emergent reading can succeed, but there are difficulties in sustaining these new patterns. One theory for why this challenge exists is that often there is a lack of consensus between researchers, practitioners and families in relation to ideas about literacy, beliefs about developmental goals and stages, and ideas about appropriate forms of teaching and learning. This hypothesis and others should be explored in more detail in future work, and such work should carefully consider how these issues can be responsibly negotiated while addressing young children's language and literacy developmental needs.

EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

What is considered effective early care and education programming for children from language minority backgrounds?

- **There is little evidence available regarding the efficacy of particular practices for these children.** It is extremely important that future research can clearly articulate and state the effectiveness of specific instructional practices (e.g., vocabulary instruction, physical gestures and verbal cues) along with their optimal delivery for use with young children from language minority backgrounds.

- **Many questions concern the role of English knowledge in early childhood for later school performance.** What is the relationship between knowledge of English at young ages and later academic outcomes? Does knowledge of English promote success? Are

there additional constructs that are associated with proficiency in English that play a role in whether children succeed academically?

- **In developing practices that are specialized, how individualized should they be?** Determining the extent to which language and literacy programming can or should be specialized to the individual needs of a child who is not proficient in English is a challenge to many early childhood practitioners. For example, how can language of instruction be targeted and managed when there are multiple languages spoken in a single early care setting? How can diversity be addressed in the classroom while also drawing on programming that is inclusive of all children? Future work can test the effectiveness of a variety of programming strategies and demonstrate the processes by which those strategies are successful.

- **The field of early care and education is rich with instructional innovation by practitioners.** Future work would do well to collect data on practitioner reports regarding how they are addressing the needs of young language minority children across a variety of child care and education programs. What has been the response of practitioners to large influxes of language minority children? Anecdotal observations suggest that practitioners are engaging in a range of practices to address situations that may arise when children cannot communicate in English in early childhood settings, with little guidance regarding the efficacy of such activities or routines (e.g., consistently using young bilingual children as language brokers). In addition, more data regarding the needs of practitioners in this area, from their perspective, is required and should inform future research efforts (e.g., Head Start Dual Language report, OHS 2008).

- **What aspects of structural and process quality should be present in programs to address the needs of language minority children?** The field of early care and education continues to struggle with defining quality in early childhood programs, identifying structural aspects and dimensions of process that are linked to recommended practices or better child outcomes. Future research in this area should also consider defining what quality programs look like in terms of the particular needs of children from language minority backgrounds.

What models of language instruction are ideal in building language and literacy skills?
- **Do first language and literacy skills assist in development of language and literacy skills in a second language?** The K-12 literature suggests that teaching children to read in their native language promotes literacy skills in English, or the second language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders & Christian, 2006). Limited evidence with younger children in preschool settings suggests that two-way bilingual immersion programs (English-Spanish) in the U.S., at the very least, do not adversely impact English language learning, improve Spanish vocabulary for both native English and native Spanish speakers, and that using the native language allows children to engage in richer discussions around academic content (Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung & Blanco, 2007). Future research should gather more evidence about the efficacy or strengths of different program models for young children and pursue questions that might flow from the findings described above. For example, additional research can further

examine whether learning patterns are replicable, whether they hold over time, and whether outcomes are dependent on the source of language input.

- **Experimental studies comparing the learning trajectories of children who have participated in different types of programs (e.g., two way immersion, English immersion, rapid transition) would be helpful.** Longitudinal data should be collected in early childhood as well as in the primary school years to document a wide array of children's outcomes as they relate to language of instruction. Do some programs work better for some children than for others over the long term? In early child care settings where there are limited resources and the ideal language of instruction cannot be achieved (e.g., in settings where practitioners are only fluent in English), what other targeted strategies should be used to promote language and literacy learning? What are the resources needed to carry out the various models of bilingual programs for young children and what are the structural features of a good bilingual program?

MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT

What measures can be used to accurately assess the language and literacy skills of young language minority children?

- **Research must fill the gaps in culturally and linguistically valid, reliable assessment tools.** Much more research is critically needed to construct measures for young language minority children that have strong psychometric properties as well as content and cultural equivalence. There is a lack of formal assessment tools for young language minority children (Espinosa & Lopez, 2007) and new instruments that are accessible to practitioners are particularly lacking. Large-scale systematic efforts to collect data on young language minority children would expand opportunities to conduct psychometric analyses on existing or new measures. These data collection efforts should include assessments done in English and in each child's primary language.

- **Efforts to assess language development must consider the diversity of experiences and trajectories among bilingual children.** Research suggests language development among bilingual children is much more variable when compared to monolingual children, so great care must be taken in choosing measures and interpreting results accurately. Refining measures for this particular population in future research efforts will require a greater understanding of the process of language acquisition (e.g., successive or sequential) and home language and literacy environments experienced by young children. Current and future assessments should be directly linked to what we know about bilingual language development over time and beyond the early childhood years.

- **Valid instruments are needed in other languages (in addition to Spanish).** Future efforts must develop valid and reliable measures in languages other than Spanish, as well, to ensure that more language minority children can benefit from high quality assessments, as well as the programs that are evaluated using these measures.

ISSUES THAT CUT ACROSS TOPICAL AREAS

The following areas of inquiry or consensus span the plenary topics outlined above and, in some cases, surfaced repeatedly in discussions during the two-day meeting. Some of these reflect

overarching considerations for framing future research on language and literacy development among young children from language minority backgrounds.

What do we know about children from language minority backgrounds across childcare settings?
- **Little is known about the actual distribution of these children across care settings.** With the exception of a few programs, there is little data available that reflects the percentage of language minority children in either formal or informal care environments. Systematic data collection efforts that are carried out either independently or as part of other data collection efforts across a range of child care programs can create opportunities to do important policy relevant research.

- **Limited understanding of the care choices of LEP families hinders programming.** Overall, immigrant families in the U.S. use formal child care less often than families with native-born parents. Some findings suggest that it is a lack of child care options that might contribute to this pattern, but there are also reports of families using particular types of child care for more personal reasons, such as the provider sharing the same cultural background as the family and the child. The factors that contribute to the disparity in use of certain types of care may be barriers (e.g., limited language proficiency) or advantages (e.g., two-parent households or greater social support) for these children. More research is needed to understand the child care choices of families from language minority backgrounds.

- **More information about the influence of regulations and resources on access to and quality of care would benefit policy development.** More studies are needed to understand the role regulatory standards can play in providing systematic and accessible child care services and in improving overall quality across various types of child care settings. In addition, we also know little about the extent to which professional supports are available for informal care providers. This line of research should also include information regarding what types of administrative and financial resources are needed to provide these supports.

What is the impact of socio-emotional outcomes for language and literacy development?
- **Socio-emotional, language and literacy development are interrelated.** The focus on language and literacy for young children may be overly narrow given the interrelated nature of socio-emotional and cognitive health. Large-scale research programs should be inclusive of the numerous facets of young children's development that are interacting and maturing concurrently when considering influences on language and literacy skills.

- **How might additional stressors affect the experiences of language minority children in care and education settings?** We have little data on the particular stressors that young children whose primary language is not English might face in care and education settings. For instance, how challenging is the task of navigating the different language environments across home and (potentially several) child care environments? Additional factors to consider are the impact of stressful events such as discriminatory policies that might play a role in how children and families access and adapt to institutional environments such as formal care settings.

What is the importance of linking early care and education to the primary years and beyond?
- **Longitudinal research extending past early childhood would do much to advance knowledge base**. Language and literacy development among language minority children is more variable than among monolingual children. Longitudinal research that would extend from early childhood to primary school years and beyond would allow for a greater understanding of why this variation exists and how it is shaped over time.

- **Research partnerships that span developmental periods would benefit the field.** Establishing partnerships between researchers focused on early childhood settings and those focused on grades K-12 to understand key research issues for language minority children would be highly beneficial in providing information on longitudinal school trajectories. Moreover, additional efforts would be made to ensure consistency and the feasibility of future analysis of language and literacy instruction across the early years and the primary grades if longitudinal studies are the primary focus from the outset.

- **Many questions of enormous importance in this area require longitudinal study designs that span the transition to grade school.** How is the transition to Kindergarten for children and families from language minority backgrounds? What particular efforts should be made for language minority children (and their families) when they transfer to formal schooling environments that do not have the same supports or modes of instruction as child care centers or other early childhood settings?

How should professional development systems respond to an increasingly diverse population of young learners?
- **Preparing early care and education practitioners to work with the current and future population of young children in the U.S. requires appropriate attention to the role of socio-cultural diversity.** Language and culture are often viewed as add-ons or electives in teacher education programs. However, as the population becomes increasingly diverse throughout the country, knowledge and awareness of socio-cultural influences on early childhood learning and development should be embedded in all of the coursework. Caregivers and educators should be supported with instructional resources and relevant expertise to promote appropriate practices or, when necessary, innovation.

- **What is the significance of a culturally diverse workforce in early care and education?** It is unclear how the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of practitioners might shape care or instructional practices. Future work might consider the significance of these dimensions of practitioners' experiences. Many programs cite shortages in qualified, bilingual staff. Furthermore, future research might demonstrate the need for a diverse workforce in the early care and education industry and suggest ways to build professional capacity in this area.

- **Processes of change among caregivers and teachers call for examination.** Practitioners may feel overburdened by instituting new practices suggested by research. Engaging new practices will likely be dependent on the level of teacher support that is provided for making changes. Future studies that focus on evaluating various programmatic efforts would do well to explore the issue of professional development in more detail and the topic of teacher support, more specifically.

- **Greater attention and resources should be invested in the science of dissemination to early childhood settings.** Even in instances where research findings are available and summaries are written for a lay audience, practitioners and policymakers may not know where to find or readily access this work. Information regarding the best practices will not address children's needs unless there are institutionalized processes that allow exchange of information between researchers, practitioners and policymakers. There is often little guidance from research and policy on effective educational practices, and practitioners are left to make best guesses about how to address young children's needs, particularly in contexts where language minority children are a rapidly growing population. Moreover, without proper policies in place, many practitioners cannot carry out recommendations suggested by the research literature. There is substantial disconnect that can be ameliorated with significant attention in future research to topics of dissemination.

What kinds of research knowledge can be gained from examining children's bilingual language development in international settings?
- **International research can offer insights about framing, interpreting, and translating research**. While research on bilingual language development from other countries may not be generalizable to the U.S., international research can assist us in framing important research questions and making sense of findings in the U.S. International perspectives can also assist in shaping dissemination efforts on young children's bilingual language development to inform policymakers as well as practitioners and families.

What, if any, overarching concepts should guide future research on language and literacy development among young children from language minority backgrounds?
- **Research must consider the context of children's language and literacy development**. In addition to considering the individual skills of young children, which is often the focus of education reforms and psychology, a research agenda that includes the context of children's language and literacy development is needed. Thus, supporting language and literacy development entails a range of factors that interact in important and complex ways, including effective programs, professional development systems, cultural processes, family engagement, and underlying cognitive processes (e.g., learning new words, print awareness, emerging meta-linguistic skills). This listing is not exhaustive; many additional factors may not have been discussed at length in the meeting and therefore are not mentioned in the present report. Future research should reflect on the contexts of children's development, exploring the ways that various contexts might shape young children's language development and might pose significant opportunities for supporting growth and/or targeting intervention.

- **Literacy is broader than reading or writing**. Young children who may not have the ability to engage in conventional forms of reading and writing are acquiring knowledge of how to interact with print in addition to the purpose of print. As a result, literacy practices may vary depending on the communities in which they occur and on the interpretive processes and types of interaction occurring around the literacy event. Future

research should explore the multiple forms of and opportunities for supporting language and literacy in children's everyday lives.

- **Language minority children are an enormously diverse group**. Children and families from language minority backgrounds in the U.S. comprise a widely heterogeneous group. There is substantial variability across language minority subgroups in terms of country of origin, household structure, economic status, and cultural norms. Future work is needed to understand this variation in ways that are systematic and would assist in targeting support and resources effectively. Moreover, research illuminating aspects of family and community life that are deemed beneficial for children's development can be used to inform basic developmental science as well as future efforts to support children's language and literacy learning. Similarly, language minority children and families who have special needs should be incorporated and have their needs addressed appropriately in research and programming efforts. Future research with language minority children should provide sufficient description of research samples and settings to avoid generalizations that might equate language minority status with vulnerable or "at-risk" status.

- **The experiences associated with language status should be parsed out from those related to low-income status**. Available data strongly suggest that language minority children are disproportionately represented within the overall population of children living in poverty (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007; Garcia & Miller, 2008). Moreover, the average household income for language minority families with young children is typically lower than that of other families in low-income samples (Garcia & Miller, 2008; Ziv, 2008). Future work is needed to disentangle each of these constructs, socioeconomic and language status, in ways that illustrate the influences of these separate, albeit interrelated, variables on the language and literacy development of young children.

- **Parents are partners in programming**. The early care and education field has held a long standing tradition of partnering with families and ensuring the well being of parents. (See online program descriptions for Child Care Bureau (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/) and Office of Head Start (http://www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc)). Integral to research efforts in this area will be the inclusion of families' perspectives, of families' needs, and of significant family processes to align closely with programming approaches in order to support positive language and literacy outcomes for young language minority children.

More specifically, in the areas of research analysis and methodology, what do we know about research efforts concerning language minority children?
- **New methodologies are required**. The field needs to advance new methodologies that will assist in meeting some of the challenges in collecting data about language minority children. For instance, the existing standard assessments of young children's cognitive development are insufficient for understanding and monitoring the language, vocabulary, or more general cognitive skills of children from language minority backgrounds. Simple translations of valid English language instruments are not enough to ensure comparability between English measures and the child's home language. Furthermore, valid,

standardized methodology for measuring growth over time and across different language groups is not currently available. Future work must carefully develop assessment instruments and procedures to provide valid, reliable, and comparable data about the experiences, skills, and developmental progress of young language minority children. In turn, this will enable better integration of language minority populations in nationally representative studies and will yield more valid, and greatly needed, information about their experiences in different early childhood settings.

- **Within-group analyses can be informative, but should be balanced with more valid comparisons across groups**. A common approach in understanding the competencies of young language minority children has been to compare scores on a given measure to English-speaking children, often confounding ethnicity or socioeconomic status in these comparisons, without careful definition or statistical adjustment. Alternatively, children of Hispanic descent, who are not necessarily from language minority families, are frequently compared to non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black children, regardless of language abilities. Depending on the questions, the measures, and the analytical specifications used, these approaches can yield useful information. However, more work is needed to ensure that measures and methods are available that are equally valid and reliable with all of these populations. Further, there is also utility and need to conduct within-group analyses to understand the variation that exists among young language minority children and their families. This approach enables a greater understanding of normative development within this population and can provide profiles of children who have demonstrated positive language and literacy outcomes. Within-group analyses might also assist in understanding whether there are other key markers, groupings, or experiences (i.e., other than ethnic background and language status) that can improve our understanding of the pathways to positive or negative outcomes. While within-group analyses can offer significant and valuable information about developmental processes and phenomena of particular relevance to groups language minority children, research to address questions of national policy significance requires methods that yield comparable data across groups of children. The field needs both examinations of within-group processes and methods to enhance assessment of all children in large, nationally representative studies. Future research should pursue within-group analyses to enrich knowledge about the range of skills and experiences of subgroups of language minority children while continuing to develop methods that enable valid comparison to their peers.

- **Research findings should be generalized with caution.** Consumers of research studies that include language minority participants should ask critical questions regarding the extent to which findings can be generalized. Future research should consider the comparability of population and/ or program features between the study population and the new population with which the study will be replicated or where findings will be applied.

- **Mixed-method research designs can offer greater insight.** There are limitations in understanding issues of cultural diversity when using exclusively qualitative or quantitative approaches. The exchange of findings or ideas across research efforts that rely on either approach or studies that draw on mixed-method designs will be important for future work in this area.

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