Does the Hispanic Epidemiological Paradox Extend to Childhood Adversity and Later Life Disability?

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Background, Contributions, and Hypotheses
- Evidence suggests adverse circumstances during childhood increase later life disability
- Little research has examined whether this association affects Hispanic Americans, whose life course health dynamics often differ from other groups (e.g., Laditka & Laditka, 2017)
- We estimated this association for African American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic white women and men for eight childhood circumstances: fair or poor health, poverty, father or mother with education less than grade 8, household moves or receipt of money from family due to financial difficulties, father with extended unemployment, or no father in the household

Data and Methods
- Data were from the Health and Retirement Study (8 waves, 1998-2012, ages 51+, n=29,629, 136,704 functional status and death transitions)
- We used a 5-level index of childhood risk factors, none to 4 or more. Multinomial logistic Markov models estimated monthly probabilities of transitioning among having difficulty with activities of daily living (ADLs), having help with ADLs, and death, adjusted for age, gender, education, and race/ethnicity
- We used the probabilities to conduct microsimulations, creating large populations with monthly functional status measures through death for each individual, and analyzed outcomes in those populations

Results, Women
Women age 70 with high school education illustrate results (all p<0.001):
- Comparing those with 4 or more adversities to those reporting none, for Hispanics the percentage of remaining life with ADL difficulty was 8.7% greater, and with ADL help 9.8% greater.
- Comparable results were 7.5% and 9.1% for African Americans, 9.7% and 6.8% for whites
- Childhood adversity was not associated with mortality
- Results suggest childhood adversity may increase later life disability similarly across ethnicities

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Discussion and Implications
- Those with high childhood adversity had significantly more impairment through most adult life than those who reported none
- The association of childhood adversity with adult functional status varied little with race and ethnicity
- Results highlight the need to better understand associations of childhood adversity with functional status throughout life for Hispanics, given the growth of the Hispanic population and evidence suggesting that Hispanics may live longer, more impaired lives