Emphasizing Low-income African – American & Latinx Families’ Strength During the Preschool to Kindergarten Transition

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Research Agenda

How do ecological contexts (community), individual, and family factors promote the resilience of low-income, ethnic-group families and children’s school readiness?
Background

- **School Readiness**: Child competencies and abilities that children should possess upon entry to kindergarten

- **Parental Involvement**: Engagement in activities that promote children’s academic success (home & school based)
Gaps in the Current Literature

• Role of family and extended kin are limited

• Outcomes based on demographic variables are emphasized rather than family processes

• Overgeneralization of negative findings (deficit-thinking)

• Operationalization of school readiness and family involvement are derived from White middle-class models
Why is this significant?
Figure 6: Percentage of children under 6 years old in low-income and poor families by race/ethnicity, 2014

Percent (%)  Low income  Poor

White  34%  14%
Black  69%  42%
Hispanic  64%  34%
Asian  30%  13%
Hispanic children are least likely* to be academically ready for kindergarten

**EDUCATION**

Percent of children not yet in kindergarten (3-5) with various school readiness skills, 2006-2007

- **ABC**
  - Recognizes all letters
  - Hispanic: 15, Non-Hispanic White: 36, Non-Hispanic Black: 38

- **20+**
  - Counts to 20 or higher
  - Hispanic: 42, Non-Hispanic White: 69, Non-Hispanic Black: 69

- **W**
  - Writes first name
  - Hispanic: 50, Non-Hispanic White: 64, Non-Hispanic Black: 58

- **H**
  - Holds a pencil with fingers
  - Hispanic: 84, Non-Hispanic White: 88, Non-Hispanic Black: 86

- **Sp**
  - Speech is understandable to a stranger when child speaks
  - Hispanic: 87, Non-Hispanic White: 97, Non-Hispanic Black: 88

- **R**
  - Reads written words in books
  - Hispanic: 3, Non-Hispanic White: 8, Non-Hispanic Black: 16

*Hispanic children are significantly less likely than white children to be ready for school on all indicators except the ability to hold a pencil. Hispanic children are significantly less likely than black children to be able to recognize all letters, count to 20 or higher, or read written words in books.

Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

In some states, more than half of children are Hispanic

Percent of children who are Hispanic, 2013

Hispanics can be of any race. All race/Hispanic origin data are self-reported.

Source: Child Trends’ calculations of 2013 postcensal population estimates, from the U.S. Census Bureau.
Purpose

1. Explore the school readiness beliefs and practices of low-income Latinx & African American mothers.

2. Explore how mothers actively promote their children’s readiness for the transition to kindergarten.
Family Resilience Perspective

• How the family works together to survive and thrive despite adversity (Walsh, 1996; 2002)

• Focuses on family strengths

• Assets are highlighted with particular attention to family agency
Setting - Study 1

Mariette Myers Head Start (N=20)

- Mean = 33 years
- 55% had some college
- 80% were employed
- 35% had an annual income of $10K-$19K
- 75% were single
Sample – S2 Hazelwood Head Start (N=20)

- Mean = 31.5 years
- 45% had a U.S. High school degree
- 55% were from Mexico
- 90% were employed
- 35% had an annual income of $10K-$19K
- 45% were cohabitating
Beliefs – AA mothers

Kindergarten sets the tone for school, Darryl’s school, from beginning to end. So if he’s prepared for kindergarten, he’s prepared for first grade. If he’s prepared for first grade, then he’s prepared for second grade, and so on. – Aaliyah

These are basically stepping stones once children start school and how they’ll do in life, generally. So as long as they do good in school, then in life they should do great because you need education. – LaSenda
Beliefs – Latina mothers

Because if Nina does well in kindergarten, then she is going to do well in first, second, third grade, and so on. – Natalia,

I want Lucia to do well in kindergarten because at the end of kindergarten she will go to first grade … and that way she will be better each passing year. – Flor

I think kindergarten is the foundation for Javier’s school years … I don’t know how they teach here, but imagine that it’s not the same as in Mexico or daycare. … Kindergarten just helps make things easy for him. – Fabiola
### Home Literacy Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Reading Practices (N=20)</th>
<th>Emergent Writing Practices (N=20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book reading (17)</td>
<td>Spelling (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet mastery (14)</td>
<td>Writes own name (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word recognition (8)</td>
<td>Writes letters/words (11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter recognition (6)</td>
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<td>Sight words (5)</td>
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<td>Vocabulary (4)</td>
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(Jarrett, Hamilton, & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Reading Practices (N=17)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book reading (17)</td>
<td>Writes words/letters/name (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet mastery (16)</td>
<td>Draws/Traces (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting the library (5)</td>
<td>Spells (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(Coba-Rodriguez & Jarret, in progress)
## Extended Kin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members supporting literacy activities - AA</th>
<th>Family Members supporting literacy activities - Latinx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners (Fathers): 14</td>
<td>Partners (Fathers): 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents: 7</td>
<td>Grandparents: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunts: 3</td>
<td>Siblings: 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Siblings: 19</td>
<td>Uncle: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cousin: 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trusted friend: 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Immigration
- Neighborhood patterns
(Mis)alignment

Differences between preschool & kindergarten teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home-based Involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assisting with homework</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asking questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting child’s interests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing child’s friends</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preschool Teachers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Socio-emotional development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergent writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergent reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approaches to learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence (self-care)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor development/Physical well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nominal knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>General knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asking questions</strong></td>
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