

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

Illinois B – 3 Continuity Conference (2018)

**Sarai Coba-Rodriguez, Ph.D., CFLE**

University of Illinois at Chicago

Department of Educational Psychology

[scobaro2@uic.edu](mailto:scobaro2@uic.edu)



This work was supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Hatch project 793-357 [accession number: 1007545]. Megan-Brette Hamilton assisted with bibliographic searches and literature reviews, and preliminary analyses. Maria Greaves-Safadi Barnes assisted with data collection and transcribing. Kimberly Crossman and Aisha Griffith assisted with transcribing. Members of the Ethnographic Research Lab team in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at UIUC, also contributed to the research project. Heather McLeer provided editorial assistance. We gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic involvement of our participants and Mariette Myers and Hazelwood Preschool who made this study possible.

# 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)

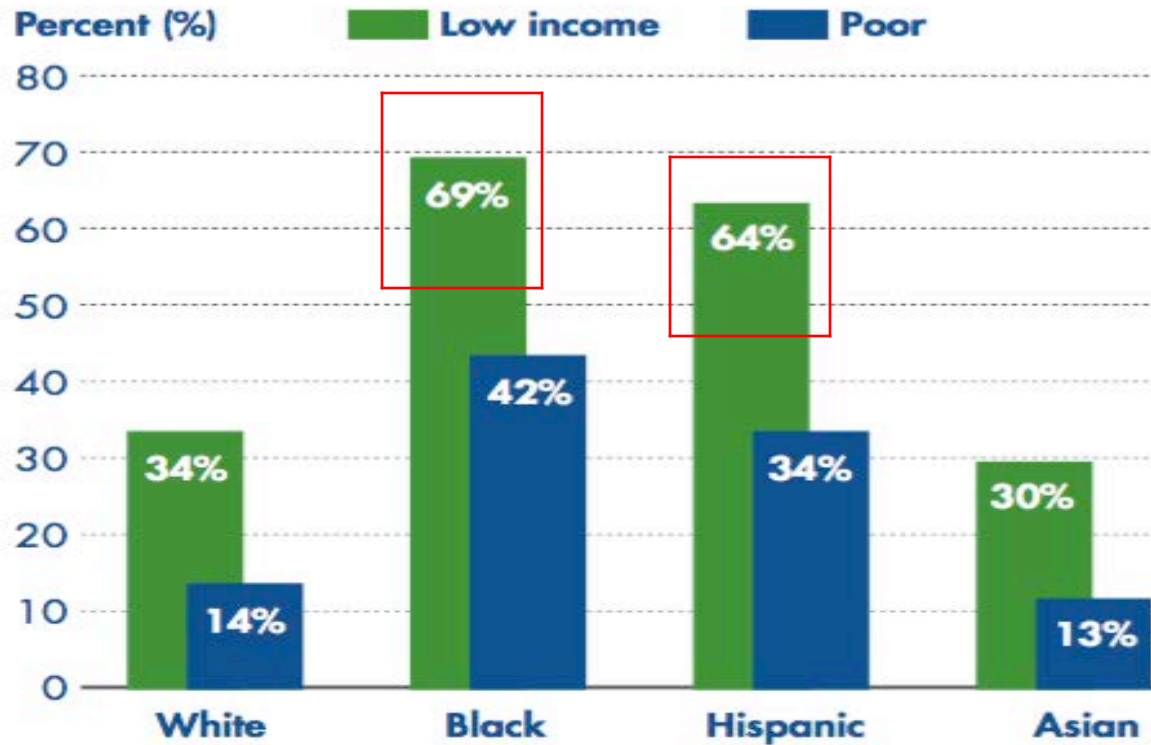
# Gaps in the Current Literature

- 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

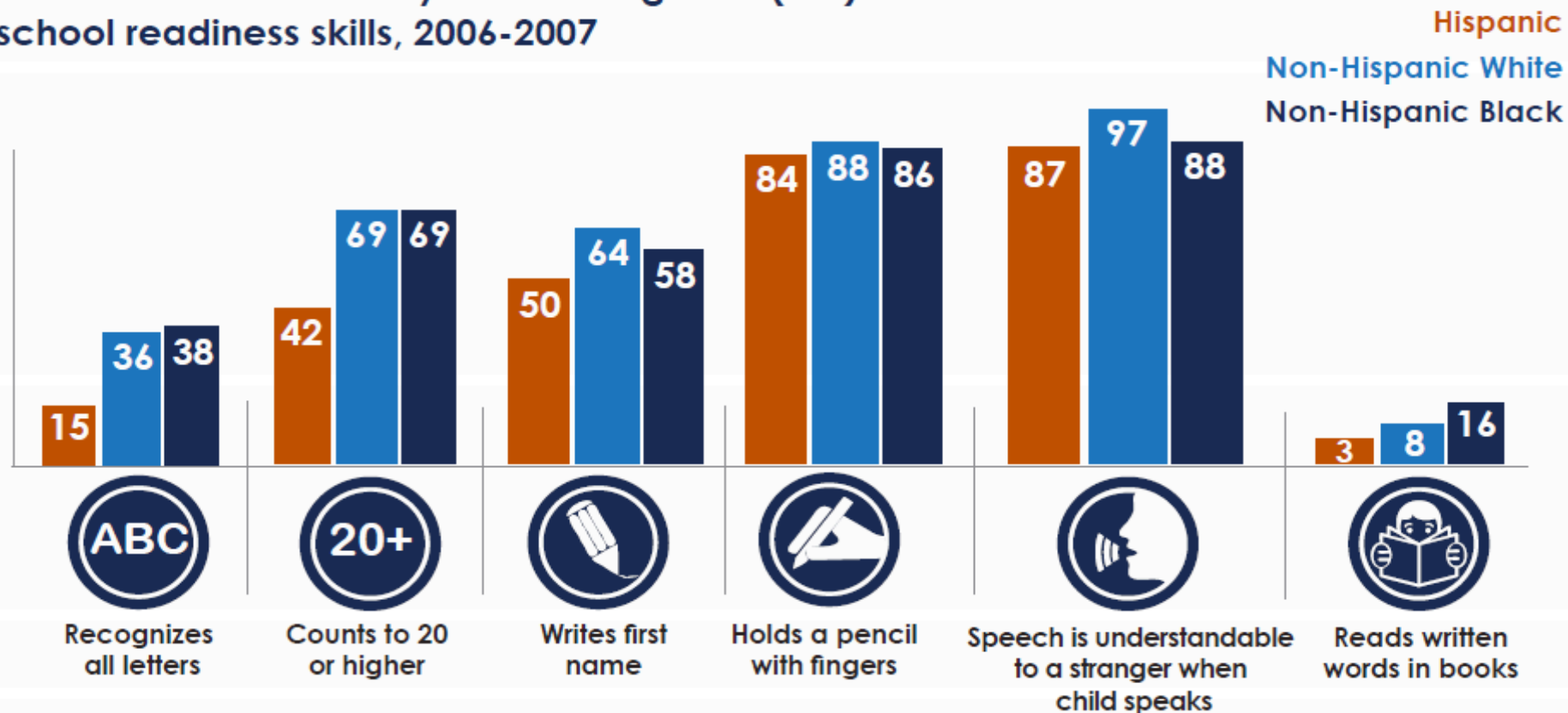


# Hispanic children are least likely\* to be academically ready for kindergarten



## EDUCATION

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



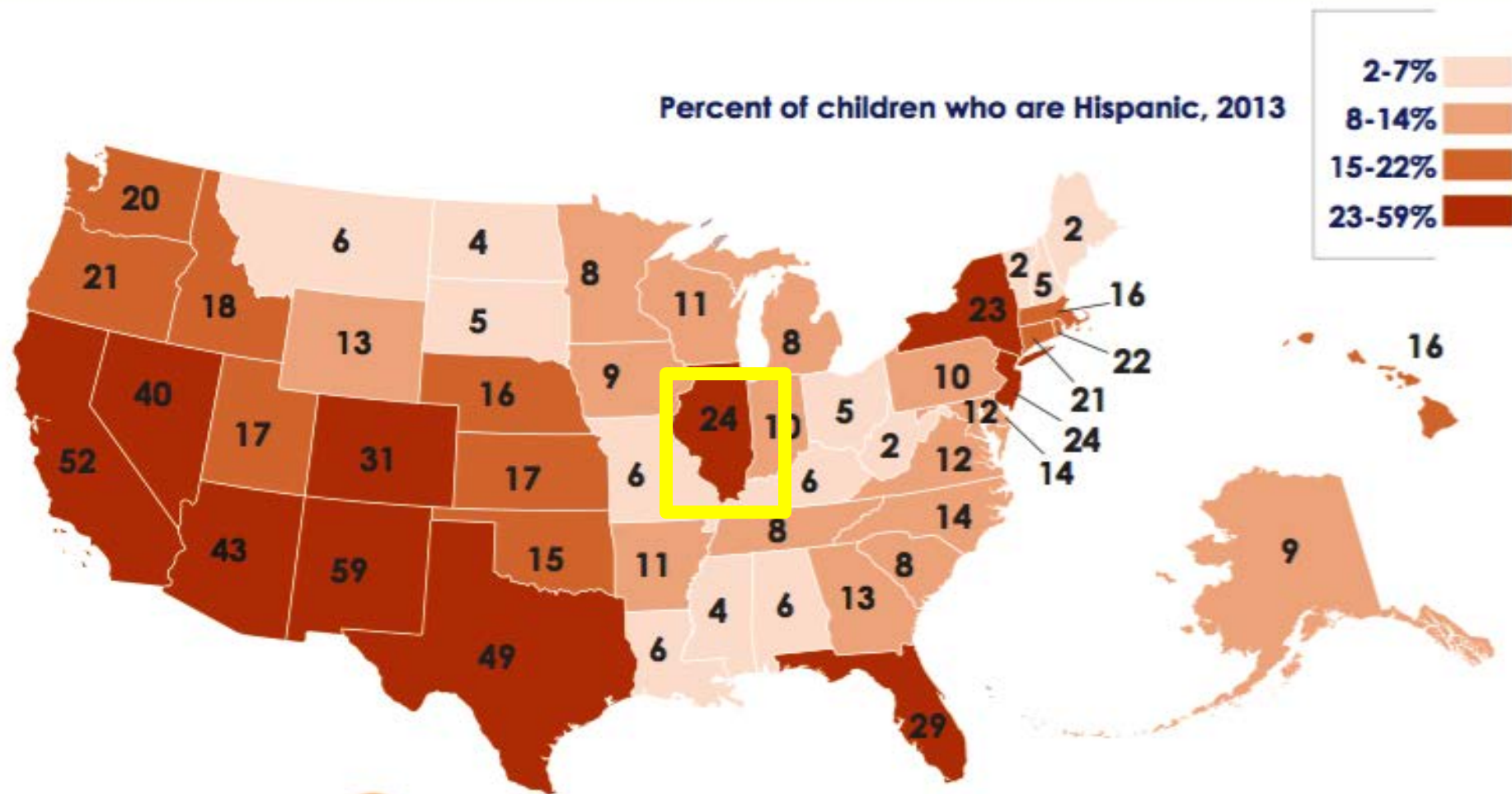
\*Hispanic children are significantly less likely than white children to be ready for school on all indicators except the ability to hold a pencil. Hispanic children are significantly less likely than black children to be able to recognize all letters, count to 20 or higher, or read written words in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



## DEMOGRAPHICS



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

Emergent Reading Practices (N=20)	Emergent Writing Practices (N=20)
Book reading (17)	Spelling (11)
Alphabet mastery (14)	Writes own name (11)
Word recognition (8)	Writes letters/words (11)
Letter recognition (6)	
Sight words (5)	
Vocabulary (4)	

(Jarrett, Hamilton, & **Coba-Rodriguez**, 2015)

Emergent Reading Practices (N=17)	Emergent Reading Practices (N=17)
Book reading (17)	Writes words/letters/name (15)
Alphabet mastery (16)	Draws/Traces (6)
Visiting the library (5)	Spells (3)

(**Coba-Rodriguez** & Jarret, in progress)



# Extended Kin

Family Members supporting literacy activities - AA	Family Members supporting literacy activities - Latinx
Partners (Fathers): 14	Partners (Fathers): 9
Grandparents: 7	Grandparents: 2
Aunts: 3	Siblings: 2
Siblings: 19	Uncle: 1
	Cousin: 1
	Trusted friend: 1

- Immigration
- Neighborhood patterns

# (Mis)alignment

Differences between preschool & kindergarten teachers:

---

## Home-based Involvement

---

### Mothers

Spending time with children

Assisting with homework

Asking questions

Supporting child's interests

Knowing child's friends

### Preschool Teachers

Socio-emotional development

Emergent writing

Emergent reading

Approaches to learning

Independence (self-care)

Motor development/Physical well-being

Nominal knowledge

General knowledge

Asking questions

---

# References

- Jarrett, R. L., & **Coba-Rodriguez, S.** (2017). "How African American mothers from urban, low-income backgrounds support their children's kindergarten transition: Qualitative findings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 1-10.
- Jarrett, R. L., & **Coba-Rodriguez, S.** (2017). "We keep the education goin' at home all the time:" Family literacy practices in low-income African American families of preschoolers. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 22(2), 57-76.
- Jarrett, R. L., Hamilton, M. B., & **Coba-Rodriguez, S.** (2015). "So we would all help pitch in:" The family literacy practices of low-income African American mothers of preschoolers. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 57,81-93.
- Jarrett, R. L., & **Coba-Rodriguez, S.** (2015). "My mother didn't play about education": Low-income, African American mothers' early school experiences and their impact on school involvement for preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten. *The Journal of Negro Education*,84(3),457-472.
- Walsh, F. (2002). A family resilience framework: Innovative practice applications. *Family Relations*,51,130-137