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“WE’RE GONNA’ DO IT TOGETHER!”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SCHOOL READINESS
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AMONG LOW-INCOME LATINA MOTHERS AND TEACHERS IN A
SUBURBAN HEAD START

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The transition to kindergarten is a critical milestone in children's lives, with implications for academic and future life success. Research documents that Latino children are disproportionately at-risk for being unready for kindergarten compared to their Black and White peers. Researchers report that low-income Latina mothers and preschool teachers often hold different beliefs about the skills that children should possess and the type of activities they engage in to promote school readiness. However, little is known about parental beliefs and involvement practices *before* school entry, especially for low-income Latina mothers living in the suburbs. Challenging deficit perspectives that often characterize low-income families of color, this study used qualitative interviews and a resilience framework to better understand school readiness beliefs and practices of low-income Latina mothers (N = 17) and preschool teachers (N=5) in one suburban Head Start.

Several findings emerged. First, mothers understood school readiness as consisting of nominal knowledge and emergent literacy. Preschool teachers emphasized literacy skills and socio-emotional skills, suggesting a small misalignment between mothers and teachers. Mothers understood parental involvement as being home-based rather than school-based involvement and focused on life involvement rather than academic involvement. Teachers stressed home-based activities but focused on academic skills. Mothers and teachers differed on the types of home-based activities needed to promote children's readiness. Second, Latina mothers are actively involved in preparing their children for kindergarten and engage in multiple activities and conversations. Mothers demonstrated resilience through the use of kin and Head Start. Barriers to parental involvement included demanding work schedules and limited English language facility. Finally, mothers and teachers provided recommendations on how to support Latino children's kindergarten transition. These findings contribute to our substantive and theoretical understanding of school readiness practices within low-income Latino families during the preschool years.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Current Study, and Research Questions

Latinos¹ are currently the largest racial-ethnic minority group in the U.S., and the fastest-growing at 17% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Currently, one in four children in the U.S. today are Latino/a and it is expected that by 2050, that number will be more than one in three. The Latino population in the U.S. is disproportionately likely to be low-income (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, & Kennedy, 2013). At present, more than two-thirds (67%) of Latino children under the age of six live in low-income households (Murphey, Guzman, & Torres, 2014). While most Latino children are not themselves immigrants, it was estimated that in 2008 about 4 million U.S.-born children had at least one undocumented parent (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Research has found that poverty is even higher among this group (Murphy, Guzman, & Torres, 2014), rendering this population of children the second (African-American children are first) most likely to experience economic and academic hardships (Addy, Engelhardt, & Skinner, 2013).

The ages of roughly four to seven marks a period of change in the “developmental agenda” in many cultures (Sameroff & Haith, 1996). For many children, entering kindergarten serves as the primary school experience and represents a significant milestone (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, & Wildenger, 2007). Upon school entry, children take on the formal role of student as they enter a more academically oriented elementary school and say goodbye to a more play-based early childhood education (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta 2000). In this new role, children must learn to successfully negotiate a range of heightened expectations and responsibilities from teachers and peers (McIntyre et al., 2007), such as completing tasks more independently and relying on large-group instructions with less teacher support than preschool students (Le Ager & Shapiro, 1995). Families are also faced with new expectations. Families must learn how to best support their children’s education, learn how to collaborate with teachers, and adjust to the new elementary school routines and expectations. In addition to poverty and immigration status, which can place Latino families in a vulnerable place and create high levels of stress from the transition to new cultures, changes, and ways of life (Flores et al., 2008), the transition to kindergarten can also intensify families’ vulnerability.

There is great concern among educators and policymakers about the significant number of Latino children transitioning to kindergarten without the necessary school readiness skills, such as precursory reading, writing, and oral language skills needed for school success (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Rimm-Kaufmann, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Compared to White and Black children, Latino children are least likely to be ready for the transition to kindergarten (Lee, Autry, Fox, & Williams, 2008; Marcella, Howes & Fuligni, 2014). For example, only 15% of Latino children can recognize all letters compared to 36% of

¹ Hispanic, Latino/a, and Latino will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. Hispanic or Latino/a: A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race.

White and 38% of Black children. Likewise, only 42% of Latino children can count to 20 or higher (69% for both White and Black children), and only half of Latino children can write their names (64% White and 58% Black) (Murphey et al., 2014). These early academic gaps are further exacerbated for children of immigrants living in low-income families (Palacios, 2012). Researchers have shown that when children are unprepared for the transition to school they experience negative short- and long-term developmental, social, and economic consequences (Barnett, 1995; Belsky et al., 2007).

School readiness, at the most basic level, refers to the state of child competencies and abilities that children should possess upon entry to kindergarten (Snow, 2006). However, preschools, elementary schools, and families often differ on the meaning of school readiness and related skills and abilities needed for young children to successfully transition (Barbarin et al., 2008). Parents and teachers share the responsibility for the education of young children and research documents that children fare better in kindergarten when collaborations are forged between the home and the school during the preschool process (Pelletier & Corter, 2005).

Understanding mothers' beliefs about what constitutes school readiness are important because they are children's first teachers and influence how children are socialized for school (Barbarin et al., 2008; Duncan et al., 2007; Farver, Kim, & Lee, 1995). Parental beliefs not only influence what parental practices they do (or do not do), but also likely dictate parents' level of engagement with children for the purpose of skill development (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The literature on school readiness beliefs suggests that low-income racial-ethnic group parents, compared to teachers, are more concerned with academic and cognitive skills than social and emotional skills in their conceptualization of readiness (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Diamond, Reagan, & Bandyk, 2000; Hill, 2001; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2001; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). However, there is also evidence to suggest that parents' beliefs about school readiness are related to their ethnic/cultural, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005; Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006; Harding, 2006; Laurea, 2003; Lee et al., 2008; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Piotrkowski et al., 2001). Understanding Latina mothers' view is also significant given the rise of Latinos in the United States, and more so, the rise of Latino children in schools. In the coming decades, the number of Latino school-aged children will see an increase from 11 to 28 million, with Latinos accounting for 26% of the nation's population under the age of five (Murphey et al., 2014).

Similarly, understanding preschool teachers' school readiness beliefs is important since it impacts their teaching practices, assessment, and placement of children within the classroom (Abry, Latham, Bassok, & LoCasale-Crouch, 2015; Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). Some research has suggested that Head Start teachers placed higher importance on socio-emotional behaviors than academic skills (Grace & Brandt,

2005; Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013). Researchers have also found that pre-school teachers' beliefs are related to numbers of years teaching, their race/ethnicity, and their students' socio-economic status. For example, more experienced teachers tended to value activities that involved higher-order cognitive thinking, such as telling or illustrating stories, compared to their less-experienced counterparts. African-American teachers tended to place a higher value on items related to alphabet, word, and story knowledge while White teachers emphasized verbal language in literacy acquisition. Finally, preschool teachers who worked mostly with low-income children placed greater emphasis on pre-reading, pre-writing, and literacy-related skills, compared to peers who worked with predominantly white middle class-students (Burgess, Lundgren, Lloyd, & Pianta, 2001; Lee & Ginsburg, 2007).

Despite areas of disagreement on what skills are most important for children to learn before transitioning to kindergarten, there is a consensus that when children are unprepared for the transition to school they experience short- and long-term developmental, social, and economic consequences (Belsky et al., 2007). However, research clearly documents that children perform better in school when there is consistency in beliefs and practices between parents and families (Barbarin et al., 2008; Diamond et al., 2000).

Parental involvement, or the multiple ways that parents support their children's education and learning, has emerged as a key protective factor for children's academic and future success (Ginsburg-Block, Manz, & McWayne, 2010). Researchers consistently demonstrate that higher levels of parental involvement are positively associated with the development of social and academic skills both at school entry and during later years (Baker & Iruka, 2013; Barbarin et al., 2008; Barnard, 2004; Durand, 2011; Lee et al., 2008; Wasik & Hindman, 2010). Indeed, research indicates that when parents are engaged in their children's education, their children demonstrate greater levels of academic success in an array of areas, such as school attendance, self-esteem, motivation to learn, and overall academic performance when parents are active in their education (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2003, 2007, 2010).

The term parental involvement or family engagement is typically conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that encompasses a wide range of parental behaviors, both in the home and in the school, that directly and indirectly supports children's education and learning (Christenson, 2004; Epstein, 1990; Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, & Sandler, 2005; Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Research has shown that these home- and school-based behaviors look different depending on the families' cultural values and beliefs about the best ways to support their children's school readiness (Hill, 2010). Evidence suggests that low-income parents are more often informally involved in their children's education at home (Billings, 2009; Fantuzzo et al., 2000; McWayne & Melzi, 2014; McWayne et al., 2013). Because parental involvement practices tend to emphasize the more

traditional or formal forms of practices (at-school involvement), marginalized² parents from diverse sociocultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic origins are described as *uninvolved* (Auerbach, 1989; Moles, 1993). As a result, they are judged as not valuing education (Hill & Craft, 2003; Jones, 2003; Lopez, 2001; Marschall, 2006). Researchers have argued that the assumption that marginalized parents are *uninvolved* lies in the notion of deficit thinking (see Valencia, 1997), which diminishes the culturally specific perspectives of minority families.

Research Problem

The transition to kindergarten is a critical developmental period, setting the stage for children's long-term educational trajectories (Graue, 2003; Malsch, Green, & Kothari, 2011; Miller, 2015). With Latinos being the largest minority population in the U.S., there is an urgent need to understand Latina mothers' beliefs and ways they support their children's education to inform culturally appropriate interventions and policy. Investigating parental beliefs and practices during the preschool years is also important for Latino families, and in particular for immigrant Latino families with preschoolers, as this developmental period is not only a critical time to prepare children for school success, but may also be the first time parents will be engaging with U.S. schools (McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008).

Although research has shown that parental beliefs and practices are a critical factor in children's success throughout their school careers (Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2007), little is known about Latina mothers' beliefs and practices in the early school years. To date, the preponderance of research on parental involvement is mainly quantitative, which employs a White middle-class model of family practices, uses standardized assessments that obscure culturally based family practices, miss heterogeneity, and in some cases, resilience among families (Barbarin et al., 2008; Diamond et al., 2000; McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Cheung, & Wright, 2012). They also tend to focus on older school-aged children (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005, 2007). By extension, very few qualitative studies have examined Latina mothers' parental involvement practices and beliefs among preschool children attending Head Start or kindergarten children (see Cardona, Jain, & Canfield-Davis, 2012).

Purpose Statement

The Ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) stresses the importance of examining children's proximal environments, and the interactions with others within these settings, when assessing children's development and well-being. Thus, the purpose of this study is twofold. The primary purpose is to explore the school readiness beliefs and parental involvement practices of low-income Latina mothers who have a child transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten, as well as the beliefs of Head Start teachers. Researchers have found that preschool teachers and low-

² The term marginalized is used to describe people, voices, perspectives, identities, and phenomena that have been left out or "excluded" from the center of dominant society (Hudak, 1993).

income Latina mothers often hold different beliefs about the skills that children should possess (Barbarin et al., 2008), and thus the practices they participate in. This misalignment can have negative implications for Latino children's kindergarten adjustment (Piotrowski et al., 2001). Second, this study explored maternal resilience and school readiness. Specifically, this research uses a strength-based family resilience framework to better understand how low-income Latina mothers promote their children's readiness for the transition to kindergarten. A strong body of research exists on the strengths of Latina mothers in promoting the socialization and well-being of their children (Bermúdez & Mancini, 2013; Ceballo, Huerta, & Epstein-Ngo, 2010; Durand, 2011; McWayne et al., 2013; Mogro-Wilson, 2011; Palacios, 2012; Raffaelli & Wiley, 2013). Challenging deficit perspectives often characterizing low-income families, this study focuses on what Latina mothers *are doing* as opposed to what they are *not doing* in promoting their children's early educational success. A family resilience perspective takes into consideration how mothers of preschoolers in their daily lives utilize resources, problem solve, and engage with their children to facilitate their children's transition to kindergarten by highlighting mothers' strengths and resiliency.

Current Study and Research Questions

Data used for this dissertation derived from an ongoing qualitative project focused on promoting school readiness beliefs and practices among low-income African-American and Latino families. The project examined beliefs about school readiness abilities, parenting practices, and parental involvement among low-income parents and Head Start teachers (Jarrett, Hamilton, Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2015; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2017; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, in press).

This study specifically focused on Latino families because there is a large body of literature that suggests that the vast majority of Latino parents are *uninvolved* in their children's schooling (Auerbach, 1989; 2007; Valencia, 2002;). Mothers are the main focus of this research because they often assume primary caregiving for young children (Barbarin et al., 2008). Likewise, educators' perceptions of school readiness were also important to explore since teachers make daily decisions and assessments regarding children's school readiness and abilities to achieve. We also recruited from Head Start because this federally funded program targets economically- and socially-disadvantaged preschoolers who are at risk for not being ready for kindergarten, with the goal of enhancing children's social and cognitive development and increasing parental involvement (Office of Head Start, 2015). Using a family resiliency model of family stress, adjustment, and adaptation to help conceptualize children's successful kindergarten transition that highlights maternal strengths and agency (Walsh, 2002), this qualitative study addressed the following research questions (See Table 1):

Table 1. *Guiding Research Questions*

Mothers	Head Start Teachers
1. How do Latina mothers understand/conceptualize the meaning of school readiness and the transition to kindergarten?	1. How do Head Start teachers understand/conceptualize the meaning of school readiness?
2. How do Latina mothers understand/conceptualize the meaning of parental involvement?	2. How do Head Start teachers understand/conceptualize the meaning of parental involvement?
3. What home and school practices are mothers engaging in to facilitate school readiness?	3. What home and school practices do Head Start teachers observe mothers engaging in that facilitate school readiness?
4. What facilitators and barriers do Latina mothers experience as they prepare their child for school?	4. What facilitators and barriers do Head Start teachers observe Latino families experiencing as they prepare their child for school?
5. What recommendations do Latina mothers have to better prepare children for the transition to kindergarten?	5. What recommendations do Head Start teachers have to better prepare children for the transition to kindergarten?

Chapter Overview

Eight chapters follow. Chapter Two is a review of related literature. I explore the meaning of school readiness, how Latino children are faring in terms of *being ready to learn*, and current explanations for disparities among Latino children in early childhood. I also explore Latina mothers' school readiness practices. Particular attention is paid to home-based and school-based involvement among this population. Barriers to involvement are also illustrated. Chapter Three describes the theoretical framework guiding this study, followed by a detailed description of the methodology.

Key findings related to school readiness beliefs and parental involvement practices among Latina mothers and preschool teachers are presented in Chapters Four through Eight. Each findings chapter is divided according to guiding research questions. In Chapter Four, mothers and preschool teachers describe how they conceptualize and understand school readiness. Findings are divided into the seven domains of school readiness mentioned in the literature. In Chapter Five, mothers' beliefs and expectations about school readiness and the kindergarten transition are presented. Mothers' beliefs entail why kindergarten is important for their children, how ready they feel their child is for kindergarten, and their beliefs about why some children are ready (or not) for the transition to kindergarten. Attention is also given to mothers' perceptions/views about the kindergarten transition in respect to what the kindergarten teacher will expect from their child, what mothers expect kindergarten teachers to want from them as parents of new kindergartners, and expectations that mothers have for their child's new kindergarten teacher. In Chapter Six, the meaning of parental involvement is presented from the perspective of mothers and preschool teachers. In Chapter Seven, mothers' strategies and practices describing how they are preparing their child for kindergarten are presented, as well as teachers' view about parental involvement. It begins by focusing on mothers' own experiences growing up and their parents' involvement in their education. A description of how they were involved, the advice they

received, and barriers parents faced are provided. Next, this chapter examines mothers' in-home school readiness practices and the messages they give. Mothers' reliance on extended kin and Head Start to help prepare preschoolers for kindergarten is further examined. Families' in-home activities and involvement through photographs depicting how families are involved are shared. Barriers that mothers experienced to involvement are also investigated. This chapter ends with a description of how preschool teachers' viewed mothers' school readiness practices. In Chapter Eight, recommendations from mothers and preschool teachers are offered. In this section, mothers provide recommendations to preschools, elementary schools, what preschools like Hazelwood should be doing, and also offer recommendations to the President of the United States for what they can do to help better prepare children for the transition to kindergarten. Preschool teachers also provide recommendations to schools and explained some of the challenges faced by Hazelwood parents when helping families with the transition. Chapter Nine concludes this study. In this final chapter findings are summarized, and implications for theory and practice are given. Study limitations and future research considerations are also provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The goal of this chapter is to explore the discourses on school readiness beliefs and parental involvement during the kindergarten transition process, with a particular focus on Latinos. It begins with a brief introduction of Latinos in the United States. This is followed by a summary of how preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and Latina mothers conceptualize school readiness. Possible variables that explain differences between preschool and kindergarten teachers *and* between preschool teachers and Latina mothers are discussed. Latina mothers' understanding of parental involvement is explored next, along with a summary of the school- and home-based activities that mothers engaged in with their preschool-aged children. Lastly, barriers to parental involvement among Latino families are discussed.

Latino Demographics

Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the United States (U.S. Census, 2014). In approximately 10 years, 35% of Latinos who are currently children will be contributing to the nation as workers and taxpayers, and they will be impacting the future economy (Pérez, 2004). It is also estimated that by 2050 there will be more Latino school-aged youth residing in the United States than non-Latino white youth (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Nearly 60% of Latino children live with two married parents, 10.4% with cohabitating parents, and 25.3% living in a single-mother household. In addition, 68.7% of Latino children have at least one parent with a steady, full-time job and 15.5% have two parents working full-time (Murphey et al., 2014).

The US has the most *heterogeneous* Latino population in history (McAdoo, Martinez, & Hughes, 2005). Even though seven in ten U.S. Latino/a children are of Mexican heritage, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, Dominican, Cuban, and other countries in Central and South America make up this great diversity of Latinos in the United States. However, the diversity of Latinos varies by region, particularly when we look at Latino/a children. Southwestern states that have a history of Hispanic settlement, like New Mexico (59%) and California (52%), for example, already have Latino children as their majority. Newer regions in the Midwest (Illinois) and South (Alabama), however, are also seeing recent and rapid changes in their demographics. For example, between 2000 and 2010, Illinois saw a 31% growth in the Latino child population. Latinos are not only impacting the States' demographics, but also schools', as there is an increased demand for teachers who have been trained to work with culturally diverse children and their families (Marschall, 2006). Regardless of region or race/ethnicity, Hispanic children are part of every state and place an unprecedented impact on the social, economic, political, and education sectors of our society.

School Readiness

National attention focused on school readiness in 1991 through the establishment of six National Education Goals, with the first being "All children in America will start school ready to learn" (National

Education Goals Panel, 1991). To clarify the meaning of school readiness, the identification of the following five dimensions of school readiness were developed: (a) physical and motor development; (b) social and emotional development; (c) approaches to learning; (d) language; (e) cognition, and general knowledge (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995; Love, 2001). In 2011, the Obama Administration's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Program (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) refocused national attention on early childhood education and the importance of school readiness for low-income African-American and Latino children who, relative to White peers, are disproportionately at risk for being unready for the transition to kindergarten (Lee et al., 2008; Marcella et al., 2014). Although there is a long history of research on early childhood development, school readiness as a concept has a shorter and mixed history (see Snow, 2006; Winter & Kelley, 2008).

Readiness implies the mastery of various skills, abilities, and characteristics that scholars, parents, and practitioners have argued are important for children to possess to be successful in kindergarten and throughout life (Pianta, Cox, & Snow, 2007). An exploration of research on readiness shows that definitions of early childhood school readiness vary greatly, with some focusing on academic knowledge and others focusing on developmental milestones (Carlton & Winsler, 1999). Others focus on the importance of a range of diverse skills and abilities that will contribute to children's success in kindergarten and beyond. Such skills include self-help skills, self-esteem, and self-regulation as being important for children's open engagement and attention to the classroom environment (Bredekamp, 2005; Eberts & Gisler, 1991) and ability to engage with fellow classmates and the teacher (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, McLanahan, 2005). Likewise, the importance of thinking skills (i.e., ability to understand cause and effect, likeness and differences) (Eberts & Gisler, 1991), pre-reading skills (i.e., print awareness, symbolic representation) (Bredekamp, 2005), and social skills (i.e., interacting with teachers and peers, acknowledging the needs of others) (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes & Karoly, 2009), have also emerged as being important for early school success. Also, a child's level of physical health and well-being are important to consider because they affect his or her ability to learn and absorb knowledge (Grace & Brandt, 2005).

Preschools and School Readiness. School readiness beliefs from early childhood teachers ultimately impact teaching practices and are influential on the learning and development of young children (Chang Hedy, Muckelroy, Pulido-Tobiassen, & Dowell, 2005; Kohler, Henning & Usma-Wilches, 2008; Lee & Ginsburg, 2007; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Such beliefs are important to explore because they highlight teachers' expectations for and interactions with children, classroom climate, and children's performance (Abry et al., 2015). Preschool teachers' discussion of school readiness is multidimensional and diverse. Head Start is our nation's largest federally sponsored early childhood program developed to serve at-risk, vulnerable children and their families by promoting school readiness (Zigler, Finn-Stevenson, & Hall, 2002). Head Start views school readiness as children

possessing skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning in life (Office of Head Start, 2017). The National Association for Education and Young Children (NAEYC), which consists of early childhood educators and others invested in the education of young children from birth to age eight, describe school readiness in terms of promoting ready children, families, communities, and schools (National Association for the Education of Children, 1995).

Researchers have found that preschool teachers primarily focus on social and emotional skills in their conceptualization of school readiness (Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013; Grace & Brandt, 2005; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). For example, using surveys and focus groups with Head Start and public school pre-K teachers, Hollingsworth and Winter (2013) found that both sets of teachers placed higher importance on social-emotional behaviors and skills, such as pro-social skills, pretend play, and friendships than on academic skills. Similarly, Grace and Brandt (2005) found that early childhood professionals believed that social-emotional, physical health and well-being, school-related behaviors and skills, communication skills, self-help skills, and approaches to learning were the top school readiness characteristics related to kindergarten success. Language development, motor development, cognitive development, and general knowledge domains were viewed as less critical to success in kindergarten. Wesley and Buysse (2003) conducted focus group interviews with preschool and kindergarten teachers and found that teachers emphasized social and emotional development while de-emphasizing academic skills. They also found that pre-kindergarten teachers spoke about the importance of approaches to learning. Particularly, they spoke of the importance of building children's confidence, stimulating children's creativity, engaging their attention, and being mindful of children's curiosity (Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Kindergarten teachers believed that children need to know the alphabet and be able to identify printed letters, know how to use pencils, and pay attention when they walked into class.

Using the Community Attitudes on Readiness for Entering School (CARES) survey, Piotrowski, Botsko, and Matthews (2001) found that social competencies such as playing well with other children and communicating needs and feelings were *absolutely necessary* for school readiness success. Teachers assigned lesser importance to self-care, basic knowledge, and motor skills. In a qualitative study that explored parents' and teachers' beliefs about kindergarten readiness in three play-based programs accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Hatcher, Nuner, and Paulsel (2012) found that teachers (and parents) associated kindergarten readiness with social-emotional maturity and the ability to interact successfully with peers and teachers. All 13 teachers also agreed that school-related behaviors (i.e., approaches to learning) were associated with success in schools, such as paying attention, cooperation with school routines, following directions, and staying on specific assigned tasks as important for children's transition. Using first-year data from 12 focus groups that examined how early childhood educators defined how a child is ready for school, Lara-Cinisomo and

colleagues (2009) found that early childhood educators believed that a child needs to be emotionally (i.e., confident, motivated) ready. Next, they believed that children needed to be physically (i.e., healthy with good motor skills), cognitively (i.e., knowledge of the alphabet, numbers), and have good social skills (i.e., getting along well with others) to be ready for kindergarten.

When researchers have examined preschool and kindergarten teachers' beliefs about the importance of early school competencies, independently (Bassok, Fitzpatrick, & Loeb, 2014; Lin et al., 2003) and in comparison to one another (Hains, Fowler, Schwartz, Kottwitz, & Rosenkoetter, 1989; Piotrowski et al., 2001), a clear pattern of misalignment in beliefs has emerged. Lin et al. (2003) found that early childhood educators are more likely to report problem-solving as a key feature of school readiness, while kindergarten teachers more often emphasized appropriate school behavior. Hollingsworth and Winter (2013) also found that compared to preschool teachers who focused mostly on pro-social skills, social-emotional skills, school-related behaviors and skills, communication skills, self-help skills, and approaches to learning, kindergarten teachers believed that children should be *ready* to learn and focused on social and emotional skills in their conceptualizations of readiness (Abry et al., 2015; Hains et al., 1989; Lin et al., 2003; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). While both groups of teachers rate academic skills lower than either interpersonal or self-regulatory competencies, preschool teachers tend to overemphasize interpersonal over self-regulatory abilities when compared to their kindergarten counterparts.

Research has found that preschool teachers' beliefs about school readiness are related to multiple factors, including numbers of years teaching and race (Burgess et al., 2001). Using a sample of teachers from the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Burgess and colleagues (2001) found that teachers with a master's degree endorsed the importance of emphasizing oral language in their classroom to a greater degree than did teachers with a bachelor's degree or less. That is, teachers with more practice tended to value activities that involved telling or illustrating a story compared to their less-experienced counterparts. Further, African-American teachers placed greater value on items related to the alphabet, word, and story knowledge. White teachers emphasized verbal language in literacy acquisition. Ackerman and Barnett (2005) also found that when compared to White teachers, African-American and Latino teachers viewed academic skills as more central components to school readiness.

Although limited, research has shown that preschool teachers' beliefs about school readiness vary depending on the SES of students (Lee & Ginsburg, 2007). Findings reveal that preschool teachers who worked with low-income children who attended federally and state-funded programs, including Head Start, placed greater emphasis on pre-reading, pre-writing, and literacy-related skills compared to peers who worked with predominantly middle-class White children. These teachers believed that teaching rigorous emergent literacy skills was necessary to help low-income and children of color to catch up with middle-income peers. Teachers of middle-income children emphasized enriching children's social

development, gearing literacy activities toward children's own interests. Wright, Diener, and Kay (2000) also found that teachers working with low-income children believed that readiness was predicated on children's academic skills such as recognizing numbers and letters of the alphabet and less often on children's social skills.

Researchers have tried to explain why variations between preschool and kindergarten teachers exist. Kagan (1992) reported that teachers' beliefs are shaped, at least in part, by their experiences during pre-service training and as a practicing teacher in the classroom. Currently in the U.S., preschool teachers' requirements vary from state to state and range from a high school diploma to a Bachelor's degree. In contrast, all 50 states required public school kindergarten teachers to have a Bachelor's degree and state license (Abry et al., 2015). Variation in beliefs is also believed to be caused by teachers' professional training (Lin et al., 2003; West, Jausken, & Collins, 1993).

Parents and School Readiness. Literature on school readiness has suggested that regardless of race, low-income racial-ethnic group parents, compared to teachers, are more concerned with academic and cognitive skills than social and emotional skills in their conceptualization of readiness (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Diamond et al., 2000; Hains et al., 1989; Hill, 2001; Lewit & Baker, 1995; Lin et al., 2003; Piotrkowski et al., 2001; Wesley & Buysse, 2003; West et al., 1993). Likewise, some research has shown that parents focus more on cognitive abilities as being important for children's success (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Lewit & Baker, 1995). Parents emphasized knowledge of colors and shapes and hands-on work to promote readiness (Grace & Brandt, 2005). Utilizing the CARES survey of 355 low-income ethnic minority parents in one New York City district, Piotrkowski et al., (2001) found that 82% of parents felt it was "absolutely necessary" that children entering kindergarten know their letters and colors and be able to count to 15. They also found that parents ranked basic knowledge (i.e., knowing their numbers, colors) as "absolutely necessary" for kindergarten more (76%) than kindergarten (25%) and preschool teachers (48%).

In a similar study, Barbarin and colleagues (2008) used data from the National Center for Early Development and Learning to explore school readiness perceptions from parents with a kindergarten child. Open-ended results suggested that parents conceive of readiness in terms of nominal knowledge (i.e., ability to name objects, identify numbers, letters, shapes, parts of the body), compared to higher order cognitive skills such as inferential thinking (i.e., draw conclusions, make comparisons or predictions). In this same study, researchers found minimal ethnic differences. White and Latino parents were much more likely than African-American parents to cite socioemotional domains as critical skills for children to possess before entering school. When they controlled for poverty status, White parents cited independence most often compared to Asian, African-American, and Latino parents. There were not racial/ethnic differences in nominal knowledge. Consistent with other studies, Diamond et al. (2000)

found that although parents held a global view on school readiness, meaning that they believed that a variety of academic and behavioral skills are important for children's success in kindergarten, they still placed greater emphasis on academic abilities. Evans, Fox, Cremaso, & McKinnon (2004) too, found that African-American and Latino parents conceptualize school readiness more often in terms of nominal knowledge and less often in terms of social development and inferential skills than White parents.

Some researchers argue that parents' perceptions may relate to their level of education, with parents who did not graduate from high school being more likely to focus on academic skills such as counting to 20 and mastering the alphabet than parents who have graduated from college (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005). Some researchers argue that parents from different social classes have different values that in turn impact practices that are relevant to school readiness (Cheadle, 2008; Lareau, 2003). The child rearing values and practices of low-income ethnic-racial group families may be at odds with the school (Bodovski, 2010; Doucet & Tudge 2007) and disadvantage children with respect to school readiness, particularly Latino students. For example, Latino parents view the teacher as being the expert with specialized skills and questioning the teacher may be considered culturally disrespectful to many Latino parents (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Limited knowledge about Latino families and schooling in the United States is available (Yamamoto & Halloway, 2010; see Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Reese & Gallimore, 2000).

Parental Involvement

The topic of parental involvement and its impact on academic achievement has been well documented in the literature (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Downer & Pianta, 2006; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Jeynes, 2003, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; McClain, 2010). Broadly speaking, parental involvement refers to parental engagement in activities to promote children's academic success, including academic and non-academic activities that are home-based (e.g., supervising homework) and school-based (e.g., volunteering, attending meetings, interacting with teachers) (Barbarin et al., 2008).

Ethnic minority status has been associated with lower levels of teacher ratings and quality of parental involvement (Hill et al., 2004). Teachers and principals also tend to attribute lower levels of parental involvement among ethnic minority parents to a lack of motivation to cooperate, a lack of concern for their children's education, and a lower value placed on education (Lopez, 2001). Pertaining to this study, Latino parents have often been perceived as not caring about their children's education (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Valdés, 1996). For example, Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005) noted that Latino parents talked less to their children, used a more limited vocabulary, and were less likely to read to their children than White parents (see also Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Garcia Coll, 2001). However, many researchers have found that Latino parents highly value education for their children (Delgado-

Gaitan, 1994; Lopez, 2001; Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014; Quioco & Daoud, 2006; Reese, 2012; Sonnenschein, 2002; Valdés, 1996) and express high aspirations for their children's future academic success (Sonnenschein & Galindo, 2010).

In their research in seven states over a period of 28 years, Ada and Zubizarreta (2001) consistently found that parents of immigrants had high hopes for their children in this new country. Further, parents expressed a desire to support and participate in their children's education. Likewise, Sonnenschein, Metzger, and Thompson (2016) investigated how 23 Black and 35 Latino parents who were low-income facilitated their preschool children's reading and math skills. Families were recruited from two Head Start centers in Baltimore, Maryland. Parents were interviewed and asked to complete a questionnaire addressing parents' socialization of their children's reading and math development. They were also asked about the frequency with which their children engaged in 11 reading-related activities and 20 math-related activities. Response options were 0 (never/not at all) to 3 (every day/almost every day). Findings revealed that the majority of parents' strongly/very strongly endorsed the importance of children reading at home (Black: 87%, Latino 88%) and assisting their children with reading (Black 91%, Latino, 97%). Specifically, for Latino children, the three reading activities that Latino children engaged in most frequently were reading storybooks, 31% daily/almost daily; using workbooks, 29% daily/almost daily; and reading ABC/preschool books, 20% daily/almost daily. As with reading, the majority of parents strongly/very strongly endorsed the importance of children doing math at home (Black: 57%, Latino 83%) and assisting their children with math (Black: 70%, Latino 89%). Latino children engaged most frequently in counting objects, 57% daily/almost daily; answering or asking questions about quantity amounts, 60% daily/almost daily; and watching math television programs, 46% daily/almost daily. In summary, the majority of Black and Latino parents who were low-income emphasized the importance of children engaging in reading and math activities at home and assisting their children with such activities.

To date, the literature has primarily focused almost exclusively on school-based activities (Lopez, 2001), a behavioral domain in which immigrant parents may be less involved relative to U.S.-born parents (Ladky & Peterson, 2008). Researchers have found that Latino parents view parent involvement in terms of informal activities, particularly home-based activities over school involvement activities (Garcia Coll et al., 2002). In fact, ethnographic research suggests that for Latino families, parent involvement might involve higher levels of and a more diverse set of activities in the home and less involvement in the school (De Gaetano, 2007). Using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten (ECLS-K), Suizzo and Stapleton (2007) examined the role of maternal education and ethnicity and home-based parental involvement. The researchers reported that compared to Asian Americans, African-Americans, and Whites, Latino/as engaged in the fewest outside-home activities. When income, family size, child's

sex, maternal depression, and maternal education were controlled, Latinos and Asian-Americans reported higher expectations than Whites and African-Americans. Latino-Americans and African-Americans reported the highest frequency of engaging in discussions about ethnic heritage, religion, and cultural values and practices.

In their predominantly Mexican sample of low-income, first-generation Latina mothers in Los Angeles, McWayne et al. (2013) reported that Head Start mothers distinguished between home- and school-based engagement (e.g., volunteering at school, attending school functions), with higher levels of participation in home-based activities (e.g., reading, use of flashcards). Significantly, mothers identified other components of engagement they believed to be important, such as keeping their children safe, parental role modeling, and self-improvement (e.g., improving English language skills). Similarly, Latino parents, particularly those who are non-English speaking, may not often attend school events, volunteer in the classroom, or communicate directly with school staff (Llagas & Snyder, 2003; Marinez-Lora, & Quintana, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). However, they are engaged in high levels of home-based involvement by emphasizing educational values, engaging in educationally relevant home-based activities such as monitoring homework, providing educational resources, and adequate nutrition and rest for their children (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Hill & Torres, 2010; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004; Quiocho & Daoud, 2006).

In a study with Afro-Caribbean and Latino families, Calzada and colleagues (2015) found that both parents were more involved at home than at school. In this same study, researchers found that parental involvement at school was higher when teachers were also Latino. It's possible that a parent-teacher match may facilitate communication by breaking down language barriers and eliminating cultural misunderstanding. Overall, home-based involvement has been understudied in the literature, despite growing recognition that both home- and school-based strategies are important for promoting academic success, especially among immigrant students (Eamon, 2005; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Mena, 2011).

Some scholars suggest that traditional involvement roles may be outside the cultural repertoire of some parents, especially marginalized parents who may have limited experience of U.S. schools and have fewer resources (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Valdés, 1996). As a result, many parents are seen as uninvolved and uncaring (Valdés, 1996). Most recent research tells us that Latinos' conceptualization and involvement reflect Latino cultural values and beliefs (Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006; Ramos, 2014). Latino/a parents' academic socialization may focus more on what researchers have called motivational practices than on traditional practices (Ceballo, Maurizi, Suarez, Aretakis, 2014; Hill & Torres, 2010). In a study of low-income Latina mothers with children enrolled in public preschool, Ramos (2014) documented the high value that 43 mothers placed on education. The researcher found that some mothers attended parent meetings and volunteered at the preschool. However, mothers were more engaged in

home-based activities, such as book reading to their children. The researcher also found that Latina mothers' conceptualization of parental involvement reflected Latino/a cultural values of *sacrificios* (sacrifices), *consejos* (advice), and *apoyo* (moral support) (Azmitia, Cooper, & Brown, 2009; Ramos, 2014). Similarly, Durand (2011) examined the childrearing and educational beliefs of six Latina mothers (five Mexican, one South American) of first graders and found education and learning was manifested in values of *familismo* (familism) and *educación* (moral education).

Although past research has shown the importance of parent involvement for children's achievement in school, few have focused on identifying the specific activities and behaviors unique to Latino families (McWayne et al., 2013). Thus, it is critical to increase our knowledge about parenting beliefs and values and begin incorporating the full range of experiences that *all* children are exposed to (Garcia Coll & Patcher, 2002). Understanding the specific engagement behaviors that could help to explain children's school readiness among Latino/a children becomes important as practitioners and policy makers seek to create bridges with families from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (McWayne et al., 2013). This knowledge is also essential as it can offer schools an expanded and inclusive definition of parent involvement, as well as better understand cultural continuities and discontinuities across children's homes. Finally, much of the work of parent involvement has focused on school-aged children—less is known about parent involvement in the preschool years (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008).

Barriers to Latino Parent Involvement

Economic, linguistic, social, and cultural barriers seem to influence Latino parents' ability to support their children's school experience (Pyle, Bates, Greif, & Furlong, 2005). For instance, low-income Latino parents, in particular, those who are recent immigrants, often have an inflexible work schedule, experience language differences, and lack familiarity with U.S. schools (Capps, Casteñada, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010). Other factors also found in the literature that inhibit parent involvement include child-care responsibilities and related family responsibilities (LaRocque et al., 2011). Previous negative experiences with schools can also pose barriers (Tinkler, 2002). For example, the uncomfortable feelings that minority parents experience in the school may be the result of negative perceptions that they receive from teachers and schools (Kim, 2009). These findings were corroborated in a more recent study by Martinez et al. (2004), who found that Latino parents reported less welcoming experiences at their child's school than did their non-Latino counterparts. Similarly, Ramirez (2003) found that immigrant parents who have lower English proficiency reported feeling intimidated by school personnel and were thus less involved in their children's education. In a similar study, LaRocque and colleagues (2011) found that Latino families often feel intimidated by not being able to properly speak English, causing parents to withdraw and *appear* less involved, although they are engaged in a variety of less visible behaviors (Hill & Torres, 2010). White teachers make up

about eighty-three percent of the teaching workforce, whereas African-Americans and Latinos constitute less than seven percent each (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). These statistics suggest that once children enter school, they will most likely be matched with a teacher who has a different racial/ethnic background than them and their parents and is less likely to speak Spanish (Tinkler, 2002). The lack of visibility caused by language barriers could suggest that that Latino parents do not care. Indeed, Hill and Craft (2003) found that teachers believe that parents who volunteered at the school valued education more than parents who did not (or could not) volunteer. Along the same lines, Peña (2000) and Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001) further found that even under parent-attracting policies, minority parents continue to feel like their input and participation are not welcomed.

Parents' perceptions of their personal skills appear to further shape their thinking about the kinds of involvement activities that they engage in. Negative feelings about themselves may hinder parents from connecting with their children's schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004). For example, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) found that parents reflected on their knowledge and skills when confronted with specific demands of helping their children with work. Research has shown that parents' confidence in their own intellectual abilities is an important predictor of their school involvement (Hindman, Skibbe, Miller, & Zimmerman, 2010; Machida, Taylor, & Kim, 2002). For families living in poverty, this may be especially important: "Poverty exerts direct effects on parents' mental health and self-perceptions through increased stress resulting from the struggled to make ends meet. Poverty also has direct effects on children's early school outcomes because its adverse effects on parents are in turn associated with lower parental involvement" (Hill & Taylor, 2004 p.162).

Notwithstanding these possible impediments, studies have found that parents often seek opportunities for involvement that fit their circumstances (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Trevino & Brown, 2004) and are consistent with the beliefs about the importance of involvement in their children's education (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Okagaki & Bingham, 2010).

Chapter 3: Research Design and Data Analysis

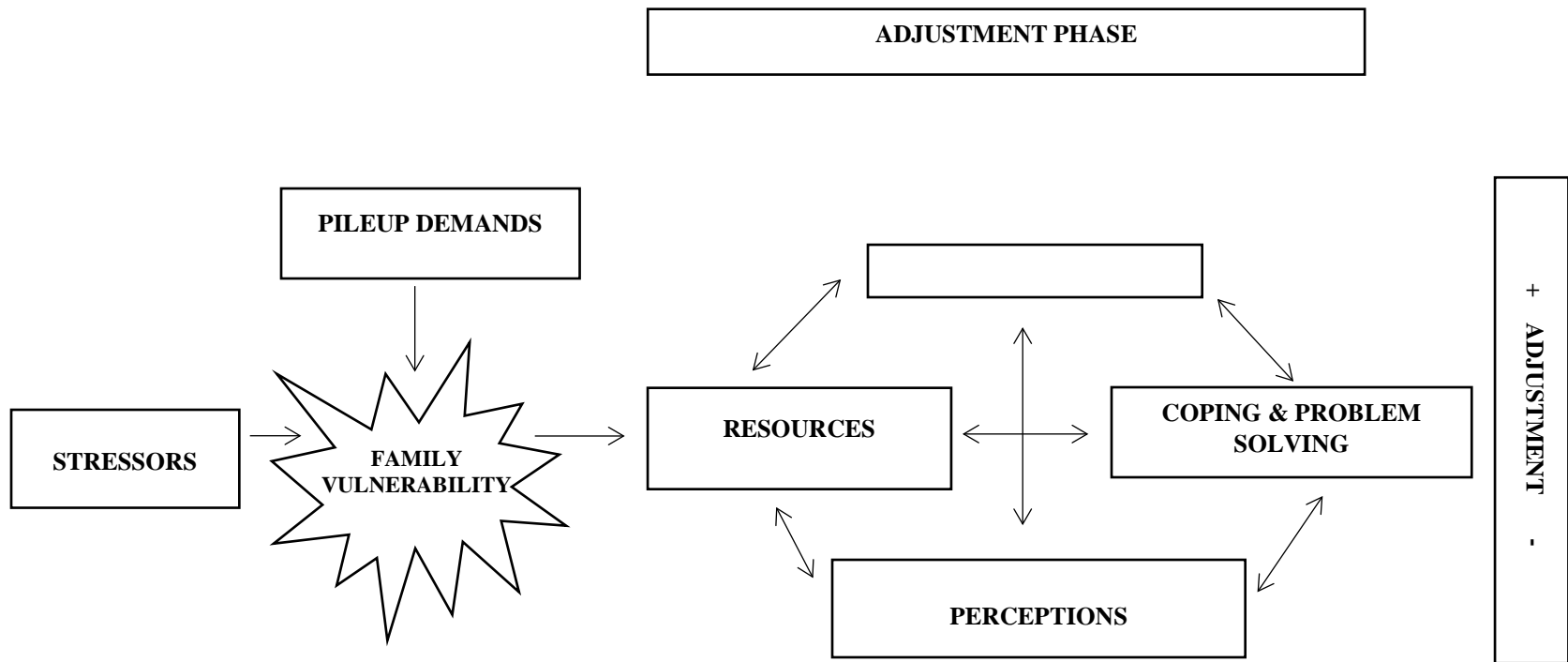
This chapter proceeds with a general explanation of the family resiliency model of family, stress, adjustment and adaptation and how it was conceptualized for this study. Next, an in-depth discussion of the research methodology, the rationale for why it was employed, and its approach is provided. It continues with an explanation of the setting, sample, and recruitment process, followed by a discussion of the data collection methods and how the data were organized and stored. Ethical considerations and reasoning behind compensation are also given. Lastly, managing relationships in the field, the process of data analysis, and managing data quality are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

A family resiliency model of family stress, adjustment and adaptation is used to conceptualize how Latina mothers of preschoolers in their daily lives utilize resources, problem solve, and engage with their children to facilitate school success in kindergarten. Resiliency can be defined as a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptations within the context of significant adversity” (Luther, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p.24). According to McCubbin and McCubbin (1993), resiliency “focuses on what family types, patterns, processes, coping supports, problem-solving abilities, and transactions with the community play a role in family recovery” (p. 3). According to this model, families will face hardships but most families will also foster growth to protect their members, in part by drawing on their network of relationships to restore balance. A family resiliency framework (Walsh, 2002) also allows a focus on maternal strengths and agency as central elements in children’s successful kindergarten transition.

This dissertation uses the adjustment phase of the resiliency model to frame an examination of one-time interviews, describing a series of interacting components that over time shape family adjustment outcomes with respect to mothers’ resiliency and children’s school readiness. The interacting components may range from positive to negative behaviors and some components serve as protective factors that typically buffer the effects of negative vulnerability, while other factors serve a promotive function, contributing to positive outcomes regardless of risk factors (Luther et al., 2000). Testing this distinction is beyond the scope of this qualitative study. Figure 1 illustrates the portion of the larger model that will be used for this study, the adjustment phase.

Figure 1. *General Family Resiliency Model of Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation*



As depicted above, the adjustment phase has several components, which I describe below³.

The **pileup of demands** with ongoing **stressors** may increase a family's vulnerability. Vulnerability is defined as the "interpersonal and organization conditions of the family system" that are composed of an accumulation of demands and trials associated with family life (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996, p. 17). Contributing factors are **normal patterns** of family interaction and daily life. These patterns represent how the family system operates: This includes family routines and how *their relationships function* and can range from positive to negative. We examined the multiple burdens mothers said they experienced as they prepared their children for the kindergarten transition.

The next component focuses on the capabilities and strengths of families, particularly the available resources they have access to and which allow them to manage stressors (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). A critical resource is social support, which includes family and non-family members (Levitt, Lane, & Levitt, 2005). Similarly, institutional supports influence family adaptation (Black & Lobo, 2008). All of these resources can offer a rich, protective sense of cohesion by providing assistance, information, and services that contribute to the welfare of the family (Luther et al., 2000; Seccombe, 2000). With respect to our families, we examined the availability of family and non-family members and their contributions to children's kindergarten transition. We further examined the supportive role played by child-serving institutions in children's readiness for kindergarten.

Family perception is the way that families appraise their vulnerabilities. Adjustment will be influenced by how the family defines the seriousness of their hardships (i.e., the kindergarten transition) and the adequacy of their resources. Typically, the more positive their perception, the more constructive the problem-solving efforts become. The last component that contributes to adjustment is **problem-solving and coping**. Problem solving and coping contribute to the family's ability to manage stressors and hardships by using resources, abilities, and skills to resolve challenges (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). Our study was attentive to mothers' view of the school readiness transition, as well as how they addressed the routine and unexpected challenges associated with this stage of their children's development.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research encompasses methods such as interviews, observations, and documents (i.e., photographs) used to gain descriptive data to better understand phenomena from the participants' perspective (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). The

³ Based on study findings, each component of this model is further specified in the discussion chapter.

data collected occurs in a natural setting and is sensitive to the people and places under study (Cresswell, 2007). Analysis of qualitative data is inductive, meaning that researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes by organizing the data into units of information. This inductive process involved working back and forth between the themes and the data until a comprehensive set of themes were established. Throughout the entire qualitative research process, I focused on learning and interpreting the meaning that participants held about the issue at hand (Cresswell, 2007). Overall, qualitative research tries to develop a holistic account of the issue under study by attempting to answer: “What is happening?” and “Why is it happening?” It further embraces the nuances inherent to what people say, what they do, and how they think. Likewise, it emphasizes the individual and the role that contexts and relationships play in forming beliefs and behaviors (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lofland, 1976; Lofland & Lofland, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990).

I used qualitative research for several reasons. First, qualitative research is used when there is a need to study a complex issue, which can only be accomplished by directly talking to people, understanding them from their own frames of reference, and experiencing reality as they experience it (Cresswell, 2007; Taylor et al., 2015). By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk about what is happening, and reviewing documents (i.e., photographs) they produce, qualitative researchers obtain first-hand knowledge of participants’ beliefs and perspectives. Qualitative research is also used to examine multiple perspectives or social life from different vantage points (Taylor et al., 2015). It rejects the notion of “hierarchy of credibility” (Becker & Chiswick, 1966), which assumes that the perspective of powerful people is more valid than those with less power. Rather, in qualitative studies, the poor, marginalized, or deviant are the ones who receive the opportunity for their views to be heard (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015), and are empowered to share their stories and have their voices heard. When qualitative researchers study people qualitatively, researchers get to know participants personally and experience what they experience in their daily struggles, whose essence may be lost through other means of research (Taylor et al., 2015). Thus, qualitative researchers look at settings and people holistically. Lastly, qualitative research is used to develop or contradict theories that do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem being examined (Cresswell, 2007).

Strong commitment, time, and resources are required in qualitative research. Cresswell (2007) stated that researchers who do qualitative research are committing to extensive time in the field collecting data, gaining access, rapport, and an “insider” perspective. In addition, they are committing to engaging in the complex, time-consuming process of data analysis, where

researchers sort through the copious amount of data with the task of reducing them to relevant themes and categories.

Methodological Approach

This qualitative study was informed by an interpretive approach that explored the meaning-making processes and daily lived experiences of low-income Latina mothers and Head Start teachers (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Tesch, 1990). This approach privileges the life knowledge and stories of groups that are often marginalized (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Krumer-Nevo, 2005) and hard to reach. Specifically, it recognizes participants' silenced stories, giving them voice and honoring their individual differences (Cresswell, 2007). The use of this approach was adopted to help guide our understanding of parents' and teachers' beliefs and perspectives about school readiness while considering social and economic factors that shape their experience. Further, it allowed us to uncover ways in which participants understood and supported their child's education that might not have been readily recognized by the literature or policy makers. Moreover, because qualitative research is focused on the lived experience expressed by the participants themselves and participant agency, qualitative methods identify heretofore unknown positive practices, behaviors, and resilience. It also created an opportunity to inform policies in culturally sensitive ways (Krumer-Nevo, 2005).

This approach was useful in two ways. First, it helped me understand mothers' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and school readiness. Second, it allowed me to recognize the richness and value of participants' experiences, beliefs, and practices and appreciate their personal histories and aspirations for the children they care for.

Setting

Participants from this ongoing project were recruited from the Hazelwood Head Start⁴ site located in Florence⁵, a northern Chicago suburb. According to the 2017 U.S. Census Bureau, residents in Florence had a median family income of \$74,806. The majority (61.3%) of residents were White, followed by Asian (22.5%), Latino/Hispanic (10.3%), and African-American (3.7%). Six percent of the population had a household income of less than \$15,000 and 5.5% of families received Food Stamp/SNAP benefits. Of those who were 16 years and over, 67.5% were employed, and 4.2% were unemployed. 21% of households with children under the age of 18 and 35% of children under five years old were headed by a single mother (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

⁴ Pseudonym of Head Start program

⁵ Pseudonym of neighborhood

Crestwood-sponsored Hazelwood is a leading provider of early childhood care, education, and family-centered service. Crestwood is committed to improving the lives of children and families throughout Illinois by providing quality programs and services to children and families in need, particularly African-American and Latino/a families. Specifically, Crestwood serves roughly 40,000 families each year and provides more than 80 social services programs throughout 60 Illinois counties. Almost all families (98%) served by Crestwood earned below \$25,000 per year, and more than 30% of households earned less than \$15,000 annually. In 2014 alone, 949 children considered at risk for academic failure received early care and education services. At the time of the study, 60% of children enrolled at the center were considered Latino/a.

Sample

Purposive sampling was used to recruit parents and teachers (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling is the most common sampling technique among qualitative research, and entails actively selecting participants that are most relevant for the research problem (Bernard, 2002; Marshall, 1996). Qualitative researchers recognize that some informants are ‘richer’ than others who can provide vital insights on the research questions (Marshall, 1996; Taylor et al., 2015). As a result, the logic and power of purposive sampling lie in selecting informant-rich cases that aid in answering the research question(s) and help in developing theories and concepts (Patton, 1990). By selecting Latina mothers of preschoolers and the preschool teachers of these children, these informant-rich cases provided the greatest insight and in-depth understanding of the research phenomena at hand (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Flick, 2014; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Taylor et al., 2015).

In qualitative studies, the aim is not to acquire a fixed number of participants. Rather, the goal is to gather sufficient in-depth information as a way of fully describing the phenomenon being studied (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002). To this point, researchers have agreed that there is no *right* sample size (Becker, 1998; Kuzel, 1999; Marshall, 1996; Patton, 1990; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Specifically, Patton (1990) stated that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 184). Instead, the sample size depends on study purpose and one that adequately answers the research questions (Patton, 1990; Marshall, 1996). Although purposive sampling has been judged on the recommended sample sizes of probability sampling (e.g., that generalizability is the ultimate goal of all good research), Patton (1990) argued that it should instead be judged by the basis of the purpose of each study and what the study is trying to achieve. However, some authors have suggested that six interviews are adequate for hard-to-reach populations (Adler & Adler, 2012).

Maternal caregivers who met the following criteria were invited to participate: 1) identified as Hispanic/Latina/o, 2) were at least 18 years of age, 3) had a household income at or lower than 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, and 4) had at least one target age child at the Hazelwood Head Start center who were transitioning to kindergarten. All seven Head Start teachers were invited to participate.

There were 24 Latino/a families with children transitioning to kindergarten. I interviewed 20 families. However, one interview was with a father, and in two interviews the father was present. These three interviews were not included in the analysis. A total of 17 in-depth interviews were conducted with low-income Latina mothers of preschoolers (See Table 2). Out of the 17, 10 mothers participated in the photo-elicitation interview (noted with an asterisk). Mothers in this sample were between 24 to 41 years old (range of 30.1 years old). Nine mothers (the majority of the sample) were born in Mexico. Four mothers were born in the United States and two were born in Colombia. One mother was from El Salvador and one from Ecuador. Parents varied in level of education. Seven parents had a high school education or equivalent, followed by four parents who had some high school, but did not graduate. Four mothers had some college, and two parents had elementary (5th and 6th grade) level education. Parents also varied with regard to where they attained their education. Seven attained their education in the U.S., and seven in Mexico. Others attained their degree in Colombia, El Salvador, and Ecuador. Almost all parents (N=15) were employed in service sector jobs. One mother was unemployed at the time of the study, and one was a student enrolled at a community college. Seven mothers were cohabiting with their male partners, seven were single, and three were married. Household size varied. Families ranged from three to seven people in the household (mean of 4.1).

Out of the seven Head Start teachers at Hazelwood, only the lead teachers (N = 5) were interviewed. Only one teacher, Elizabeth, was Asian. The remaining four teachers were White. Four were married and one was single. Three had Bachelor's degrees in Early Childhood Education (ECE), one had a Bachelor's in Child Development/Child Life Specialist/Infant Specialist, and one had a Master's degree in ECE. Teachers' tenure at Hazelwood ranged from 2 months to 8 years. The majority of students in teachers classrooms were Latino/a, except in Georgina's classroom. She only had White students. All teachers only spoke English (See Table 3).

Table 2. *Parent Demographics (N = 17)*

Participant (Target Child)	Age	Country of origin	Education	Country of education	Employment Status	Marital Status
Amanda (Jax)	41	Colombia	HS/GED	Colombia	Employed	C
Adriana (Lesley)*	28	USA (Mexican descent)	HS/GED	USA	Employed	S
Alexa (David)	25	Colombia	SC	USA	Employed/Student	C
Alicia (Manny)*	31	Mexico	SHS	USA	Employed	S
Delia (Josue)*	27	El Salvador	Elementary	El Salvador	Unemployed	C
Flor (Lucia)*	33	Mexico	Elementary	Mexico	Employed	S
Fabiola (Javier)*	33	Mexico	SHS	Mexico	Employed	C
Irene (Kayla)*	27	Mexico	SHS	Mexico	Employed	C
Ingrid (Nayeli)*	30	Mexico	SHS	Mexico	Employed	M
Jocelyn (Alma)	28	Mexico	HS/GED	Mexico	Employed	S
Kristina (Kevin)	25	USA (Ecuadorian descent)	SC	USA	Student	C
Laura (Isa)*	38	Ecuador	SC	Ecuador	Employed	M
Maribel (Diana)	27	Mexico	HS/GED	Mexico	Employed	M
Marisol (Jacob)*	27	USA (Mexican descent)	HS/GED	USA	Employed	C
Marcela (Daniel)	24	USA (Mexican descent)	SC	USA	Employed	S
Natalia (Nina)	38	Mexico	HS/GED	Mexico	Employed	S
Paulina (Hugo)*	30	Mexico	HS/GED	USA	Employed	S

Note: HS/GED= High school/ General Education Degree; SC= some college; SHS= some high school; S= Single= M= Married C= Cohabiting

Table 3. *Head Start Teacher Demographics (N = 5)*

Head Start Teacher	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Marital Status	Degree	Education	# of years in school	Majority Race/Ethnicity of students
Elizabeth	Asian	25	Married	B.S	Child Development, Child Life Specialist, Infant Specialist	5 months	Latino/a
Georgina	White	46	Married	M.A	ECE	3 months	White
Jackie	White	29	Married	B.S.	ECE	4 years	Latino
Sheri	White	50	Single	B.S.	ECE	8 years	Latino/a
Stacey	White	36	Married	B.S	ECE	2 months	Latino/a

Note.: ECE= Early Childhood Education

Recruitment

Parents. I recruited all 17 parents by introducing the project at parent meetings at the school site, distributing fliers, and hosting their monthly parent meetings, which Hazelwood was mandated by Head Start to hold each month. Children who were transitioning were identified with assistance from the Family Assistance Coordinator (FAC)⁶ and secretary. Once children were identified, fliers written in English and Spanish (double-sided) were mailed to parents' homes inviting them to participate in the study. This same flier was also placed in children's cubbies, the front desk, and around the center. During each workshop, a sign-in sheet was used to help identify parents with a transitioning child, but who had not yet shown interest in the study. I met with the parents after the workshops or contacted them via telephone to invite them to participate.

Interested mothers who returned the contact information portion found on the bottom of the fliers were invited to participate in a one-time interview. Mothers were contacted by telephone (usually in the late afternoon or early evening), where I provided supplementary information about the study and asked if they would be willing to participate. If mothers did not answer when called, a brief message was left asking them to contact me. Attempts to re-contact ended after three calls, spaced three weeks apart.

Teachers. There were seven Head Start teachers working at Hazelwood, five of whom were Lead teachers. The assistant director scheduled a meeting with each of the Lead teachers during a portion of the teachers' two-hour break.

Data Collection

Data collection strategies entailed qualitative in-depth interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation interviews (mothers only). Access to the Hazelwood center was granted, as well as University of Illinois Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. All interviews took place during the 2015-2016 school year. Each of the parent interviews lasted between 60-120 minutes. Head Start teacher interviews were one hour long. Mothers had the choice of whether they wanted the interview to be done in English or Spanish. The ability to carry out interviews in Spanish promoted confidence and comfort among research participants (Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009; Poza et al., 2014). All interviews with teachers were done in English.

Before the start of the interview, participants were given a consent form (either in Spanish or English) to read and sign. Their rights as participants were explained verbally and thoroughly before consenting. Once consent was given, participants were asked to complete a demographic form (see Appendix A for parent demographic form and Appendix B for teacher

⁶ Roles have been altered to protect participants' identity.

demographic form). All interviews were audio-recorded. However, audio recording was not an inclusion criterion, and if participants were not comfortable with audio recording, then only notes were taken during the interviews. All mothers agreed to be audio recorded, while one teacher declined. For her, detailed notes were taken. She also requested that I send her the questions electronically and that she would reply to them in more depth after our meeting. Participating in the photography portion of the study was also not an inclusion criterion for mothers. If mothers were not comfortable participating in the photo-elicitation portion of the study, they were still able to participate in the in-depth interview. Parents chose the location and time of the interview. Out of the 17 interviews, 14 were done in the mother's home, two in a private room at the center, and one at a Dunkin Donuts. All teacher interviews were done in a private room at the center where no one could overhear our conversation. When interviews were carried out at participants' homes, another member of the research team was notified of the date, time, and location for security purposes.

An interview guide approach with topically organized, open-ended, and semi-structured questions was used (Patton, 1990) (see Appendix C for parent protocol and Appendix D for teacher protocol). This approach was used because it was conversational in nature, encouraged an interactive dialogue, and promoted a free expression of ideas pertaining to the research topic (Kvale, 1996; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Further, the protocol was used to ensure that all topics were covered, while at the same time allowing the interview to remain flexible and open. This flexibility created a "partnership" that not only was conversational but also tailored to each interview based on participants' responses (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). As new themes emerged during interviews, the interview guide was revised to reflect these newfound themes. This was done so that new areas could be covered with new informants that were relevant to the study (Taylor et al., 2015). Protocol questions were developed from guiding research questions and study aims, school readiness literature, family literature on Latino/a families, and the guiding theoretical framework (resilience). Comparable topics were covered in both mother and teacher interviews. Particular attention was paid to subcultural family characteristics and specific school readiness issues that distinguished the experiences of Latino/a (e.g., language, immigration history) parents. Additionally, topics were included on community resources and challenges.

For mothers who chose to do the interview in Spanish, a Spanish interview protocol was developed. The English interview protocol was translated into Spanish, and then back-translated into English. This procedure is widely used in cross-cultural research to maximize the cultural equivalency of measures (Knight et al., 2009; Van de Vijver & Hambleton, 1996). A pilot

interview with a family caregiver was also completed to ensure accuracy in meaning and intention before interviews with mothers began.

Responsive in-depth interviews. Responsive in-depth interviewing or intensive interviewing emphasizes the importance of working with participants as partners, rather than as objects of research (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Instead of emphasizing detachment, responsive interviewing encouraged relationship building between researchers and their participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In-depth interviews consist of one-on-one dialogue (face-to-face mode) between the interviewer and interviewee with the purpose of discovering some aspect of personal information about and from the interviewee (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015). The face-to-face-mode is modeled after a conversation between two equals, rather than a formal question and answer exchange (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015). This method of data collection offered a rich and textured understanding of what participants are doing, thinking, and why (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015).

The hallmark of in-depth qualitative interviewing is to learn how people construct their realities, and seeks to document individuals' feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs in greater detail (Saldaña, 2011). Thus, the researcher has to find ways of getting people to talk about their perspectives and experiences without overly structuring the conversation and defining what the interviewee should say (Taylor et al., 2015). The researcher not only needs to respond to the participant, but further question what they hear (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) to gain depth and detail of participants' experiences.

The core of responsive interviews involved asking three types of questions: 1) main questions; 2) probes and; 3) follow-up questions. Main questions address the overall research problem, while probes help manage the conversation and elicit detail on the subject by providing examples. Follow-up questions explore and test ideas that emerge during the interview, by asking the interviewee to elaborate on the main concepts, themes, ideas, or events that they mentioned to provide the researcher with more detail and depth. They are also critical because they create interaction with the interviewee (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Researchers who utilize in-depth, face-to-face interviews are also able to gain knowledge of what is *not* said. Being perceptive to verbal cues (e.g., hesitation in answering a question), non-verbal cues (e.g., body movement, facial expressions), and environmental factors (e.g., location of the interview) (Herzog, 2005), researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the interviewee's world.

In general, in-depth interviews center on building a trusting relationship that honors participants' responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015). These trusting relationships,

based on the “naturalness” between the researcher and participant, are the foundation of in-depth interviews, making it the most personal of all qualitative research designs (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). In-depth interviews are also insightful because they reveal dynamic and complex processes behind demographic profiles, giving voice to marginalized populations. Following Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) guidelines, rich data was obtained through open-ended, topical questions and probes that elicited meaning, process, and participants’ own stories. Moreover, it provided opportunities to identify strengths of low-income Latina mothers and Head Start teachers that are otherwise not observable (Ungar, 2003).

Limitations of in-depth interviews. While there are many benefits of conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews, limitations do exist. These included cost, time, recruitment of hard-to-reach populations, and recruitment of interviews due to scheduling conflicts or inconvenience of location. A major concern is that face-to-face interviews may distort the data. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) for example shared that the manner in which the interviewer conducts the interviews and the depth and breadth of an interview’s response can affect the quality of the data. Kvale (2015) further added that an “asymmetrical power relation” (p. 37) has the potential to lead the interviewee to express what the interviewer wants to hear, or provide the “correct answers.” To address this challenge, participants were verbally informed that the goal of this conversation was to learn their thoughts and experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers. I started each interview letting them know that they were the experts and that I wanted to learn from them.

To further enhance the quality of the data, I built rapport with participants prior to the interview by spending time at the site, volunteering in activities, and participating in informal and scheduled meetings. Before the interview, I began with small talk and a brief introduction about myself, to further connect with participants. I followed Roller and Lavrakas’ (2015) interviewing recommendations: 1) actively listening and showing sincere interest in participants’ responses and asking appropriate follow-up questions; 2) staying focused on the interview objectives but also being flexible in the interview content; 3) maintaining a heightened sensitivity to both verbal cues and non-verbal cues; and 4) obtaining accurate and complete records of the interview. Most importantly, when completing interviews, I constructed a situation that resembled two people naturally talking to one another (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Taylor et al., 2015). The conversation (interview), as suggested by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) was relaxed, conversational in nature, and non-judgmental.

Photo-Elicitation Interviewing (PEI). In addition to narrative interviews, this project also used photo-elicitation interviews to gain a richer view of families’ beliefs and practices

regarding school readiness and parental involvement (Baker & Wang, 2006; Banks, 2001; Collier & Collier, 1986). Photo-elicitation interviewing (PEI) is defined as inserting a photograph into research interviews to invoke responses (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002, 2005; Hurworth, Clark, Martin, & Thomsen, 2005; Lapenta, 2011; Rose, 2012; Vila, 2013; Wang & Burris, 1997). PEI is widely used in various fields and disciplines ranging from cultural studies to sociology, health, and nursing (Baker & Wang, 2006; Cappello, 2005; Dyches, Chichella, Olsen, & Mandlaco, 2004; Sontag, 1977). However, limited studies using PEI have focused on early education. The few studies that are available have focused on White and African-American families with preschoolers (McAllister, Wilson, Green, & Baldwin, 2005; Miller, 2014) but none with Latino/a children. To my current knowledge, no studies using a sample of low-income Latina mothers have used photo-elicitation methods to study how they prepare their child for school.

Photo-elicitation is a valuable tool for documenting and communicating insights that mothers deemed important when preparing their child for kindergarten. It can access taken-for-granted activities that may not emerge in interviews. Bukowski and Buetow (2011) add that photographs can make the “invisible visible” (p. 739) since photographs have the ability to evoke feelings, memories, and thoughts that require verbalization. Researchers have also found that pictures elicit longer and more comprehensive interviews; at the same time they help participants fight fatigue due to the repetition of conventional interviews (Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002). Rose (2012) further stressed that photo-elicitation makes participants feel more involved and motivated during the research process because it is novel and it breaks the monotony that characterizes traditional interviews (Creswell, 2013; Lapenta, 2011).

Photographs complemented the in-depth interviews and encouraged parents to further reflect on their role as they prepared their child for kindergarten (Miller, 2014). The process of taking pictures is in itself a process of reflection since parents had to reflect first on how they make meaning of school readiness. Second, parents reflected on what school readiness activities they wanted to portray. Because photographs have shown to provide an “excellent source of qualitative analysis” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 127) and have gained attention as a means to better understand family processes, generate knowledge, and convey understanding (Pink, Kurti, & Afonso, 2004), mothers were invited to reflect on the meaning of each picture during the interview.

Specifically, this study used an auto-driven approach (Clark, 1999; Heisley & Levy, 1991), sometimes known as respondent controlled or reflexive PEI (Prosser, 1998). The auto-driven approach consists of asking participants to take their own pictures and then asking a set of questions regarding each photo (Samuels, 2004). The interview thus is driven by informants (Heisley

& Levy 1991). This approach allowed mothers to control what pictures they took and encouraged participants to focus on aspects of their lives that they found meaningful and significant. Further, auto-driven PEI increased intimacy between participants and subject since the images had some meaning to the mothers (Banks, 2001; Byrne & Doyle, 2004). Auto-driven PEI also promoted a deeper level of reflective thinking than interviews alone (Heisley & Levy, 1991). Given the authorship of the images, mothers were treated as experts and thus given power and control over the data they wanted to share. This recognition of their expertise served as a source of empowerment (Wang & Burris, 1994) and agency for marginalized populations (Banks, 2001; Rose, 2012).

The goal of PEI for this study was to open dialogue, prompt memory, and encourage discussion (Miller, 2014) about preparing children for kindergarten. The information gathered from the photographs helped not only to guide the interview but also to contextualize the discussion (Collier, 1957; Miller, 2014) and understand family processes (Alfonso, Kurti, & Pink, 2004), as photographs can highlight taken for granted activities that may not spontaneously emerge in interviews (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011). Photographs served two purposes for this study. First, they allowed the pictures to be used as a tool to contextualize the lives of families, while at the same time acting as an avenue for participants to communicate school-like activities in their daily lives (Miller, 2014).

Photo-elicitation interviewing procedures. As part of the in-depth interview, mothers were invited to take part in a photograph-based portion of the study. First, they were given a disposable camera and asked to take photos over the course of the week of what they (and other family members) were doing to prepare their child for kindergarten. It is recommended that for participant-driven photography, one week of photographs allow for a weeklong cycle of activities (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; McAllister et al., 2005). Due to the nature of photo interviewing (naturalistic), parents were given minimal instructions on what photos to take (Padgett, Smith, Derejko, Henwood, & Tiderington, 2013), although they were given full instruction on how to use a disposable camera and brief instructions detailing the assignment (See Appendix E).

A few days before the parents were due to return the camera, parents received a phone call asking how it was going and if they had any questions. They were also reminded of when they had to return the camera. Cameras were returned to the gatekeeper (the secretary). All pictures were developed at a Walgreens. The turn-around was usually 5-7 business days. During this time, interviews with parents were scheduled. I kept digitized photos, and one set of photos were returned to participants after the interview.

Photo-elicitation interviews have often been described as unstructured because they are participant-driven, but there are standardized components in which to compare responses (Miller, 2014). Participants were asked a set of questions regarding each photo to ensure that all participants were being asked the same questions (See Appendix F). For each photo, mothers were asked who was in the photo, the location of the photo, the activity in the photo, and why each photo was taken (Harper, 2002; Mandleco, 2013). Pictures that were duplicates, blurry, and those taken by mistake were excluded from the interview.

Advantages of photo-elicitation interviewing. Research has shown several advantages to photo interviewing. Photo-elicitation can create a bridge between the world of the researcher and the world of the research participants (Shaw, 2012). Photos can trigger participants' memories, uncovering new perspectives and explanations, and helps assess participants' interpretations and meanings. The combination of visual and verbal language produced unanticipated information, promoted longer, more detailed interviews, and assisted with building trust and rapport. It also facilitated within method triangulation to improve study rigor (Hurworth, 2003). Finally, Clark- Ibáñez (2004) argued that the use of photographs can lessen some of the awkwardness in interviews since it gives participants and researcher something to focus on (shared interest) (Lapenta, 2011; Rose, 2007). The use of photos also reduced the power dynamic between researcher and participant, as participants have agency in what they photographed and guided the discussion regarding purpose and meaning of the photos (Madleco, 2013).

Limitations of photo-elicitation interviewing. Several limitations to using this technique exist (Madleco, 2013). First, asking parents to take pictures is an additional task in their already busy lives. It is possible that they may forget to take photos, may not have the camera when they want to take pictures, or may take multiple shots of the same activity just to complete the roll. It may also be possible that parents may take pictures all at one period rather than spreading them out. One way to tackle these limitations was to call parents during the week and ask how the photographs were going, as well as reminding them about the task at hand. Not knowing how to properly use the camera when taking pictures (e.g., flash setting) and being unwilling or unable to share the meaning behind their photos are also possible limitations. To make sure that parents knew how to use the camera, a "trial" camera was on hand and used as a demonstration tool for mothers. Finally, it is possible that families may stage activities or document events that are not a regular occurrence in the household (Miller, 2014). The use of the in-depth interview following the photo-elicitation portion of the study touched upon the discussion of these activities and got at how frequently these activities occurred. Therefore, the use of photographs in combination with the interview allowed for checks and balances (Clark-

Ibanez, 2004) of the information provided. This acted as an additional form of cross-checking that was used to confirm, refine, or question existing knowledge on Latina mothers' understanding of school readiness and parental involvement.

Implications of photo-elicitation interviewing. Photo-elicitation interviewing offered insight into what *mothers* regarded as important and integral (Taylor et al., 2015) to the process of preparing their child for kindergarten. The use of photographs aided and illustrated the diversity and behavioral patterns that exist within groups (Gold, 2004), challenging stereotypes of Latina mothers and their role in their child's education. Challenging these general characteristics has the potential to further help policy makers and schools see the variety of family activities that parents participate in as they help their child transition. For example, Miller (2014) showed that the photo-elicitation process has the potential to serve as an intervention tool for families *and* schools. Not only does the photo-elicitation process require families to reflect on the images and their relationship to children's successful entrance to kindergarten, but it also increases families' awareness of activities that may benefit the child. Miller (2014) argued that if parents can identify and reflect on the contributions they are making, it may increase parents' sense of self-efficacy, which has been found to be an important characteristic of parental involvement and ultimately, children's school readiness (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). At the same time, photographs can be used to educate the school on the many meaningful activities that families are doing but may be invisible during the transition process. As a result, the use of photographs may help schools identify existing strengths that Latino/a families possess.

Participant observations. Participant observations was a third strategy used in this study. Participant observation is defined as research that involves social interaction between the researcher and participants, during which data is systematically and unobtrusively collected (Taylor et al., 2015). Observations provided an opportunity to learn more about the setting and allowed me to experience participants' lives first-hand. Informally spending time at the site also allowed me to develop rapport with participants, which ultimately enhanced interview quality (Taylor et al., 2015). Research has shown that the type of rapport that researchers can build with participants may influence what researchers gather: what the participants say in the interview depends on how they view the researchers, and how the researcher views them (Taylor et al., 2015). To avoid participants responding in socially desirable ways or giving exaggerated answers to please me, I followed the guidelines set forth by Taylor and Bogdan (1998):

Paying homage to their routines is the first guideline I followed. To establish rapport with informants at my site, I accommodated myself to their routines and ways of doing things. I then established *what I have in common with people*. The casual exchange of information is often

considered a vehicle through which researchers can break the ice. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), one of the best ways to begin gaining people's trust is to *do favors for them*. I spent time at the site helping teachers and administrators with anything and everything they needed, including hanging posters, sorting paper-work, making copies, and sometimes answering the phone. When parents asked for my assistance, I was there. I accompanied many parents to the Kindergarten Fair that the district held, as well as to the school to help them register their child for school. Being *humble* was the next suggested strategy. Because I have information that others in the site did not (as a result of interviewing parents, teachers, and spending time with staff) I had more knowledge of what everyone in the setting was thinking. I kept this knowledge to myself and did not reveal anything that informants shared with me.

Establishing and maintaining rapport with informants was an ongoing activity (Taylor et al., 2015). However, as fieldwork moved beyond the first few months, I had to devote attention to finding ways to broaden my knowledge of settings and participants. A field tactic suggested by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) was being *at the right place at the right time*. I was at Hazelwood on a bi-weekly basis from mid-January until mid-August, from Wednesday through Friday. On Wednesdays I arrived before children were picked up (3 PM) and stayed until closing (6 PM). On Thursdays, I came when the center opened (7 AM) and stayed until closing (6 PM) to engage with parents whose schedules only permitted them to do the drop-off. On Fridays, I arrived at noon and stayed until 5 PM since the majority of children got picked up earlier on Friday. I was also at the site whenever there was a function (i.e., parent workshop, parent meeting). *Acting native* was the next suggested approach. Presenting myself as a naïve but interested outsider was an effective way of eliciting information (Lofland, 1971). A final strategy for building rapport and broadening my knowledge was by *learning how people use language*. The vocabulary used in a setting most often provided important clues to how people defined situations and classified their world, suggesting lines of inquiry and questioning (Taylor et al., 2015).

Observations were also taken in conjunction with in-depth interviews. Note jotting was done unobtrusively. Jotted notes consisted of little phrases, quotes, keywords that researchers write down during the observation and at unobtrusive moments (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). They also have the function of jogging one's memory at the time of writing field notes.

Complete and accurate field notes were taken after each visit to the site or parents' home (Berg & Lune, 2014; Bogdan, 1972). I drew on Lofland and Lofland's (2006) system of note taking. The notes for this study were organized by: Observations Notes (ON), Theoretical Notes (TN), Methodological Notes (MN), and Observer's Comments (OC). Observational notes recorded situations, events, and conversations. These notes contained as little interpretation as

possible and contained the who, what, when, where, and how of human activity. Next, theoretical notes were used to derive meaning from the observation notes. During this time, I interpreted, inferred, and hypothesized meanings of situations, events, and conversations. Methodological notes are personal reflections on activities. They were used as a reminder or as a critique of my tactics. Finally, observer comments are personal comments on how I felt as I interacted and participated in the field. These personal notes were kept in a separate journal.

While observations were detailed, they were used to supplement interview data. Observations were used to learn more about the setting, staff, teachers, and parents on a regular basis. They also provided a description of the setting and activities that took place in parents' homes.

Ethical Considerations

I took multiple steps to ensure the safety and confidentiality of all participants. First, no information was gathered from participants until consent was explained and participants agreed to participate. To ensure that all participants understood their rights as well as the study goals, I verbally explained the consent forms and went over the demographic form with each participant. For parents with low literacy, those who were unable to read or write, I offered to read the questions in both the consent and demographic forms, as well as write down the mothers' answers. Pseudonyms were used for the research site, neighborhood, individual participants, and the participants' family members. These pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and other research documents (e.g., memos). Additionally, all identifying information was (and will be) omitted from the products of this study, including the dissertations, research presentations, and future publications.

There were minimal risks to those who participated in the study. Participants may have encountered minimal discomfort allotting time in their schedule to complete the interview and taking the photographs. Some mothers may have experienced distress when asked about their childhood, as the interview may have brought forward difficult emotions. To ensure comfort, mothers were notified that they could skip any question they did not feel comfortable answering. During this portion of the interview, I stayed attuned to mother's facial reactions and bodily gestures, and no probing was done when it was evident that the mother was feeling uncomfortable. I also made sure that I had social service referrals for parents who may need additional support.

Compensation

Members of low-income groups have been found to be less motivated to participate than members of higher income groups (Knight et al., 2009). Roosa and colleagues (2008) found that

members of any ethnic minority group or economically disadvantaged group may be more attracted and more likely to elicit participation if it has immediate personal benefits (i.e., receiving incentives). It is recommended that financial incentives be provided in studies where participants are low-income (Knight et al., 2009) due to the time demands of participating in research. Incentives should be in the most accessible form possible (e.g., cash, cash card, gift card) and should not be large enough to be coercive or make it difficult for low-income individuals to refuse to participate. Some researchers argue that participating in research that gives back to participants is consistent with the cultural values of collectivism or *familismo*, which place the emphasis on what is right for the group/family more so than what is good for the individual (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Knight et al., 2009). In line with Knight and colleagues (2009) suggestions, parents were compensated with a \$20.00 gift certificate to Target for their participation in the study. Target was chosen because it was a five-minute drive from Hazelwood. Mothers also received copies of the photos they took. Each teacher received a gift bag of classroom supplies as a thank you.

Managing Relationships in the Field

This section discusses how relationships with participants, teachers, and gatekeepers were handled during the research process. Managing field relationships was critical for ensuring good data quality. I offer details of entering and exiting the field, maintaining positive interactions with participants, and managing my role as a researcher in this space.

Entering and exiting the field. At the site, I was given the role as ‘Kindergarten Organizer’ as they were aware of my research intentions. How I came about this role was more due to necessity at the site than anything else. Yet, I used it as a way to gain access to teachers and mothers, as well as build rapport. Two weeks after my initial visit to Crestwood, there were shifts in staff that left the center shorthanded. Due to being short staffed, their monthly parent meetings required by Head Start seemed to be the least of their worries, rightfully so. Because I was clear that I was interested in working with parents who had a child transitioning to kindergarten, the Family Assistance Coordinator (FAC) asked if I could take over the parent meetings. Instead of being just an observer at the parent meetings, I became an active player. At the first parent meeting that I attended, the FAC introduced me as part of the Crestwood team. Further, I was added to their newsletter as a new team member to join Crestwood. Looking back at it now, being considered a ‘team member’ by the Crestwood staff helped me become an insider and helped me earn mothers’ trust earlier than if I was not. Because staff trusted me, the mothers also trusted me, making it easier to get mothers interested in the study. Most of the mothers that I approached for interviews welcomed the opportunity to talk to me about their children and

kindergarten. My interactions and relationships with individual participants were positive through my time in the field. Being able to approach parents face-to-face eased my entrance into the field and their lives (Knight et al., 2009).

Field relationships have to be negotiated and renegotiated over time (Adler & Adler, 2012; Burgess, 1984). Positive interactions with participants led to greater intimacy in a few cases, particularly with mothers. In fact, a couple of parents wanted to become friends. One of the parents invited me to her brother's recently opened Mexican restaurant 15 minutes away from Hazelwood. When I agreed, she met me there and paid for my meal, although I insisted that I pay. Throughout the family's time at Hazelwood, she stayed in touch with me via text and randomly messaged me to tell me that her son was now reading small words and, at times, asked if I could find information regarding her son's school. Another mother knew that I was at the site every Friday and brought a Mexican dish (Pozole), which she made for me. She also added me on social media (Facebook) and messaged me via WhatsApp with requests to translate certain forms she had received or to tell me that her daughter was beginning to read. A year later, she still messages me and updates me on her daughter's status. The two mothers and I were close in age, no more than a five-year difference, and both mothers were single. We had a very good connection during the first interview, so there was a rational basis for such requests. Until this day, we still keep in touch either via social media or through messaging.

My relationship with the staff at Hazelwood was also positive. We were all around the same age, late twenties. Out of the four family assistance workers, three were Latina. The director was European-American. My gatekeeper, Alegra, the site secretary was four years older than me and had two young daughters. Because I sat next to her at the front desk during my time at Hazelwood, our conversations went from talking about the families and what needed to be done, to talking about our families and our lives. She would vent about her husband and admitted that she was too young to have children. I would just listen. I would often receive emails from her telling me she was excited to see me, and instances when I was not able to come, receiving emails of how much she missed me. Sitting in the front also allowed me to greet parents when they came in to drop-off and pick-up. It also granted me the opportunity to briefly talk to them.

Gaining rapport with the other family assistants took a little bit longer as they were in a different room and would often be at home visits or training when I was there. However, one way that I began to build rapport was by asking them questions. When I needed to learn more about Head Start regulations or funding, for instance, they would sit down with me and thoroughly explain it to me. I was always grateful for their time and sent "thank you" emails afterward. Because we were also close in age, they often invited me out for their Friday night drinks.

Although I always wanted to go and be friends with them as well, I did not want to develop a friendship during data collection and risk going native. Also, because I was busy with my dissertation research, developing a friendship was not feasible.

Since I sat at the front desk with Alegra, I would see teachers walking back and forth as the restrooms, the playroom, the break room, and the main offices were near us. That was my chance to also talk with the teachers. There were a few times that Hazelwood was short in staff and they asked me to help the teachers. Although my help was brief (staying in the classroom with another teacher to give another teacher the opportunity to go to the bathroom), teachers were very grateful. They also asked for my assistance, such as laminating students' work or making copies. This not only eased Alegra's job, which she was thankful for (she was always thanking me) but it also gave me an opportunity to collaborate with the teachers.

I have not exited the field. Although I am no longer collecting data, I offered to give this new cohort the same kindergarten information as the last group (e.g., match students with their neighborhood school, provide a supply list, registration dates). The FAC director sent me the family's information (names of family members, home address, telephone number) and with help from my students in the Ethnographic Research Lab, we were able to provide each family member with a packet of information regarding the kindergarten transition. When the FAC director found out that I would be taking a job at UIC (Sue's HDFS Facebook post announcement), she added this to her page wrote, "So proud of this girl right here...she's done so much and dedicate her time to Crestwood to help our children and families..." Maintaining good rapport was important for maintaining contact with parents and staff and their possible willingness to participate in follow-up interviews in future studies.

Researcher Reflexivity

Hesse-Biber (2007) defines reflexivity as the "process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her own social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process" (p. 29). To stay grounded in the data, I constantly reflected on my perspective and biases that had the potential to shape my interpretation and analyses of the data. Specifically, I paid particular attention to my race, ethnicity, social class, age, and citizenship status. I am a young, Spanish-speaking Ecuadorian woman from an immigrant middle-class family who grew up in Chicago. My upbringing in an immigrant, single-mother household and my ability to speak Spanish, and the fact that participants (particularly mothers and staff) and I were close in age gave me a certain insider status, but I was also an outsider in many ways. First, I did not have children. I was also more highly educated than all the mothers, teachers, and staff. While all target children were American citizens, the majority of parents were

not. Differences in citizenship status, although not talked about in the interview, were evident through informal conversations or through information shared with me via the staff. Indeed, my insider/outsider status changed throughout each interview (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Researchers' multiple identities are part and product of the humanistic nature of conducting social science research (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I believe that my not having kids worked in my advantaged. During each mother interview, I made it clear that *they* were the experts, as I did not have any kids. Giving mothers this power helped them be more forthcoming with their time and answers. While participants and I shared the same common language (Spanish), dialects and meaning of words differed. There were several times that I had to probe mothers to explain a particular phrase that I had not heard before, or had heard before but was not sure if the meaning was the same in their country. Although this might be seen as a setback, I believe it made the mothers feel more in control as they were teaching me something (which they did).

Besides two mothers, Laura and Kristina, no other mother was Ecuadorian. As soon as I met Laura, she picked up on my Ecuadorian accent and asked right away if I was from Quito. I replied that I was born in Quito, but moved to Chicago when I was 5 years old. She went ahead and shared with me that she had not been able to go back to her home country in over 20 years, as she does not have legal documentation, although she is in the process of applying. Kristina, who was a year younger than me did not recognize my accent, but that could have been because the interview was done in English. However, when she talked about her parents being Ecuadorian, I did share that I was also Ecuadorian. She got excited and we slightly got off track. However, my interviews with the remaining 15 mothers were as outgoing and personal as they were with Laura and Kristina, leading me to believe that my ethnicity did not matter to mothers.

My education did not matter to families, per se, yet many mothers used me as a role model for their own children. For example, one mother told me that she wanted her daughter to be like me. When I probed her to explain what she meant by that, she said she wanted her daughter to be educated and single. Although mothers knew that I was in college, they did not understand that I was getting my Ph.D. Many actually believed that I worked for Hazelwood as a teacher, social worker or with family assistance. For example, several mothers told me that they were happy to meet with a teacher and talk about their children. I explained to them that I was not a teacher, and that I was volunteering at Hazelwood. That brought more confusion as many did not understand why I was not getting paid. Families and I also differed in social class, making me an outsider. However, before volunteering at the site or walking into family's homes, I made sure that my attire was simple and not flashy. I did not wear any brand name clothing or lots of

jewelry or make up. I tried my best to always park near the end of the lot so they could avoid seeing the car I drove. While not new, it was newer than theirs.

My behavior with Hazelwood staff differed. Although I was aware of my privilege with mothers, I wanted to make sure that I did not come off as an elitist who was getting her Ph.D. I consistently monitored my language and the level of expertise I portrayed about certain topics. There were times where I already knew about a policy or law that impacted Head Start but still asked staff to explain it to me. With regards to teachers, the interim-director scheduled all teacher meetings for me. Because they were short staffed due to high teacher turnover, the interim-director felt that this was the easiest way for everyone. I agreed. The only characteristic that I shared with teachers was that our area of work was with early childhood and that we have post-baccalaureate degrees. Two teachers were around my age, and only one teacher was single. Although we did not share many characteristics, I do not feel that it influenced our conversation. As previously mentioned, I started each interview letting them know that they were the experts. In this case, I told them that I've never worked in a classroom with young children and that I was here to learn from them. Apart from Jackie, who did not want to be recorded (she later was let go), every other teacher was very open and friendly. While some may feel they were coerced to talk to me because their interim-director assigned these meetings, I made sure to tell teachers that this was entirely up to them and that they were free to stop the interview at any time. When our hour was up, many teachers wanted to continue to talk and even mentioned to me that "this was fun!" Many times that I would encounter teachers in the hallway and they would ask when we were going to meet again. Due to limited time, I was not able to schedule a second interview, although for future studies I will.

I knew that I brought biases to my research even before starting data collection. Being a daughter of an immigrant single mother impacted the worldview that I brought to the study. Much of the literature that I have read (and continue to read) on Latino/a families comes from a deficit perspective and I was determined not to follow in that same path. Using a family resilience lens, I walked into mothers' homes and Hazelwood believing that mothers *were* involved and *did care* about their child's education. *How* they were involved is what I wanted to find out. It is possible that I was predisposed to finding positive indicators of parental involvement since so much has been written about Latino/a families (and families of color) as lazy and uncaring. Similarly, I could have been predisposed to finding positive indicators from Head Start teachers. All my previous encounters and relationships with Head Start teachers had been positive and inspiring. My biography cannot be erased and it's possible that information could be filtered during the research process, but this does not compromise the integrity of this study (Lather, 2003). The goal

of this dissertation was not to confirm my worldview of Latino families, but to provide a deeper understanding and credible body of knowledge related to how low-income Latino families prepare their children for kindergarten.

One of the ways that researchers can describe and interpret their behavior and experiences within the context is to make use of memos and field notes, particularly observer comments (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and memoing. I reflected on these issues throughout data collection and analysis through my observer's comments. By writing and reading these personal thoughts and feelings about the research process, I became aware of biases and preconceived assumptions. Once I was aware of these biases, I changed the way I approached the analysis to enhance the credibility of the research. Furthermore, I practiced reflexivity through regular coding team meetings that allowed me to address my biases and perceptions with individuals who have different backgrounds and experiences.

Data Analysis

In this section, I discuss how the data were analyzed. I describe the various activities I engaged in, including transcribing, coding, visualizing the data, and memoing.

In-depth interviews

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. N-VIVO, a qualitative data management program that facilitates the coding process by classifying and sorting the data from the interviews (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013), was used to support the qualitative analysis. N-VIVO helped organize interviews, memos, and family demographic information.

Transcription of data. For English interviews, trained undergraduate students from the Ethnographic Research Lab first transcribed the data. A second student listened to the audio while reading the transcript to ensure that the first student correctly captured participants' words. Interviews conducted in Spanish had several rounds of review to ensure the accuracy of meaning and intentionality. First, Spanish interviews were transcribed by an undergraduate student whose first language was Spanish and who worked with the researchers for several years. Next, a professional translator who self-identified as Mexican, and who had experience working with low-income Latina mothers, mostly Mexican mothers, translated all Spanish interviews to English. She had full access to the audio transcription while translating to verify the transcription and later, translation. Once the translations were completed, two bilingual members of the Ethnographic Research Lab met to verify the translation. A document was created with Spanish and English versions side by side (question by question). The document allowed students to go back and forth and certify the accuracy of the translation. Next, I reviewed both sets of Spanish and English transcripts to confirm that the translations were harmonious.

While Latinos do share a common language, Latinos are not a homogenous group. People from various Latin and South American countries have various dialects and phrases that do not mean the same things across ethnicities. Taking this into account, the final step was to verify that the English transcript was conceptually equivalent and captured culturally relevant concepts and nuances. The translator, who was Mexican herself, added notes throughout the transcript explaining the meaning of certain phrases/words. Further, I reached out to colleagues, friends, and family members who were of the same background as my participants (e.g., Mexican, El Salvador, Ecuador) to ensure that regional differences were addressed.

Coding process. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend constant contact with the data by reading and rereading transcripts, field notes, and observations. Thematic analysis was performed on the translated and transcribed transcripts. All transcripts and notes from the interviews were read and re-read multiple times to identify specific categories and themes presented in the participants' responses. I began coding by using initial a priori codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) related to school readiness and parental involvement that derived from guiding questions, substantive literature, and the theoretical (resilience) framework. Next, open-coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was conducted. I coded each transcript in its entirety. With open-coding, I immersed myself in the data through line-by-line analysis for significant events, experiences, and feelings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Keywords were underlined and then written in the right-hand margin of the printed manuscript that accurately described the meaning of the text segment. The goal of the initial-line-by-line coding was to identify key phrases or terms in interviewee's words that could be used as preliminary codes. Throughout the process, I wrote memos about the substantive, conceptual, and theoretical ideas that emerged during the analysis.

A priori codes were complemented with new or emergent codes that derive from the data (Mayan, 2009; Patton, 1990; Saldaña, 2015; Snow, Lofland, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005). These generated codes served as a shorthand method to label, separate, compile, and organize the data (Charmaz, 2006). Codes were organized to create a provisional coding scheme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As I read each transcript, I revised the provisional coding scheme. Existing codes were then confirmed, revised, collapsed, or deleted as additional codes emerged. Passages that did not fit the coding scheme as well as negative cases were noted and coded.

A second coder was part of the coding process (Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this technique, another trained researcher and I reviewed the data independently and coded responses. Coding disagreements (e.g., name of code, meaning of code) were resolved through a collaborative discussion process, known as coding by consensus (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Ladany, Inman, Constantine,

& Hofheinz, 1997; Olesen, Droes, Hatton, Chico, & Schatzman, 1994; Polkinghorne, 2005; Willging, Waitzkin, & Nicdao, 2008; Williams & Morrow, 2009). Coding by consensus highlights the use of multiple researchers, the process of reaching consensus, and a systematic way of examining the representativeness of the data (Hill et al., 1997). The assumption of coding by consensus is that multiple perspectives increase the approximation of the “truth” and are more likely to be free from research biases (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The goal of consensus coding is to arrive at a consensus decision about the most appropriate code and meaning for the data. Rather than just having one person to analyze the data, coding by consensus refers to use of a primary team of multiple people (2-5) and at least one auditor (graduate advisor) to review and provide feedback on the analyses (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, 2012). My second coder and I coded the data independently from one interview (the longest and most detailed) and then reunited to discuss our ideas until a single unified version was agreed upon. The use of multiple researchers allowed for a variety of opinions and was helpful for capturing the complexity of the data (Hill et al., 1997; Hill, 2012). To achieve consensus, we relied on mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005).

A consensus method was used for several reasons. First, being able to think and talk about the complexities and ambiguities of the data with the other members allowed me to come up with more thoughtful and accurate conceptualizations. A common understanding of the data is sought while at the same time giving individual team members the right to hold different perspectives and viewpoints (Hill et al., 1997; Hill et al., 2005; Hill, 2012). Likewise, the consensus among researchers was a key method for integrating multiple perspectives (Hill, 2012). Second, because individual researchers often overlooked important concepts/ideas when going through the data independently, having multiple researchers looking over the same data had the potential to yield better decisions about the data (data quality) and reduce individual biases. Prior research found that the use of coding by consensus improved decision quality (see Sundstrom, Busby, & Bobrow, 1997). Third, because coding by consensus hinges on the researchers having differences in opinions and perspectives about what the data means, we had to question one another and remain open to broadening our perspectives about ways to interpret the data (Hill, Marquez, O’Connor, & Remus, 1994). While coding by consensus was labor intensive, it is a rigorous method that allowed us to examine the data and come to a consensus about meaning. It also reduced biases that could occur if only one person analyzed the data. Moreover, having multiple perspectives is found to lead to richer understanding of the data (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005, 1997; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Ladany et al., 1997; Polkinghorne, 2005; Willging, Waitzkin, & Nicdao, 2008; Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Data displays. One of the challenges of qualitative data was organizing and analyzing the copious amounts of data, which can be unwieldy and time-consuming to manage (Morse & Field, 1996). One mechanism that aided in data reduction, facilitating interpretation, and identifying patterns within the data was the use of data displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data displays were used by placing selected or reduced data in a condensed and organized format for examination. They represented a systematic way to manage large quantities of data and to be able to draw valid conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) note that analysis is easier when the analyst can see the data organized and compressed in one place, rather than in multiple pages of unreduced text. Relatedly, good data displays permit the researcher to absorb large amounts of information quickly (Cleveland, 1985). Data displays can take a number of forms, from matrices to graphs or charts. Data entries can also vary from short blocks of text, quotes, phrases, ratings, abbreviations, and symbolic figures (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Overall, data displays promoted the examination of data, the making of comparisons, and the identification of themes or patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Matrix displays or illustrative displays were used for each participant and each question, as well as displays comparing participants along demographic characteristics. Matrix displays are characterized by rows and columns (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and are essentially the “crossing” of two lists. Specifically, I used three kinds of data matrices. Profile matrices started with a unit of analysis, examined a series of variables (e.g., age, education, family size), and focused on how things were related to one another (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). This type of display was helpful for understanding the connection, as well as exploratory eyeballing that later led to a deeper explanation. It was also compared easily with other matrices (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Proximity matrices, on the other hand, contained data about how similar or dissimilar a set of responses were (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) (e.g., parents’ responses about what school readiness entails). Finally, conceptually ordered matrices that included rows and columns arranged to bring together items that “belong together” were also used. Verbatim quotes/passages were used to highlight themes. By bringing together relevant data in various data displays, I was better able to identify patterns and themes, similarities and differences, and make valid interpretations.

For each question asked, I compared mothers’ responses. I similarly compared teachers’ responses to each question. I then wrote a summary memo for each question that described emergent themes, similarities and differences, and emerging interpretations. As ideas, themes, and interpretations emerged throughout the analysis process, I used data displays to compare parent responses based on demographic characteristics such as age, number of children, single- or two-parent household, employment, etc. For teachers, I also made comparisons based on age,

number of years teaching, training background, etc. Below is an example of each of the matrixes I used:

Table 4. *Profile Matrix, Parents' Demographic*

Parent (Initials)	Age	Education	Family Size	Marital Status
AB				
CD				
EF				

Table 5. *Proximity Matrix*

Parent (Initials)	Parents' individual response to: What does school readiness mean to you?
AB	
CD	
EF	

Table 6. *Conceptually-ordered Matrix (Parents' beliefs and practices)*

Parent (Initials)	Skills and abilities needed for a child to learn before kindergarten	What are some of the things you are doing to help your Child get ready for kindergarten?	What are other people doing to help your child for kindergarten?
AB			
CD			
EF			

Photo Elicitation

For each set of photographs, descriptive data displays were prepared that identified the location, activity, and people in each photo. More specifically, each parent had her own data display containing each picture they took (See Table 7). Mandleco (2013) stated, “during the sorting; it is helpful to have the interview transcripts available so the image can be identified, the reason the photograph was taken noted, and what that photograph means to the participant” (p. 80). The photo elicitation interviews were then analyzed using the codes developed from the in-depth interviews, as well as new emergent codes. The photo and data interview were organized thematically, and comparisons were made among families (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data from each photo elicitation interview was also compared to data from the in-depth interviews. To ensure data quality, a second team member also coded and reviewed the photo data.

Table 7. *Photo Data Display*

Photo #	Photo	Response	Who, what, where, why	Comments
#				

Observational Notes

Interviews and photographs were reviewed and compared with my observational notes to further understand participants' accounts, which led to more detailed interpretations. To supplement caregivers' description of school readiness and parental involvement in the interviews and photographs, observational notes gathered by me provide another source of data to

supplement participants' accounts. Observation notes were coded and organized based on four domains: context, people, process, and meaning:

- **Context:** what is the nature of the setting in which activities occur? What is the relationship between the setting and people's activities, behaviors, and how they view the world?
- **People:** Who/what are the relevant individuals, participants, social groupings? What are the characteristics of individual, participants, and social groupings? What roles do individuals, social groupings play? What is the nature of interactions/relationships among individuals, participants, and social groupings?
- **Process:** What is happening? What kinds of events, activities are at issue? How are the events related to each other? What is the timing, sequencing, and structuring of events? What are people doing? What are they trying to accomplish?
- **Meaning:** How do members talk about, characterize and understand what is going on? How do people define themes, others, and their settings?

Once observational notes were organized, data from the photographs and data interviews were compared to explore, describe, and explain the meaning of school readiness and parental involvement.

Analytic memos. Throughout the stages of analysis, detailed analytic memos were written to further develop an understanding and interpretations of the data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Charmaz, 2006, 2014). The goal of these memos was to reflect on emerging themes and ideas and present key content of a code and document theoretical ideas. Charmaz (2014) noted that memo writing is a "pivotal" step between data collection and drafting of papers since it prompts researchers to analyze the data and code early in the research process (p. 162). Further, "memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons, and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue," enabling the researchers' standpoints and assumptions to become visible. More importantly, memo writing gave me space to become actively engaged with the data, a place to develop ideas, fine-tune subsequent data-gathering material, and to engage in critical reflexivity (Charmaz, 2014). Overall, memo writing helped me move analysis to a deeper level of understanding, as well as to practice and maintain reflexivity.

Writing memos began with elemental memos where I wrote on particular topics or other areas of interest. For each memo, I provided a definition, although a precise definition was not always available at that point, followed by key characteristics. I then described the specific conditions under which the category worked. Next, I sorted each memo by putting together

memos that illuminated the same category to distinguish from other categories. Finally, I integrated memos by noting relationships between categories/themes.

Storing and Organizing Data

Throughout the entire study, all documents, protocols memos, transcripts, data displays, field notes, and physical documents were kept in an organized computer file and/or designated and locked cabinet. Everything was stored for easy retrieval. Digital and audiotaped interviews were also stored in an organized computer file for safekeeping. All information regarding participant interactions, emerging data, coding schedule, and the development of themes was fully documented and saved in organized computer files. All electronic data is also saved in a password secure computer where only researchers who are part of the IRB have access to the data. Additionally, Nvivo, a computer software program designed specifically for qualitative research, was used in this study to systematically organize, sort, and code data for analysis. It also served as a central location to write memos and to visually depict data analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Trustworthiness of Data

Within qualitative research, researchers have developed multiple ways to assess the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative data (Creswell, 2007; Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Shenton, 2004; Taylor et al., 2015). Trustworthiness is the degree to which the findings are supported by evidence and can be trusted as accurate reflections of participants' beliefs and experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, in their widely cited article, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the differences between qualitative and quantitative studies and the different ways that data quality is assessed. The authors used the concept of trustworthiness to suggest four factors in establishing trustworthiness from quantitative research:

- a) Credibility (comparable to internal validity)
- b) Transferability (comparable to external validity/generalizability)
- c) Dependability (comparable to reliability)
- d) Confirmability (comparable to objectivity)

Credibility refers to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings. Techniques for operationalizing credibility included prolonged engagement (rapport), triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks.

Transferability denotes how applicable or generalizable one's research findings are to another setting or group. For example, how comparable are the researchers' findings to other studies. Providing thick and rich description can be used to compare research findings and to accomplish transferability.

Dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time and that the study could be repeated. To address dependability, the process within the study should be reported in great detail, enabling another researcher to repeat the work. Dependability can be established by providing an audit trail, or dense description of the research design and its implementation (describing what was planned and executed), such as methods from memos, field notes, methodological logs, labeling system, and manual of procedure (operational detail of data gathering).

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality of the data and the extent to which the respondents shape the findings of a study rather than researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Techniques for responding to confirmability included the examination of research findings by providing a chronological narrative of initial coding efforts, analytic activities, and triangulation to reduce the effect of investigator bias. Progressive subjectivity where the researcher admits his or her predispositions to the study is another technique. Further, recognition of shortcomings in the study's methods and their potential effects should also be part of the confirmability audit trail. Other researchers have also identified important strategies to assess and promote the quality of qualitative data, including the development of an appropriate protocol, probing, and memoing that aid in credibility and reliability of qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Taylor & Bodgan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015).

Trustworthiness was constantly considered throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Thus, several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness were used to check the credibility of the data and minimize distortive effects (Charmaz, 2006; Cresswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lather, 2003; Patton, 1990). Cresswell (2007) suggested that qualitative studies include at least *two validation strategies* used to strengthen data quality. However, the more approaches used in verifying analyses, the more confident researchers are in deciding the study's interpretations, and findings are trustworthy (Healy & Perry, 2000). The following strategies were used to strengthen this study's trustworthiness.

Culturally relevant protocol. This study used a culturally relevant protocol. The protocol for Latino/a families was pilot tested with Latina mothers of preschoolers to "ensure that the appropriate questions were asked, and the research objectives were met" (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 80).

Group discussion. Group discussions and team meetings, including the PI, and members of the research team, and coding by consensus informed analyses and group coding and served as a reliability check (cf. Hill et al., 2005; Ispa & Halgunseth, 2004).

Negative cases. Negative cases were also sought out to fine tune and expand interpretations. Negative cases or deviant cases (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015) were important to seek because they allowed me to develop an understanding of why this is so. It also aided in understanding the limits of the research data (Hill et al., 2005; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015).

Probing. During the interview, probing, a general strategy of ensuring effective qualitative interviewing was utilized. Probing can be described as asking open-ended questions that delve into details and specific descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives (Taylor et al., 2015). Throughout the interview, probing was used on topics that the participant had raised, by asking specific questions that encouraged the participant to provide further information, and asking for clarification of the participant's words. The following types of probes were used in this study: continuation probes, elaboration probes, attention probes, clarification probe, slant probes, and steering probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Each probe used is described below.

A continuation probe was used to encourage the interviewee to keep talking on the present subject. Examples of continuation probes included: "*Mmm hmm. So...*" or "*Then what?*" Elaboration probes asked for more detail or explanation of a particular concept or theme that I selected from what the interviewee had said. Elaboration probes included: "*Could you give me an example?*" Or "*Can you tell me more about that?*" The next type of probe used was an attention probe. An attention probe lets the interviewee know that I am listening carefully and encouraged participants to elaborate. An example of an attention probe comprised of: "*That is interesting.*" Clarification probes asked the interviewee to explain something that I simply did not follow. An example of a clarification probe could be: "*I'm afraid I didn't follow. Can you say that again please?*" To learn the order of events, sequence probes were used (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Slant probes helped me determine the lenses through which participants' eyes and helped me interpret their words. One might ask: "*How does that (topic) make you feel?*" A final probed used throughout each interview included steering probes. When a conversation goes off track, a steering probe was needed to lead the participant back on the intended bath .A simple way to do that was to say, "*Sorry, I distracted you with that questions. You were talking about....*"

In addition to probing, rephrasing what the participant said, asking for confirmation, asking participants to provide what he/she meant, and letting the informant know when something was unclear were used. These techniques allowed for a clearer picture of the people, places, experiences, and feelings in participants' lives (Taylor et al., 2015).

Particularly for Spanish interviews, probing was key to making sure that meaning was understood. While we shared the same native language (Spanish), it was not always certain that we shared the same ethnicity/background (I only shared ethnicity/background with two mothers who were Ecuadorian). For example, certain sayings and phrases in Mexico mean something completely different in Ecuador. Therefore, probing and making sure what participants mean was key to understanding their experiences and perspectives.

Member checks. Member checking was also used (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015). Member checking is a technique to confirm the interpretations with some or all study participants (Hill et al., 2005; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998;). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that member checks are “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p.314). One way of member checking, aside from directly asking participants was *question answer validity*. Question answer validity is when researchers during an interview engage in real-time paraphrasing of interviewee’s comments to confirm or clarify intended meaning (Hill et al., 2005; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Taylor et al., 2015). For example, if inconsistent or vague information were identified throughout the interview, participants were asked to elaborate on previous comments or ideas. Taylor and colleagues (2015) proposed that often, these lies and deceptions turn out to be misunderstandings. Overall, this was critical during the data-gathering phase since I was able to interpret the comments being made by participants correctly.

Peer debriefing. Another mechanism used to manage data included peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is defined as having a researcher or someone familiar with the phenomena being studied review and provide critical and extensive feedback on process, descriptions, analyses, and interpretation of the study’s results (Bratlinger et al., 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing supported the credibility of the data and contributed to the overall trustworthiness of my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing has also been found to be an effective technique for understanding and discovering possible biases and errors in the data gathering process and analysis. Similarly, peer debriefing contributed to confirming that the findings and the interpretations of the study are worthy, honest, and believable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to providing methodological support, peer debriefing also helped me cope with the stress that often accompanies field work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Peer debriefing with close colleagues involved the discussion of themes, ideas, conceptualizations, and research application and was used to clarify that aim of my study findings. My debriefing colleague(s) (i.e., committee members) had expertise in the method and subject area. They were also objective and rigorous in his/her feedback (Hill et al., 2005; Roller

& Lavrakas, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Feedback was provided orally and in written forms and covered all aspects of the study.

Use of direct quotes. To further ensure integrity and trustworthiness of the data, findings are presented using direct quotes in English (and Spanish when applicable), which exemplified the interpretations presented by the researcher. Quotes revealed respondents' depth of emotions, the ways they organized their world, their thoughts about what was happening, as well as their experiences and perceptions (Patton, 1990). I grouped participants' responses by categories (or themes) using quotes as brief examples (see Williams & Morrow, 2009). This organization allowed for cross-analysis of the findings by presenting categories, and the frequency of the categories within the sample. Findings from this study emphasized the sample as a whole and used quotes as highlights and exemplars that show clarity in, and a detailed description of the connection between the interpretation of the data and the participant's unique and individual contribution. Further, quotes presented were selected based on their ability to exemplify an intended concept (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).

Analytic memos. As previously discussed, I used memos throughout the analysis process. They were used to develop more abstract levels of analysis, as well as to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data and to document the process and progress of analysis systematically.

Triangulation. Triangulation increased the study's credibility and involved using multiple sources of information and/or methods to develop a more comprehensive and credible account of the participants' views and perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980). Multiple sources of information were used for this study. Information was triangulated from parents and teachers, and participant observation conversations with staff and directors. Multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, photographs, and observational data were also used and compared. Throughout the analysis, family resilience theory was used as a sensitizing lens to analyze and interpret the data. As Guba (1981) stated, the goal of triangulation is to make sure "an inquirer's predilections are tested as strenuously as possible" (p. 85). With the use of triangulation, data was woven together to create a more nuanced view of mothers' and teachers' beliefs and practices regarding school readiness and parental involvement. All of the data were considered as parts of a larger puzzle, which constituted this study.

Audit trail. Maintaining an audit trail is another way to address issues of dependability and confirmability simultaneously (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of an audit trail is to make it possible for an external auditor to examine the process of how the data was collected and analyzed, and interpretations made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This strategy involved another researcher being able to clearly follow the steps I used and examined data processes, findings and

interpretations. Dependability is related to the consistency of findings; that is, whether the findings were consistent and reproducible. In other words, it serves as *proof* that it has been carried out as claimed. Credibility was viewed through neutrality, which refers to the degree to which the findings represented the participants' experiences and not of the researchers' biases, perspectives, and prejudices (Guba, 1981).

Data Saturation

Data saturation generally refers to the point in data collection and analysis when no additional information, properties, or dimensions can be added to complete or advance the theoretical understanding that has been developed (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Green & Thorogood, 2004). In other words, data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate a study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Walker, 2012), when the ability to obtain additional information has been attained (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), or when there are no more surprises or no more emergent patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Taylor et al., 2015), and when further coding is no longer feasible (Guest et al., 2006). Bernard (2012) stated that the number of interviews needed for a qualitative study to reach data saturation was a number he could not quantify, but that the researcher takes what he/she can get. However, Guest and colleagues (2006) found that data saturation occurred by the 12th interview. After 12 interviews, they created 92% of their total number of codes developed for all 30 of their Ghanaian transcripts and 88% of the total number of codes developed across the two countries (Ghana and Nigeria) and sixty interviews. A possible reason the authors gave for reaching saturation after 12 interviews related to sample homogeneity. With purposive sampling, participants are by definition chosen according to some common criteria. The authors suggest that the more similar participants in a sample are in their experiences, the sooner that saturation is reached. In this study, 17 (five more than Guest et al., [2006] suggested for data saturation) participants were homogenous in the sense that they were Latina mothers of preschool-aged children attending Hazelwood.

Achieving theoretical saturation is difficult and time-consuming. In fact, Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that theoretical saturation can never be fully achieved. Analytic exercises such as the use of data displays, member checking, memoing, and constant comparison among mothers' accounts via in-depth interviews, observations, and photo-elicitation interviews were done to ensure data saturation. For example, I used a semi-structured interview protocol, which allowed for each participant to be asked the same questions. Throughout the interviews, I noticed that mothers were saying the same things regarding their beliefs and practices about school readiness and parental involvement. When coding, I coded each question across all participants

and began to see common themes. The use of data displays also assisted in reaching data saturation, as I was able to clearly see themes across questions. However, several researchers have reported, that no new significant categories emerge depends on time and resource constraints, the number of texts and their complexity, experience of the researchers, and number of researchers reviewing the data (Guest et al., 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Chapter 4: The Meanings of School Readiness

Research suggests that school readiness is socially constructed across multiple contexts. School readiness domains are explored first, followed by mothers' and preschool teachers' meanings of school readiness. The meanings of school reading among mothers and preschool teachers are divided into two sections. A discussion of the similarities and differences between mothers and preschool teachers' meanings of school readiness ends this chapter.

School Readiness Domains

Although there is no exact definition of what constitutes school readiness, there is an agreement that school readiness is a multidimensional and developmental construct including cognitive skills, social-emotional/behavioral development, physical development, and health (Graue, 2003). There is general consensus, however, that school readiness is not only dependent upon the qualities that children bring to the learning experience, but also dependent upon the contexts in which learning occurs—contexts which include the home and school environments as well as the larger community (Hair, Halle, Terry-Humen, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006). Because definitions of school readiness and related skills were multifaceted and multidimensional, I drew upon a number of descriptors of school readiness to organize these data (Barbarin et al., 2008; Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Hair et al., 2006; Halle & Churchill, 2016; McDermott, Leigh, & Perry, 2002; NGEF, 1991; Office of Head Start, 2017; Sabol & Pianta, 2017; Sparks & Reese, 2013). The following domains were used in this study: (a) nominal knowledge; (b) literacy/language, which entailed emergent writing, emergent reading, and language; (c) socio-emotional development; (d) approaches to learning; (e) general knowledge; (f) independence; and (g) motor development and physical well-being.

Mothers' Meaning of School Readiness

This first section explored mother's view and understanding of school readiness. The following questions guided this section:

1. If someone asked you to define school readiness, how would you define it?
2. How would you describe a child who is ready for school? A child who is not ready?
3. What would you say are the skills and abilities that are most important for your child to learn before starting kindergarten?

Mothers identified key elements of school readiness that included: a) nominal knowledge; (b) emergent writing; (c) emergent reading; (d) socio-emotional development; (e) approaches to learning; (f) general knowledge; (g) independence (self-care); and (h) motor development and personal well-being (See Table 8).

Table 8. *Elements of School Readiness (N = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Language/Early Literacy							MD/PW	Total
	Nominal knowledge	Emergent writing	Emergent reading	Socio- Emotional	App. to learning	General knowledge	Independence		
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X	X	X	X				5
Alexa (David)	X	X	X	X	X				5
Alicia (Manny)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Amanda (Jax)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Delia (Josue)	X	X	X			X			4
Fabiola (Javier)	X	X	X	X	X	X			6
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X			X			4
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X	X	X		X		X	6
Irene (Kayla)	X	X	X	X					4
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Kristina (Kevin)	X	X	X	X					4
Laura (Isa)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Maribel (Diana)	X	X	X	X		X		X	6
Marisol (Jacob)	X			X	X	X	X	X	6
Natalia (Nina)	X	X	X	X	X		X		6
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X	X	X	X				5
Total	17	16	16	15	11	11	7	5	98

Notes. MS/PM= Motor Development & Personal Well-Being

Nominal Knowledge/General Knowledge

Nominal knowledge refers to the possession of information that makes it possible to name or label objects in the environment. It includes responses such as knowing the names of letters, colors, numbers up to 10, numbers greater than 10, and shapes (Barbarin et al., 2008). All 17 mothers mentioned nominal knowledge as an important school readiness skill (See Table 9). Within nominal knowledge, three specific categories emerged: numbers (n = 16), colors (n = 10), and shapes (n = 4).

Table 9. *Nominal Skills (N = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Numbers	Colors	Shapes	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X	X	3
Alexa (David)	X	X	X	3
Alicia (Manny)	X			1
Amanda (Jax)	X			1
Delia (Josue)	X	X		2
Fabiola (Javier)	X	X		2
Flor (Lucia)	X			1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X			1
Irene (Kayla)	X			1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X		2
Kristina (Kevin)	X			1
Laura (Isa)	X	X		2
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X	X	3
Maribel (Diana)	X			1
Marisol (Jacob)		X		1
Natalia (Nina)	X	X		2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X		2
Total	16	10	3	29

Numbers. Almost all mothers (n = 16) believed that school readiness meant children knowing their numbers. For example, Marcela told us that “if children don’t know their numbers, then they are not ready.” Alicia reported that children should know “the basics, like your numbers.” For some mothers, it wasn’t enough that preschoolers “knew their numbers.” They also felt, as Flor did, that children should be able to “recognize some numbers...pronounce some numbers.” “Distinguishing your numbers” was a skill that Paula felt was important for children to know. Likewise, Adriana believed that children should be “practicing like their numbers” before starting kindergarten.

Some mothers were more specific and provided a range of numbers that children should know before the first day of kindergarten. The range was between 1 and 100. Two mothers, Delia and Alexa, said that children should know “numbers between 1-100.” Fabiola could not remember if her son knew the alphabet but was confident that Javier “knows the numbers 1-20 ... that’s important.” Although Jax “knew how to count to 12,” Amanda shared that he can “also mention other numbers, but not in order.” Three mothers gave a range of 1-10. For Laura,

children “knowing the numbers, at least 1 to 10” was an important skill they needed to learn before starting kindergarten. Similarly, Kristina reported that “children should identify numbers and count from 1-10” in both English and Spanish.

In addition to knowing their numbers, two mothers felt that “knowing how to add” was an important school readiness skill as well. When asked what Alma needed to learn before kindergarten, Jocelyn replied: “Math and writing ... both. I think Alma needs both, but I think the easiest thing is to learn how to add.” In a similar sense, Kristina was doing “kindergarten stuff ... like adding” with her son Kevin.

Colors. Ten mothers mentioned that children were ready for school if they “knew their colors.” For example, Alexa believed that children needed to “recognize their colors before going to kindergarten.” Fabiola shared with us that Javier “knows his colors.” Similarly, Jocelyn said that Alma “knows all the colors,” and Marcela described a child who was not ready if “they didn’t know their colors.” In her understanding of school readiness, Natalie included children’s “knowledge of the colors,” while Paulina said that children are ready for kindergarten if they know “how to distinguish the colors.” Adriana also shared with us that children should be “practicing their colors” as they prepare for kindergarten.

Shapes. Three mothers mentioned that children were ready for kindergarten when they knew or recognized their shapes. Adriana shared that “all the things you do in kindergarten are important, including shapes. ... Lesley knows her shapes.” Alexa, David’s mother believed that children were ready for kindergarten when they could “recognize their shapes,” and Marcela described a child who was not ready as someone who “doesn’t know his shapes.”

Language/Early Literacy

Emergent or early literacy falls under the broad area of language (NGEP, 1991). Within this category, emergent writing and reading developed. Emergent literacy is composed of skills that are recognized as developmental precursors to reading and writing (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). These skills are thought to develop in an interwoven manner and include phonological awareness, concepts about print, letter knowledge, and emergent writing (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). The literature suggested that the emergent literacy skills children bring to kindergarten predict future reading and writing success and academic success (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009).

Emergent writing. Seventeen mothers believed that emergent writing skills were essential for school readiness success. Included in this cluster were the following four items: writes (n = 16); writes own name (n = 15); draws (n = 3); spells (n = 2); and traces (n = 1) (See Table 10).

Table 10. *Emergent Writing (n = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Writes	Writes own name	Drawing ⁷	Spelling ⁸	Traces	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X				2
Alexa (David)	X	X				2
Alicia (Manny)	X	X				2
Amanda (Jax)	X	X				2
Delia (Josue)	X	X	X			3
Fabiola (Javier)	X					1
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X			3
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X	X			3
Irene (Kayla)	X	X				2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X				2
Kristina (Kevin)	X				X	2
Laura (Isa)	X	X				2
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X		X		3
Maribel (Diana)	X	X				2
Marisol (Jacob)		X				1
Natalia (Nina)	X	X				2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X		X		3
Total	16	15	3	2	1	37

Writes. Sixteen mothers reported that “knowing how to write” was an important school readiness skill that children had to learn before starting kindergarten. For example, Irene mentioned that the “only thing Kayla needs to learn is to write her name ... to put letters together and write before kindergarten.” Flor shared with us that it was “important for Lucia to know how to write. That’s also important before she starts kindergarten.” Delia would “love for Josue to know how to write,” a sentiment shared by several other mothers. While Kristina reported that it was important for Kevin to “know how to write” before starting kindergarten,” she also emphasized the importance of Kevin and other children who were in the process of transitioning to also “learn how to write their letters.” Paulina discussed that she would like to see Hugo “Write more words, but more than anything else write complete phrases.”

Jocelyn was pleased that Alma knew how to write letters, but felt they weren’t very clear: “Alma doesn’t write letters clearly yet ... people cannot understand her writing. For example, she makes the “E” in a worm shape, she doesn’t write it clearly, but her “A, X, L” are good, but the “E” is confusing!” While all mothers believed that knowing how to write was an important school readiness skill, Amanda felt that writing would help Jax to not feel bad around his peers: It’s super important because that way he will not feel like a child, sometimes when you don’t know how to do certain things you feel less than your peers. He is going to feel bad, he will not feel good. Because he will see that the other kids are writing and he is not. He will feel bad, of

⁷ Children’s writing develops from scribbles and symbols to using letters and words to represent meaning (Schickedanz & Casbergue, 2009), and there is a strong connection between drawing and emergent writing (Mackenzie, 2011).

⁸ Spelling abilities have been linked to letter-writing skills (Puranik, Lonigan, & Kim, 2011), and pre-conventional spelling among young children may be beneficial to learning how to read (Ehri, 1989).

course, it's logic. His self-esteem is. ... It gets low, and it happens more among us, Latinos. That's how I feel.

Unlike the rest of the mothers, who believed that writing was an important skill that children needed to acquire *before* starting kindergarten and a sign that children were ready for school, Marisol felt otherwise. When probed on whether a child who didn't know how to write signified that they were not ready for school, Marisol replied: "No, that's why children ... Jacob, that's why he'll be going to school, to learn." For her, kindergarten was the place where Jacob would learn how to write.

Writes own name. Fifteen mothers focused on the importance of their child being able to write their name, while others went a step further and felt it was important for children to write their full name, first and last.

When asked what skills and abilities were important for children to acquire before kindergarten, Maribel, Diana's mother, shared: "Maybe that they know how to write their name." Alicia proudly stated: "Manny knows how to write his name already." Unlike Manny, Laura, who also believed it was important for children to learn to write their name, shared that "Isa she needs to know how to write her name. I don't think she can write it or tell me the name of the letters. I don't think so. Not yet."

Although mothers reported that writing their name was an important school readiness skill, many mentioned that their children were struggling. For example, Amanda told us that "It's important for Jax to enter kindergarten knowing how to write his first name properly ... but he writes it wrong. He forgets and puts the "J" like this [draws an upside 'J' on a napkin]." Irene shared a similar story about Kayla: "Yes, she can do it [write her name], but she doesn't do it properly. She tries, but it's always twisted." For Jocelyn, she was proud that Alma knew "how to write her name" but laughed that she was the only one able to understand it: "She knows how to write her name ... She writes her name and I can understand it, but if someone else tries to read it, it is impossible [laughs]!" Paulina described a similar problem with Hugo's name writing ability: "He sometimes writes it right, but we're still stuck on it ... He writes his name backwards, and it doesn't matter that I tell him that is not in that way, he keeps writing it wrong."

Several mothers also mentioned the importance of children writing their full name, first and last. Marisol told us: "Daniel knows how to do his first name, but I would like to see him do his last name as well." Flor also wanted Lucia to write her full name: "I want Lucia to write her name more than anything ... write her name, first and last." Similarly to Marisol and Flor, Adriana wanted Lesley to learn how to "Write her full name, first and last. Both." Remembering that her older son, Jonathan, used to complain that his name was too long to write, Adriana went

with a shorter name for her daughter, giving her no excuse not to be able to write her full name: “I felt so bad for Jonathan. He’s like, ‘my name is too long!’” Alexa also told us that for David “not to suffer, or be behind”, she believed it was important for David to “Learn how to write his full name. ... he writes his name, he’s working on his last name.”

Mothers in general reported that learning how to write their name was an important school readiness skill, except for Fabiola. When probed on whether learning to write their name was an important skill, Fabiola replied: “No, I don’t think it’s very important that Javier writes his name because I think that he will learn those things there [kindergarten].”

Drawing. Three mothers felt that for a child to be ready for school, they needed to “know how to draw.” For example, when asked what school readiness meant to Josue’s mother Delia, she replied, “A child who knows how to draw.” Flor’s account was comparable: “You know a child is ready when they can draw.” Drawing and coloring were an important skill for Ingrid, who compared Nayeli’s “Ok drawings” to her goddaughters’: “I have a goddaughter and she amazes me because she knows how to draw and color her drawings very nice. ... Nayeli doesn’t have a lot of practice and never says, ‘I am going to draw, mommy.’”

Spelling. In their definitions of school readiness, two mothers included knowing how to spell. Marcela believed that children like her son Daniel should “know how to spell like three-letter words” before starting kindergarten. Paulina wasn’t very concerned with Hugo spelling words just yet, but did share with us that she wanted Hugo “more than anything to spell...spell his name.”

Tracing. One mother, Kristina, reported that school readiness meant knowing how to trace. She believed it was important for children, including her son Kevin, to “practice their letters by tracing.”

Emergent reading. Sixteen mothers reported that emergent reading skills were important for school readiness success. Code-related skills that lead to an understanding of print include phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, and print recognition and meaning (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001; Sparks & Reese, 2013). Included in this cluster were the following three items: Alphabet mastery (n = 16); child reading (n = 10); and phonics (n = 1) (See Table 11).

Table 11. *Emergent Reading (n = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Alphabet Mastery	Child reading	Phonics	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X		2
Alexa (David)	X			1
Alicia (Manny)	X			1
Amanda (Jax)	X	X		2
Delia (Josue)	X	X		2
Fabiola (Javier)	X			1
Flor (Lucia)	X			1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X		2
Irene (Kayla)	X		X	2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Kristina (Kevin)	X	X		2
Laura (Isa)	X	X		2
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X		2
Maribel (Diana)	X	X		2
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X		2
Natalia (Nina)	X	X		2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X		2
Total	17	11	1	29

Alphabet mastery. Seventeen participants reported that knowing the alphabet was an important school readiness skill. Mastery of the alphabet represented the most emergent reading skill that mothers associated with school readiness. For example, Adriana’s and Marisol’s definition of school readiness included alphabet knowledge: “Like practicing their ABCs.” Flor told us that a child is ready for school when they “know some letters.” Laura went a step further than Adriana and Flor and included in her definition of school readiness: “Knows the names of the letters, identifies the letters.” When asked what school readiness meant to Maribel, she told us: “School readiness is like the letters, sometimes they don’t know all the alphabet but know how to distinguish the letters.” Although Jax was having “problems with the alphabet, a little bit,” Amanda still felt it was important that “Jax know the alphabet, of course. Knowing the alphabet improves his reading.” When asked what skills were most important for Javier to know before going to kindergarten, Fabiola told us: “The alphabet. But I don’t remember if he knows the alphabet, I think so, but I am not sure.” Alma’s mother Jocelyn proudly said, “Children need to know the alphabet, Alma knows her alphabet.” Kristina alluded that it’s important for children to know the alphabet in both languages, Spanish and English: “Kevin knows his ABCs, but only knows the letters in Spanish, not English.”

Child reading. Eleven mothers mentioned how reading was an important school readiness skill. Some mothers talked about the importance of reading, while others wanted their children to start learning how to read before kindergarten.

Amanda believed it was important for Jax to start reading: “I want Jax to read, yes, of course. ... I would like that he read.” Delia’s account was similar: “I would love for Josue to be

able to read!” Other mothers, including Kevin’s mother Kristina, felt it was important for children “To know how to read.” Marisol, Jacob’s mother alluded that reading was also an important skill to know: “For them to know how to read ...to hold a book correctly.” While Maribel felt that children should be able “to read,” she took it a step further. For children who are unable to read just yet, she believed they should still be able to “interpret what is happening [in a book].” For Natalia, it wasn’t just enough that children “know how to read,” but also that they “like to read.” Marcela’s son Daniel already knew how to read, but she wanted “Daniel to read a little bit more.” Paulina shared with us that Hugo “has started reading,” but that he still needs to learn how to “read complete phrases.”

Phonics. One mother, Irene, believed that “knowing the sounds of letters” was an important school readiness skill for Kayla and other children transiting to kindergarten. For example, Irene reported that “Children should know how to pronounce the alphabet.”

Socio-Emotional Development

Socio-emotional development, social competence, or social behavior development is defined in early childhood literature as the degree to which children are effective in their social interactions with others (Barbarin et al., 2008; Halle & Churchill, 2016). Children’s social-emotional adjustment to preschool classroom demands has been demonstrated to contribute significantly to children’s early school success. Fifteen mothers reported that socio-emotional development was an important school readiness skill. This cluster included the following seven items: Gets along with others (including peers and teachers) (n = 11); adjusts to kindergarten setting (n = 10); child is independent (n = 7); regulates emotions (n = 5); communicates with teachers (n = 4); good manners (n = 3); and turn-taking (n = 1) (See Table 12).

Table 12. *Socio-Emotional Development (n = 15)*

Parent (Target Child)	GALWO	Adjusts to kindergarten setting	Child is independent	Regulates emotions	Communicates with teachers	Good manners ⁹	Turn taking	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X						2
Alexa (David)	X	X			X	X		4
Alicia (Manny)		X	X	X				3
Amanda (Jax)	X	X		X		X		4
Fabiola (Javier)	X	X			X			3
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X						2
Irene (Kayla)		X	X					2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		X	X	X			4
Kristina (Kevin)	X							1
Laura (Isa)		X	X	X				3
Marcela (Daniel)				X		X		2
Maribel (Diana)	X							1
Marisol (Jacob)	X		X		X		X	4
Natalia (Nina)	X	X	X					3
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X	X					3
Total	11	10	7	5	4	3	1	41

Notes. GALWO= Gets along with others

⁹ Learn good manners derives from Barbarin et al., 2008 where he includes it as a component of social competence, or the ability of a child to develop positive relations with peers and adult caregivers.

Gets along with others. Eleven mothers believed that engaging in and maintaining positive interactions and relationships with peers and teachers was an important school readiness skill that children needed to know to be ready for school. Maribel described that children would have the opportunity to engage more with other kids once they entered kindergarten:

It's important for them to socialize because in kindergarten there are a lot of different kids, more than in the daycare. I imagine that if they know how to socialize, it is easier for them to make new friends and interact.

Knowing how to make friends was not always easy for preschooler Nayeli. Ingrid, who described as Nayeli as "shy," felt that she needed to learn how to make more friends: "She needs time to talk with the kids, but she doesn't talk to some of them. I ask her to play with them, and she refuses. ... she doesn't know how to make friends."

In addition to making friends, mothers felt it was important for children to also know how to be around other children and "learn how to play in a group." When asked how she knows Alma is ready for school, Jocelyn replied, "Because she can be around other kids." For Kristina, how to interact with others was a balancing act that children needed to learn: "I've known kids that they either can't socialize or they are too aggressive when they are socializing because other children don't want to be friends." Although she does not consider herself to be aggressive, she did teach Kevin not to be bullied: "I always teach him, the first hit you tell them to stop, if they don't stop, you tell them the second time to stop it again. If they don't stop that's it, you are hitting them back."

Socializing did not only mean getting along with other children. For Kristina, socializing also meant being able to have "normal conversations" with other people: That is like my number one thing, because I know kids nowadays that are all day attached to the iPads, videogames and they can't have normal conversations, they just want to talk about these games, want to show you these games.... You ask them "how was your day?" and they answer "I don't know." Paulina's account was comparable:

Now kids are not as social, they are in the virtual world. They focus on other things like videogames and that stuff. I feel that it's bad for kids because it pulls them back instead of helping them to socialize.

For Paulina, socializing children was a mother's job: "You need to let them socialize with other kids, and if you don't do it that's a problem. When they go to kindergarten there will be problems." Encouraging Hugo and reminding him that he had friends was one of the ways that Paulina made sure that Hugo continued to socialize, but more importantly, that he continued to like school:

We need to motivate kids to go to school. They need to know that X friend is waiting. For example, he always tells me, "Mommy, my friend X played with me, or my friend Y did this" and I say, "That's great!"

Not only was it important for children to "make friends" and "learn to get along with people," but they also needed also engage with teachers. Amanda told us: "It's very important for children to how to have a good relationship with teachers." Alexa's reason for the importance of children having a good relationship with their teacher was that teachers would be more likely to help them when faced with a problem: "You might not understand a concept, but if you ask a teacher with an attitude, they're less likely to want to help you than if you go there with a good attitude, and try to get help."

Natalie incorporated both peers and teachers into her response when describing a child who was not ready:

When they don't know how to interact with others, but if they are ready ... they can stay with classmates and teachers in a class. Nina is not afraid of her classmates or to be a lot of time in the group or with her teacher.

Adjusting to kindergarten setting. Ten parents mentioned that adjusting to the new kindergarten setting via awareness of the new responsibilities and expectations that kindergarten brought, as well as adapting to new environments, peers, and teachers, were important for children to know before they transitioned to kindergarten.

For these three mothers of preschool-aged boys, it was important that they quickly learn that once they begin kindergarten, they could no longer just come home and play. They now had new responsibilities and expectations to meet. For example, Amanda made it clear that "kindergarten is a new stage" for Jax and that he will have responsibilities that will only be his: "I will help him, but it will be on him to fulfill it... So he can be a responsible kid. It's very important." Being aware that children will now have new responsibilities was something that Paulina also felt was important for children to know, particularly when it came to doing homework: "To be responsible, because once you go to kindergarten they give you homework and you have to be responsible for yourself." Alexa's account was comparable: "David's expectations are going to change. Responsibilities are going to change.... getting home and playin' on his iPad or whatever it is, is not a choice anymore, like you're gonna' have to do your homework first and then play."

Another expectation that mothers reported as being important for children to be aware of was that they now had to go to school every day. For Laura, this was especially salient since she sometimes allowed Isa to stay at home on her day off:

I feel that she has to understand that kindergarten is different, she has to attend ... sometimes she doesn't want to go to school on Mondays because that's the day I am off work. Sometimes we let her stay ... But kindergarten is different, and she has to be more responsible, she has to know that she has to attend every day.

Reminding preschoolers that they now had to go to school every day did not only occur in households where the preschoolers were girls. Hugo's mother Paulina reported that mothers also had to play their part: "You can't spoil them like when they were in daycare, or send them one day and not send them the next day...a mother in kindergarten is different."

Knowing that they have to wake up earlier for kindergarten was another skill that children would need to learn. At Hazelwood, Nayeli's schedule was from 9-3, but she often arrived closer to 10 AM. For Ingrid, a child who knows that kindergarten expects them to come in earlier is a child who is ready:

I wake them [Nayeli and her younger brother] up and they don't want to get up! It's 8:00 am, then at 8:10 am I finally can get them out of bed, and the problem is that when they go to real kindergarten, they will have to wake up earlier than they do now.

Irene shared that it was going to be "very difficult" for her daughter Kayla to move to go to kindergarten because the daycare is the only place she knows: "She already spent five years at the daycare, with the same teachers, she knows the whole staff ... It'll be difficult to start something new. ... She'll feel strange." Natalie's account was similar to Irene's: "Children are not ready for school when they are afraid to stay in school with new kids, new adults." Not only will moving to a different school be "a big change" for Alicia's son Manny, but he and the other children will also have to adapt to the "other activities" that they will have to learn.

Later on, Laura described that children also need to learn that they can no longer bring whatever it is they want from home to kindergarten. She gives an example of her daughter Isa, who likes to bring personal items to daycare: "Isa always wants to bring a toy, a blanket or a pillow. ... School is different. She has to know that. She doesn't know it yet [Laughing] ... we didn't tell her yet!"

Being exposed to different environments helped Fabiola's son Javier adapt more quickly. Javier has been at Hazelwood since he was 8 months old and then switched to another preschool before returning to Hazelwood:

That's why I say that he is ready for school because he already experimented in that environment. ... He will not be afraid of the teachers or the kids. He already had three different schools, different groups of kids. I have no worries for his first day at kindergarten. He's not afraid and adapts to his teachers and classmates ... that's important.

Child is independent. Seven mothers included a child being independent in their understanding of school readiness.

When asked to describe a child who was ready for school, Hugo's mother Paulina reported: "Independent because when you go to kindergarten it's different. Moms can't get too involved, kids need to learn independence." Irene also felt that parents had to step back in order for children, particularly girls, to learn to become more independent: "Kayla is very independent, but there are girls that are very close to their mother. ... They can't do anything themselves." Taking the bus if necessary and fending for themselves were signs that children were ready for kindergarten. For example, Jocelyn's mother Alma shared with us: "A child is ready to go to school when they are independent. If they have to take the bus, and they take it." After some probing, Jacob's mother Marisol described a ready child as follows: "I would say that it is when they are able to fend for themselves, without anyone's help ... That they are independent."

Regulates actions and emotions. Six mothers reported that children needed to learn how to self-regulate their emotions when in kindergarten.

Jocelyn shared with us that Alma and other preschoolers had to "know that they can't throw a tantrum." Marcela described a child who was not ready as one who "cries because they don't want to go [to school]." On a similar note, Isa's mother Laura reported that children had to understand that they could no longer start crying in kindergarten because "the teacher will not come and hug them like they do in daycare." Feeling safe and not scared was important for Alicia, Manny's mother: "The most important thing for me right now is that Manny is safe and secure. That he is okay. That he is not scared. That he is calm... And that he is confident in himself." Being scared was not the only thing that caused children not to be ready. Jax's mother Amanda told us that being anxious could also be hard for children: "They are afraid to explore new things 'cause it causes anxiety. Yes, when we start new things, we get anxious. Right? All new things cause anxiety and can be one of the reasons some kids are not ready."

Communicates with teachers. Four mothers shared with us that communicating with adults was another important school readiness skill.

Alexa told us that being able to "articulate his needs" and being "more outspoken" was a sign that David was ready for kindergarten. When asked to describe a child who was not ready, Alma's mother Jocelyn said: "If children don't know how to talk, express themselves, they are not ready." For these next three parents, a child who can get the teacher's attention by communicating with them became a necessity when their preschool-aged boys were in trouble. For example, Marisol, who reminded us that she doesn't want Jacob to be bullied because he won't fight back, reports: "They need to protect themselves. If someone hits them, they have to be able to go tell the teacher what's going on." Being able to "protect himself" was something Fabiola reminded Javier about:

I have told Javier “Don't fight, but don't let other kids bother you, if they do it, tell your teacher” and he says “Okay.” I feel that it's important that he knows that what he has to do...tell the teacher.

Good manners/emotional behavior. Three mothers included having good manners as a skill that their pre-school aged boys needed to acquire before going to school.

When asked to describe a child who was not ready for school, Jax's mother Amanda replied: “A child who doesn't know their manners.” Manners were “huge” for Alexa: “It's important for David to be a good person with manners because that could really take him far in life.” For Marcela, not having manners was a sure sign that children were not ready for school. Not only did having manners show others that the child came from a “valued home,” but it also said a lot about the parents:

I've taught Daniel to have manners.... Well, it shows values from home. I think a child that doesn't have manners kinda' says a lot about the parents because they repeat what you show them.... He's really not rude, he's really respectful and he has a lot of manners. Like he prays, he cleans up after himself, he says “Thank you,” “Bless you,” things like that. He's really good. So I think that's really important.

Turn taking. One mother reported that children needed to learn to wait their turn. When asked what skills and abilities were the most important for Jacob to learn before starting kindergarten, Marisol replied: “Jacob doesn't know how to wait his turn.” Not behaving correctly and interrupting, as he did a few times during the interview, led her to believe that Jacob was not ready for school.

Approaches to Learning

Approaches to learning focuses on *how* children learn. Children's approaches to learning represent characteristics and observable patterns of behavior they display while engaging in educational tasks (McDermott, Leigh, & Perry, 2002). Eleven mothers reported skills related to approaches to learning as important (See Table 13). This cluster included the following: ability to separate from parents (n = 6); follows rules/directions (n = 4); is excited/eager to learn (n = 4); pays attention (n = 2); follows routine (n = 2); patience (n = 2); persistence (n = 1); explores (n = 1); and takes care of materials (n = 1).

Table 13. *Approaches to Learning* ($n = 11$)

Parent (Target Child)	Separate from parents	Follows rules	Excited for school	Pays attention	Follows routine	Patience	Persistence	Explores	Takes care of materials	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		X		X					3
Alexa (David)			X							1
Alicia (Manny)		X				X				2
Amanda (Jax)			X							1
Fabiola (Javier)	X									1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			X	X				X	4
Laura (Isa)	X									1
Marcela (Daniel)		X		X			X			3
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X		X				X		4
Natalia (Nina)	X		X							2
Paulina (Hugo)		X								1
Total	6	4	4	3	2	1	1	1	1	23

Separates from parents. Six mothers reported that when children threw tantrums, cried, or were afraid to be without their parents, it was a signal that children were not ready for the next step.

Fabiola believed that children who spent too much time with their parents became afraid. She gave an example of a child in Javier's classroom who was not "used to being separated from his mom" and thus, "not ready": "When someone drops him at school he doesn't want to let go, he clings, he's afraid and doesn't want to stay ... That can be a problem. They are very close to mom or dad. I feel that it's the biggest problem." Natalia's account was comparable: "Children who never get separated from their parents are not emotionally ready ... they are afraid of their classmates, the teacher, or group time."

In addition to being clingy, Marisol's interpretation of a child who is not ready is a child who cries and throws tantrums when separated from their mom:

There are kids that cry a lot when they go to school, they don't want to be separated from their mothers, and they throw a tantrum. I have seen a child in his [Jacob's] classroom that cries a lot. He's definitely not ready.

Children who spend too much time with their mothers at home, like Alma did with her mother Jocelyn for the first two and a half years results in: "Children talking and knowing less." Similarly, Isa's mother Laura shared with us that "It can be a harsh change for children who spend all the time at home with their parents. ... It can lead to more tantrums and cries when parents are no longer there."

Follows rules and directions. Four mothers believe that children who displayed the ability to follow rules and directions were ready.

Alicia, Manny's mother, felt it was important that Manny know that in kindergarten he would have more structure and more rules to follow than in daycare:

He has to know that there are rules at school ... and for him to be able to follow the rules because he thinks that school is a park [Laughs]! He thinks it's only fun and he thinks daycare ... they play at the daycare. They will not do that at school, in kindergarten they don't play that much. They have more structure.

Marcela's account was comparable. When asked to describe a child who is ready for kindergarten, Marcela told us: "Being like mind ready for the day. ... Just knowing what to expect when he attends class ... Just knowing the strict rules, you know, what to do and what not to do." Although Jacob's mother Marisol shared with us that "children are always ready to learn," not being able to follow the rules and always wanting to play could hinder that: "It's when they can understand that they can't stand up whenever they want. They have to know that there's a limited time to play and then they have to pay attention to the teacher. ... or else they won't learn."

Along the same lines, Paulina felt that children had to follow the rules at school because the teacher-to-student ratio was going to be higher than the ratio at daycare: “They [schools] have rules ... and Hugo needs to know the rules of the place, that’s more important than anything else because there the teacher has more kids, not only a few.”

Excited about school. Four mothers focused on children being excited about school. Many felt that children showing enthusiasm for school was an indication that they were ready for kindergarten.

Natalia, who bought her two older children backpacks last year, was forced to buy her preschooler Nina a backpack at her request. A gesture as simple as buying a backpack excited Nina because that meant she was going to school: “Ever since last year that I bought the backpacks for Ariana and Diego, she forced me to buy her one! She has it well guarded until she goes to school. She’s excited to go to kindergarten and start school!”

For Amanda and Alexa, knowing their child was excited and ready for school came from just telling their child they were soon going to kindergarten. Amanda shared with us: “I think Jax is ready. He is very excited...I already told him that he is going to kindergarten and he is very excited, he wants to go!” David was scared of going to kindergarten in the beginning, but is now showing signs of excitement. Alexa explains:

Even just a few months ago, I wanna’ say, maybe November, David and I would talk about kindergarten. He was like, “Oh, I don’t wanna’ go. What happens if there’s a problem on the bus?” “What do I do if the teacher is mean to me?” He was so afraid of it. After a few reassuring conversations with Alexa, who would tell David, “No, there is no reason to be afraid of kindergarten. You’re gonna’ have so much fun!” David is “Now ready. He’s ready. He’s like super excited!” Similarly, Adriana also felt it was important for Lesley to be open to learning, as that would get her excited for school:

I want her to want to learn ... for it to be exciting instead of looking at it as a negative or being like, “Ah, I don’t want to read” or “I don’t want to do this” ... to be excited about it and wanting to learn.

Pays attention. Three parents reported that children were ready for kindergarten if they were able to pay attention, focus, and not be easily distracted.

When working in a group, Jocelyn told us that it was important for Alma to be “Attentive, to focus.” When Marcela worked with Daniel on reading, she’s noticed that Daniel “gets a little distracted” and she would like for him to focus more on the activity at hand. She shared the following: “I kinda’ want him to just focus more on the actual activity that we’re doing ‘cause he seems to get distracted and he’s a little hyper sometimes, so I kinda’ want to work on

that more.” Marisol, Jacob’s mother, described a child who was ready as someone who knows “they have to pay attention to the teacher ... that they understand that and follow.”

Follows routine. Two mothers reported that following a routine was an important school readiness skill for their pre-school aged daughters.

For example, Adriana told us:

I think it’s important to get Lesley used to a routine ... we’re going to do this in the morning and then from this time to this time, it’s lunch and then from that time to that time ... you know just like getting them into a routine that they have to follow. It’s one of the things that they have to get used to. I just feel like they need to be on a routine and I feel like that’s important for them.

Although Alma is used to having a routine while in daycare, Jocelyn reported that once she enters kindergarten, that routine would change:

I think that it depends on the school rules, the routine they have ... because she is used to her routine at the daycare. I think that maybe in kindergarten she is not going to take a nap, but she still does it at the daycare. She will have to know that she is not going to sleep at school so she will have to sleep more at home.

Patience. One mother, Alicia, believed that a skill that children needed to gain before kindergarten was having patience. Alicia shared that her son Manny was not ready for kindergarten because he is not patient: “The only thing that tells me he’s not ready will be his...the only thing that worries me is his attitude. I don't know. He’s not patient.”

Persistence. One mother, Marcela, reported that a child who thinks of other solutions in order not to give up is a child who is ready for school. When probed on what skills and abilities children like Daniel needed to succeed in kindergarten, Marcela told us:

The fact that Daniel is thinking of other solutions is really good! Well, I know in kindergarten, it’s a building and learning process. So there are gonna be a couple problems and steps throughout. And the fact that he doesn’t give up. ... I like that he’s thinking!

Explores. In her understanding of school readiness, one mother, Marisol, told us that a child was ready for school if they were willing to explore. Although Marisol believed that “children are never ready for kindergarten,” she did emphasize that children like her son Jacob “Have to go out and explore ... that’s how you know a kid is ready, if they can explore. Explore new things, like the fact that they have to learn new different subjects.”

Takes care of class materials. Alma’s mother Jocelyn shared with us the importance of children learning how to take care of their own things: “She has an area for her books, after she finishes reading a book, to put it back in that area. She has to be careful with her things, because I am not going to buy her more.”

General Knowledge

General knowledge refers to information that the child needs for problem solving, self-identification, and handling situations when away from home and parents (Barbarin et al., 2008). Eleven parents believed that general knowledge was important for school readiness success (See Table 14). Items assigned to the General Knowledge cluster included: knows own name (n = 8); home address and telephone number (n = 6); names of family members (n = 3), age (n = 1); and knows preschool name (n = 1).

Table 14. *General Knowledge (n = 11)*

Parent (Target Child)	Knows own name	Home address & phone #	Names of family members	Age	Preschool name	Total
Alicia (Manny)		X				1
Amanda (Jax)		X	X	X		3
Delia (Josue)		X				1
Fabiola (Javier)	X					1
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X			3
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X				2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X	X		X	4
Laura (Isa)	X					1
Marcela (Daniel)	X					1
Maribel (Diana)	X					1
Marisol (Jacob)	X					1
Total	8	6	3	1	1	19

Name. Eight mothers felt it was important for children to know their name before they began kindergarten.

Maribel, Diana’s mother, replied, “A child is not ready if they don’t know their name,” and Flor told us: “It’s important that Lucia knows her name and last name.” When asked about important skills needed for success in kindergarten, Javier’s mother Fabiola told us: “Knowing their name, but also identifying their name.” On a similar note, Laura said: “If Isa sees her name she can identify it. ... When she sees an ‘I’ she recognizes it, she says, ‘Look, it’s the I of Isa!’ ... but I don’t think she knows her full name.”

When asked what skill was the most important for Nayeli to learn before kindergarten, Ingrid said:

Her name more than anything because God forbid that Nayeli got lost. ... and if someone tells her “write your name here, or what’s your name?” she will not know how to say or write her name!. ... I would like her to learn her name, for security reasons.

Losing a child was not only for mothers who had girls, but it was a worry that all parents faced, including Marisol: “I feel that’s important that Jacob knows his name because if he gets lost in the mall, he knows his full name.”

Home address and phone number. Four mothers included children knowing their home address and phone number as an important school readiness skill that they needed to acquire before kindergarten. Amanda recalled a time when Jax got lost at the mall:

He needs to know his address ... Once he almost got lost at the mall, he got lost for five minutes, and I felt like I was dying. ... That was a horrible experience! If he got lost at least he will know his address and someone can take him to the police station.

Unlike Jax, who had previously gotten lost at the mall, Ingrid and Jocelyn feared such a thing would happen in the future with their daughters, which is why they were so persistent in their daughters learning where they lived. For example, Ingrid shared: "I want Nayeli to know her address ... Yes, to know where she lives, in case she gets lost, but to be honest, I hope that that never happens!" Alma's mother Jocelyn's account was comparable: "I have always said that you learn the name of the place you live because you can get lost, they have to know where they live ... you never know. You can have an accident, hope God doesn't want it!" Delia also feared that her son Manny would be left alone and pressed him to learn where he lived: "His address. ... Well, just in case something happened to him, if he is alone somewhere, for any reason!"

Two parents included children knowing their parents' phone numbers as a necessary skill that was important before reaching kindergarten. Alicia shared that Manny "knows his home phone number." Flor helped her daughter Lucia learn her phone number by writing it down in a notebook:

I wrote it down because I wanted to memorize it, and I told her "This is my number". ... When we were running errands, and they asked about my phone number, I barely remembered it because it was a new number, and I said "I don't even remember it," so I had to take out the phone and check the number, but she [Lucia] already knew it.

Names of family members. Three parents reported that children needed to know their family members names, including parents' and siblings' names.

When Flor was asked to define school readiness, her definition included: "A child who knows the names of her parents, all her family members." In case Alma ever got lost, Jocelyn felt it was important for Alma to "At least know the name of her mother." She continued: "Alma already learned my name and the name of her Dad." Knowing parents' names and sibling information was important for Amanda because "You never know what kind of things can happen in this life. The information about parents is very important for kids, super important. ... Jax has to know how many siblings he has, all the family information." For Amanda, knowing that kind of information provided Jax with "a sense of whom we are and where we come from. That's important."

Age. In addition to children knowing their home address as well as parents’ and siblings’ information, one mother, Amanda, felt it was “super important” for Jax to know “his age, the age of his parents.”

Preschool name. In case children got lost, it wasn’t enough for children to know their home address or the name of the parents. For Alma’s mother Jocelyn, it was also important for children to know “the name of their daycare, the preschool.”

Independence/Self-Care

Independence or self-care refers to the capacity for autonomy, or being able to engage in a variety of activities without assistance or one-to-one attention from adults (Barbarin et al., 2008; Head Start, 2017). Seven parents included independence/self-care related skills (See Table 15). Items under this category included: bathroom hygiene, including washing own hands (n = 7); and feeding themselves (n = 2).

Table 15. *Independence (n = 7)*

Parent (Target Child)	Bathroom hygiene	Feeding themselves	Total
Alicia (Manny)	X		1
Amanda (Jax)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Laura (Isa)	X	X	2
Marcela (Daniel)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X	2
Natalia (Nina)	X		1
Total	7	2	9

Bathroom hygiene. Seven parents believed that children knowing how to use the bathroom without any assistance was an indication that they were ready for school.

For example, Alma’s mother Jocelyn told us: “School readiness is when they can go to the bathroom alone and know how to wash their hands.” Natalia reported that children are ready when they are “potty trained and can go to the bathroom by themselves.” Alicia, Manny’s mother, described a child who was ready for school as knowing he/she would be going to the bathroom alone in kindergarten. She said:

When they arrive at kindergarten and are OK knowing how to go alone to the bathroom ... I don’t think they are ready when they don’t know how to use the bathroom or don’t know how to wash their hands after going to the bathroom.

Isa’s mother Laura felt that children would receive help from their teachers while in daycare, but in kindergarten, that would not be the case: “At the daycare, the teacher will help them, but in kindergarten, they have to go to the bathroom by themselves ... The kids have to know how to use the bathroom.”

For Amanda, not only was it “very important, yes, very important” that Jax know how to go to the bathroom, but shared with us another responsibility that children needed to learn: “Kids

have to know how to wipe their butts ... it's a great responsibility." While Marcela wasn't as confident in her answer as Amanda, Marcela did share the belief that children needed to be potty-trained, but was unclear if they also needed to clean themselves: "Well maybe ... be potty-trained. Well, he knows how. ... he's potty trained. But maybe wiping his rear on his own. I think that's something they have to learn to do by themselves in kindergarten, is that right?"

Feeding themselves. Two mothers, Laura and Marisol, included children's ability to feed themselves as an important school readiness skill. For example, Isa's mother Laura shared: "Kids need to know how to feed themselves." Marisol's account was comparable: "A child is ready when they don't need people to feed them ... Jacob can eat without any help."

Motor Development and Physical Well-being

Motor development and physical well-being encompass characteristics such as rate of growth, physical fitness, malnutrition, fine motor skills, and gross motor skills (NEGP, 1991; Sabol & Pianta, 2017; Head Start, 2017). Motor skills support children in fully exploring their environment and interacting with people and things and thus support development in all domains (Hair et al., 2006). Five mothers reported the following as important for school readiness (See Table 16): fine motor skills (e.g., can hold a pencil) (n = 4); well rested (n = 1); and well nourished (n = 1).

Table 16. *Motor Development & Physical Well-Being (n = 5)*

Parent (Target Child)	Motor Skills	Physical Well-Being		Total
	Fine Motor: Can hold pencil	Adequate sleep ¹⁰	Well nourished ¹¹	
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X			1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Marcela (Daniel)		X	X	2
Maribel (Diana)	X			1
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Total	4	1	1	6

Motor Development

Fine motor skills. Fine motor skills refer to using the small muscles found in individual body parts, especially those in the hands and feet (Hair et al., 2006). Four mothers reported that it was important for children to know to hold a pencil properly/correctly for school success.

When asked what skills children needed to learn before they started kindergarten, Diana's mother Maribel reported: "To know how to hold the pencil." Marisol echoed Maribel's response and suggested that children like her son Jacob needed to practice "Holding the pencil properly so they can write their name." Likewise, Jocelyn told us that without the ability to hold a pencil correctly, children like her daughter would be hindered from writing: "Alma needs to learn how

¹⁰ Piotrowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2001

¹¹ Piotrowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2001

to hold the pencil. If she cannot hold it, she cannot write.” Further, parents believed that if a child did *not* know how to hold a pencil correctly, that implied that the child was not ready for school. For example, Ingrid shared with us: “I don’t know if Nayeli is ready ... she doesn’t know to hold the pencil properly.”

Gross motor skills. No parent mentioned gross motor skills, which refer to moving the whole body and using larger muscles of the body, such as those in the arms and legs (Hair et al., 2006).

Physical Well-being

Well rested and well nourished. One parent, Daniel’s mother Marcela, told us that for a child to be ready, they needed to be well rested and eat a well-balanced breakfast. Marcela said: “Children need to have enough sleep, so they’re not like walking zombies.” Marcela elaborated that not getting enough sleep could hinder their learning: “I’ve noticed that sleep is really important. If you get enough, it makes the child ... more aware of the activities and have full energy to do the rest of the things that they have to do.” In addition to getting a good night’s rest, Marcela reported that it was important for children to “Have a well-balanced breakfast, so they’re not tired or losing energy.”

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to explore low-income Latina mothers’ meaning of school readiness. Findings suggest that mothers mainly identify school readiness with nominal knowledge skills. All 17 mothers included nominal knowledge skills, particularly knowing their numbers, as an important school readiness skill. Motor development and physical well-being was the least pronounced school readiness skill, mentioned by only five mothers. Prior literature supports these findings that low-income racial-ethnic parents are mostly concerned with academic skills (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Diamond et al., 2000; Lin et al., 2003).

Prevalence of school readiness skills mentioned by mothers were (ranked from most important to least important): (a) Nominal knowledge; (b) early literacy; (c) socio-emotional; (d) approaches to learning; (e) general knowledge (tied with approaches to learning, 11 mothers reporting these two skills); (f) independence; and (g) motor development/physical well-being. These findings align with Barbarin and colleagues’ (2008) findings, which found that parents conceived of school readiness in terms of naming objects, letters, and numbers. Their prevalence of beliefs in their sample mirrors findings from this study. These findings also align with Piotrowski et al., (2001) where they found that parents believed that nominal skills were “absolutely necessary” at kindergarten entry.

Early literacy skills, including emergent writing and emergent reading skills, followed. Under emergent writing, the most salient skill that mothers reported were child being able to write (16 mothers reported this skill) and child being able to write their own name (15 mothers reported this skill as important). Under emergent reading, all 17 mothers included alphabet mastery as the most important skill. Child being able to read was the next most pronounced skill, with 11 mothers mentioning this skill as important for school readiness. These findings differ from those of Reese and Gallimore (2011), who found that Latino parents believed that children reach “age of reason” at approximately five years, and therefore view reading skills and related activities as low priority. All children in this sample were under five and 10 mothers believed that children should be able to read by the time they reached kindergarten.

Fifteen mothers included socio-emotional development in their understanding of school readiness. Getting along with teachers was the most salient (11 mothers reported this skill). The next most important socio-emotional skill that mothers reported children should have before kindergarten was being able to adjust to the kindergarten setting. Approaches to learning and general knowledge skills were reported by 11 mothers. Being able to separate from parents was the top skill under approaches to learning (reported by six mothers). Child knowing own name (under general knowledge) was also reported by eight as being an important skill children needed to acquire before kindergarten. Skills related to independence (self-care) were only mentioned by seven parents. Bathroom hygiene was the most prominent skill under this category, with all parents agreeing that children who could go to the bathroom independently were ready for kindergarten.

These findings are consistent with Barbarin and colleagues’ (2008) findings, where they suggested that Latinos cited socio-emotional domains as critical skills for children to possess before entering school.

Five out of the 17 mothers included motor development and physical well-being skills in their definition of school readiness. A child knowing how to hold a pencil (fine motor skill) was reported by four mothers as being an important school readiness skill. It is important to note that parents did not include gross motor skills (e.g., jumping, running, leaping) in their understanding of school readiness, only fine motor skills. Research has shown that a strong, positive relationship exists between fine motor skills and academic success (Liu, Hamilton, & Smith, 2015), as they are essential in writing letters and numbers accurately. Although fine motor skills are important, so is the development of gross motor skills. Research indicates that children with better gross motor skills are more likely to play sports, leading to a physically active lifestyle (Liu et al., 2015), and are more likely to maintain health-related fitness throughout adolescence and

adulthood (Vlahov, Baghurst, & Mwavita, 2014). These findings are consistent with Piotrowski et al., (2001) where they found that parents of older children rated motor skills are more important than parents of younger children.

Mothers in this sample shared with us a total of 192 school readiness skills that spread across all domains (See Table 17). The number of skills that mothers included in their understanding of school readiness varied between six to 19 skills, with an average of 11 skills. Two mothers (Irene, Kristina) mentioned the least number of school readiness skills, with a total of six skills total that included nominal knowledge, emergent writing and reading, and socio-emotional development. Irene admitted that she did not spend very much time with her children because she worked too much. Often, she would only see her children two to three times a week as her job kept her late. One mother (Jocelyn) mentioned the most skills, with 19 school readiness skills across all domains.

Table 17. Overall School Readiness Skills by Parent (n = 17)

Parent (Target Child)	Nominal knowledge	Emergent writing	Emergent reading	Socio- Emotional	App. To learning	General knowledge	Independence	MD/PW	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	3	2	2	2	3				12
Alexa (David)	3	2	1	4	1				11
Alicia (Manny)	1	2	1	3	2	1	1		11
Amanda (Jax)	1	2	2	4	1	3	1		14
Delia (Josue)	2	3	2			1			8
Fabiola (Javier)	2	1	1	3	1	1			9
Flor (Lucia)	1	3	1			3			8
Ingrid (Nayeli)	1	3	2	2		2		1	11
Irene (Kayla)	1	2	2	2					6
Jocelyn (Alma)	2	2	1	4	4	4	1	1	19
Kristina (Kevin)	1	2	2	1					6
Laura (Isa)	2	2	2	3	1	1	2		13
Marcela (Daniel)	3	3	2	2	3	1	1	2	17
Maribel (Diana)	1	2	2	1		1		1	8
Marisol (Jacob)	1	1	2	4	4	1	2	1	16
Natalia (Nina)	2	2	2	3	2		1		12
Paulina (Hugo)	2	3	2	3	1				11
# of Mothers	17	17	17	15	11	11	7	5	192

Note: MD/PW= Motor Development/Physical well-being

Preschool Teachers' Meaning of School Readiness

In this second section, we explored preschool teachers' meaning of school readiness. The following two questions guided this section:

1. School readiness is a term that is widely used by many people. What does school readiness mean to you?
2. When you think about a child who is 'ready' for school, how would you describe him/her? What about a child who is 'not ready' for school?

Preschool teachers identified key elements of school readiness that include: (a) emergent literacy; (b) socio-emotional development; (c) approaches to learning; (d) motor skill and personal well-being; (e) nominal knowledge; (f) general knowledge; and (g) independence (See Table 18).

Table 18. *Teachers' Elements of School Readiness (N = 5)*

Language/Early Literacy									
HS Teacher	Emergent writing	Emergent reading	Socio-Emotional	Approaches to learning	Motor Dev.	Nominal knowledge	General knowledge	Independence	Total
Elizabeth	X	X	X	X	X	X			6
Georgina	X	X	X	X	X			X	6
Jackie	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Sheri	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Stacey	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Total	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	2	34

Note: HS= Head Start

Language/Emergent Literacy

Emergent writing. All five preschool teachers believed that emergent writing skills were important skills preschoolers needed to possess before starting kindergarten. These skills included: child writes (n = 4); child spells (n = 2); and child traces (n = 1) (See Table 19).

Table 19. *Emergent Writing (N = 5)*

HS Teacher	Writes	Spelling	Traces	Total
Elizabeth	X			1
Georgina	X			1
Jackie	X			1
Sheri		X		1
Stacey	X	X	X	3
Total	4	2	1	7

Note: HS= Head Start

Writes. Except for Sheri, all four teachers included writing as an important school readiness skill. Specifically, teachers emphasized the importance of a child writing his/her name. For example, Elizabeth reported: “They should be able to write their name even if it’s not perfectly within the lines. Like I don’t think that should be a big issue. Like at least they’re trying.” Jackie also shared that a child is ready for school when they “already know how to write their name, all their letters of their name.” Similarly, Stacey told us: “I think the big thing is if they can write their name.” Finally, one of Georgina’s individual expectations, based on experience with kindergarten teachers was that “They know how to write their name...I’ve heard from kindergarten teachers that they want them to write their name.”

Spelling. Two teachers, Sheri and Stacey, included spelling as an important emergent writing skill. Sheri reported that she thinks it’s important that children “Spell their name, that kind of thing.” Similarly, Stacey believed that “Spelling plays a big role” in children being ready for kindergarten.

Tracing. One teacher, Stacey, incorporated tracing in her understanding of school readiness. In her effort to teach her students how to write, she wrote out letters as “models” for her students:

I’ve done it the past two times of having words for them to try to write. You write it out for them, and then they have it there as a kind of model, and then you see if they can write that as well.

Emergent reading. All five teachers reported emergent reading skills, such as: identify words/letters (n = 4); alphabet mastery (n = 1); child reading (n = 2) and; phonics (n = 2) as important school readiness skills (See Table 20).

Table 20. *Emergent Reading Skills by Teachers (N = 5)*

HS Teacher	Identify words /letters	Alphabet Mastery	Child reading	Phonics	Total
Elizabeth	X	X	X	X	4
Georgina		X		X	2
Jackie	X				1
Sheri	X				1
Stacey	X		X		2
Total	4	2	2	2	10

Note: HS= Head Start

Identify words/letters. Four teachers reported that it was important for children to identify words/letters before they transitioned to kindergarten.

Elizabeth told us that children should not only be able to “identify letters in their name” but also “other kids’ name in their classroom.” Stacey shared the same sentiment as Elizabeth when she believed a child who was ready could: “Maybe recognize other friend’s name ... maybe even those that start with the same letters as theirs.” During group time, she told us that she “incorporates a letter a day,” where she tries to see “if they can come up with words that start with that same letter.” While Sheri believed that children who were ready should “know some letters,” Jackie felt that children needed to “know all their letters of their name, as well as being able to identify their letters.”

Alphabet mastery. Two teachers, Elizabeth and Georgina, felt that alphabet knowledge was an important aspect of school readiness. Elizabeth noted: “I mean yes, you have to know your ABCs before starting kindergarten.” Not only was it important for children to know their alphabet, but Georgina also elaborated and told us that children should also be able to “Recite the alphabet. I think it is helpful that they know that there are letters...you know, that kinda’ thing.”

Child reading. Two teachers reported that a child who can read, likes to read, and has book awareness¹² is ready for kindergarten entry.

When asked to describe a child who is ready for the transition to kindergarten, Elizabeth said: “Like reading and I don’t necessarily mean like reading, reading ‘cause that you learn in school. I mean, some kids are more advanced than others. ... reading maybe just their name.” For Stacey, she felt it was important for children “to read, you know a few words” but also for them to know parts of a book:

Today I was going over and talking about the title, the author, the illustrator, the spine of the book, the front, and the cover. I’ve learned that it’s also an effective element to add to literacy so that when they see a book, it’s not just a book. They know how a book is created.

¹² Book awareness falls under Early Literacy skills in Scot-Little, Kagan, & Frelow’s (2006) analysis of early learning standards.

Phonics. Two teachers included phonics in their understanding of school readiness. Georgina reported: “I think it’s helpful that they know that letters make sounds, all make words together make sounds.” Likewise, Elizabeth also said that children who “are really good with their letters’ sounds” by the end of preschool are ready for kindergarten.

Socio-Emotional Development

All five teachers reported that socio-emotional development was an important school readiness skill. The following socio-emotional skills were reported by teachers: gets along with others (n = 4); adjusts to kindergarten setting (n = 2); problem solving (n = 2); regulations emotions (n = 2); child is independent (n = 2); communicates with teachers (n = 1); and has good manners (n = 1) (See Table 21).

Getting along with others. Four teachers believed that children who interact positively with their peers and get along with them were ready for kindergarten.

For example, when Stacey was asked to describe a child who was ready for school, she replied: “They know how to play well together with other children.” In the same way, Sheri believed that children needed to “be considerate to their friends ... you know, that kind of thing.” Along the same lines as Stacey and Sheri, Georgina told us that school readiness meant children knew how to “interact positively and cooperatively with their peers” and described a child who was ready for school as someone who was “socially interactive with other students.” Finally, Jackie believed that “socio-emotional skills are the most important skills because they are the first big step and if they are not there, then they can’t learn anything else” and added: “Being able to play, interact with others, in socially acceptable ways – like using words without being physical.”

Adjusts to kindergarten setting. In their understanding of school readiness, two teachers, Elizabeth and Georgina, reported that for children to succeed in kindergarten, they needed to know that kindergarten was going to be different than preschool.

When asked to define school readiness, Elizabeth said: “Children who are prepared in ways of knowing certain things or even emotionally being able to remove themselves from a preschool setting to a kindergarten setting because it is totally different in kindergarten.”

Similarly, Georgina told us:

School readiness is letting the children know that there are certain expectations of them. That they are expected to listen to the teacher. That there will be a time in kindergarten where they will all be expected to sit at tables and do writing activities, do coloring activities. ... Part of school readiness would be that there are individual expectations for the child and then group expectations.

Table 21. *Socio-Emotional Development (N = 5)*

HS Teacher	GALWO	Adjusts to K setting	Problem solving	Regulates emotions	Child is independent	Comm. with teachers	Good manners	Total
Elizabeth		X	X					2
Georgina	X	X	X		X	X		5
Jackie	X			X	X			3
Sheri	X			X				2
Stacey	X						X	2
Total	4	2	2	2	2	1	1	14

Note: HS= Head Start

When probed on what these expectations entailed, Georgina shared: “Individual expectations would be that they know how to write their name. That they will listen to the teacher. Group expectations are that they will get along with others.”

Problem solving. Two teachers, Elizabeth and Georgina, mentioned problem solving as an important school readiness that their preschoolers who are transitioning to kindergarten needed to learn. Elizabeth believed that being able to “problem solve” was a “huge thing”:

I would say that the most important skill is problem solving because if you can’t figure out how to get through a situation and to move past that, I just think it affects you for the rest of your life. ... You can’t just get frustrated, and you know, throwing something [laughs] because you can’t do it.

Georgina, like Elizabeth, also incorporated problem solving in her definition of school readiness:

School readiness means that children have the ability to problem solve with their peers. You need to problem solve before you jump right into academics. If they want to play with a toy or if they want a crayon that their classmate has, to have the ability to talk to them and not just grab it or not just sit and cry.

Regulates emotions. Two teachers, Jackie and Sheri, felt that children needed to learn how to control their emotions before starting kindergarten.

Jackie believed that a child who was not ready for school was a child who “cannot delay gratification and someone who just breaks down and then doesn’t do anything else.” Sheri reported that regulating emotions were also important:

Being able to take frustration and not get so animated and just be able to take a breath and relax. ... To use your words instead of your body or just your emotions. If they can calm down, then they’re opening themselves up for learning. ... Without that, it’s much harder for them to learn.

Child is independent. Two teachers included being independent as a school readiness skill. Jackie felt that a child who needed one-on-one attention and did not have a special need was a child who has not ready for kindergarten: “A child who needs one-on-one is not ready because a teacher would have to focus on that child and that takes time away from other children.”

Likewise, Georgina said that a child who is ready is “more independent.”

Communicates with teachers. One teacher, Georgina, understood school readiness as a child being able to communicate their needs and wants with a teacher. When asked to describe a child who is ready for school, Georgina told us: “When they are doing an activity that’s hard for them they’ll have to speak up and say ‘I need help’ or ‘this is hard, how can you help me?’”

Good manners. One teacher, Stacey, reported that manners were an important school readiness skill: “Children need to be working on their manners ... I think that plays a big part, too. To help ‘em get ready.”

Approaches to Learning

All teachers reported approaches to learning skills as an important component of school readiness. The skills that teachers mentioned include: pays attention/focuses (n = 5); eager/excited to learn (n = 5); persistence (n = 4); listens to teacher (n = 2); can separate from parents (n = 2); follows routine (n = 1); and curious (n = 1) (See Table 22).

Pays attention/focuses. Five teachers described a child who was able to pay attention and focus as being ready for the transition to kindergarten.

Georgina and Jackie emphasized children paying attention to the teacher. For example, Georgina reported: “A child is ready when they know that when teachers talk to them, they attend.” Similarly, Jackie said “ready children” were the ones who did what the teacher told them to do: “Children should know that they are expected to do what the teachers says. If a teacher reads a story, and asks them to write ... the child should write.”

The ability for a child to focus signified to Sheri and Stacey that a child was ready for that next step. For example, Sheri reported that children were ready “If I can get them to sit at the table for 10 minutes and stay focused on one thing. ‘Cuz a lot ‘em can’t make it past 2 PM.” Stacey also told us that a child who was not ready was “not really focused” when doing an activity: “A child who is not ready is someone who if you’re trying to do an activity, they’re not really looking at you. They’re looking. ... they’re watching everybody else and not paying attention.”

Finally, Elizabeth reported that a child who is not ready is one who is “very distracted” and not able to focus:

They have a hard time just sitting down and being able to focus. They would rather just run off, play, throw tantrums. They don’t really care about what you’re trying to ask them. They, ya know, say “I don’t know” or “I don’t care,” and they just try to run away or whatever.

Table 22. *Approaches to Learning Skills (N = 5)*

HS Teacher	Pays attention	Eager/excited to learn	Persistence	Listens to teacher	Can separate from parents	Follows routine	Curious	Total
Elizabeth	X	X	X					3
Georgina	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Jackie	X	X	X	X	X			5
Sheri	X						X	2
Stacey	X	X	X					3
Total	5	4	4	2	2	1	1	19

Note: HS= Head Start

Eager/excited to learn. In their understanding of school readiness, four teachers felt that if a child was eager or excited to learn, that meant that they were ready for school.

In particular, Elizabeth told us “What’s more important is being ready and eager to learn.” Georgina also described a child as ready when “He or she is eager to learn.” In addition to Jackie’s belief that children needed to be excited about school, she also added that children need to be “interested in subjects, books” if they are to succeed in kindergarten. Finally, when asked to describe a child who was ready, Stacey shared the following: “I would say that they’re very engaged and very eager. They show their excitement for learning.”

Persistence. Four teachers included a child being persistent and not giving up as a child who was ready for school.

Georgina described a child who was ready as one who “tries their best. ... they won’t give up.” Stacey’s comment was comparable: “A child who dedicates themselves to learning is ready for kindergarten.” Staying on one task until that task is completed, according to Jackie helps children become persistence, something she felt was an important component of school readiness: “Trying to complete an activity before moving on to another ... helps them gain persistence ... helps them complete a task. Helps them concentrate too.” Finally, Elizabeth told us that if children were “just gonna’ give up and not keep going for more” that they were not ready for kindergarten and would eventually “not graduate from high school.”

Listens and follows instructions. For two teachers, children listening to their teacher and following instructions was an important school readiness skill. When asked what abilities a child needed before school, Georgina replied: “That they will listen to the teacher. They can’t ignore the teacher when they are talking.” For Jackie, not only was it important for children to listen to their teachers but also for children to “listen and follow directions. To understand what you are telling them.” Further, Jackie emphasized that a child who was not ready is one who “doesn’t know how to follow verbal or pictorial instructions.”

Separates from parents. Two teachers reported that children were ready for school when they were able to separate from their parents without crying. For example, Georgina felt that children were not ready for school when they were “Not eager to separate from their parents. ... when they have separation and anxiety and cry when the mom tries to drop them off.” Jackie’s response was comparable: “A child is ready when they are OK with mom leaving and don’t have anxiety when she’s gone.”

Follows routine. One teacher, Georgina, understood school readiness as a child being able to follow class routines. When asked to describe a child who is ready for school, Georgina

told us: “They can hang up their backpacks on the hook provided. Be able to open up their backup, give papers to their teacher.”

Curious. One teacher, Sheri, reported that a sign a child was ready for school is when “The kid wants to learn about everything! You know, they’ll ask you ‘What’ this?’ or ‘What’s that?’”

Motor Development

All five teachers included motor skills as important for the transition to kindergarten (See Table 23).

Table 23. *Motor Development (N = 5)*

HS Teachers	Fine Motor	Gross Motor	Total
Elizabeth	X	X	2
Georgina	X		1
Jackie	X	X	2
Sheri	X	X	2
Stacey	X	X	2
Total	5	4	9

Note: HS= Head Start

A ready child for Georgina is a child who “knows how to turn pages in a book” and “Knows how to zip their backpack” — both of which are fine motor skills. A ready child, according to Jackie, was someone who “Has fine and gross motor skills that are age appropriate, like the 3-point grip is really important for school readiness because it can affect their writing in the future.” Similarly, Sheri told us that in her classroom they focus on “small motor because so many of the kids don’t know how to hold a pencil or know how to use a fork the right way.” She goes on to say that she encourages parents to: “Play with play-dough at home so that their child’s motor skills could be strengthened.” Further, she points out that “large motor skills” are also important and something that they “get to do” in Head Start.

Similarly to holding a pencil, Jackie shared with us that it was important for children to: “Know how to hold the scissors correctly and know how to cut” before starting kindergarten. When asked what skills and abilities were important for children to know before going to kindergarten, Stacey replied: “Gross motor and fine motor, like practicing their cutting skills. Can they cut in a straight line or ziz-zag line?” When Elizabeth was asked what skill was the least important, she reported that fine and motor skills were not very important: “I mean some of their physical things like ... cut super perfect with scissors or if they can’t jump super high off the ground. That’s not that important, I don’t think.”

Nominal Knowledge

Four teachers, with the exception of Georgina, included nominal skills in their understanding and description of school readiness (See Table 24). These skills included: colors (n = 3); numbers/counting (n = 3); shapes (n = 2); days of the week (n = 1); and telling time (n = 1).

Table 24. *Nominal Knowledge (n = 4)*

HS Teacher	Colors	Numbers/ Counting	Shapes	Days of the week	Telling time	Total
Elizabeth	X	X	X	X		4
Jackie		X			X	2
Sheri	X					1
Stacey	X	X	X			3
Total	3	3	2	1	1	10

Note: HS= Head Start

In her description of what a ready child looks like, Elizabeth, one of the five lead Head Start teachers, incorporated the following: “A child who is ready know their numbers, colors, shapes, and all that stuff ... calendar things, days of the week ... that’s good.” When asked to define school readiness, Stacey shared with us: “Preparing children for the next step in their education. Focusing on all of the areas of development including shapes, colors, and numbers. ... Going over numbers is really important too.”

Jackie, in her understanding of school readiness, mentioned counting and telling time as two important nominal skills that children needed to learn before starting kindergarten: “They need to count to 20. By spring ... assessing how to tell time ... predisposing them to numbers, quantifying games. Children are all different but we try our hardest to expose them to numbers.” Finally, when asked to describe a child who was ready, Sheri told us: “A child who knows his colors.”

General Knowledge

Three teachers included general knowledge, specifically a child knowing their name, as an important school readiness skill (See Table 25).

Table 25. *General Knowledge (n = 3)*

HS Teacher	Knows name	Total
Jackie	X	1
Sheri	X	1
Stacey	X	1
Total	3	3

Note: HS= Head Start

When asked what children should know before starting kindergarten, Jackie reported: “Being able to recognize their name.” Sheri also felt that kindergarten teachers wanted children to go to kindergarten “being able to recognize their names, first and last.” Finally, Stacey

emphasized that preschool teachers needed to “make sure that children can recognize their name ... to be able to read their name” before going to kindergarten.

Independence

Two teachers, Georgina and Jackie, reported three independence skills. These skills included: going to the bathroom (including washing own hands) (n = 2); dressing themselves (n = 2); and feeding themselves (n = 1) (See Table 26).

Table 26. *Independence (n = 2)*

HS Teacher	Bathroom hygiene	Dresses themselves	Feeds themselves	Total
Georgina	X	X		2
Jackie	X	X	X	3
Total	2	2	1	5

Note: HS= Head Start

Bathroom hygiene. When asked to describe a child who was ready for kindergarten, Georgina shared: “A child who is able to walk themselves to the bathroom and go to the toilet on their own, and also know how to wash their hands.” She further elaborated that girls’ clothing, like tights, could impede girls’ ability to go to the bathroom on their own: “It’s difficult when girls are sent with tights that are too tight for them, and even if they can toilet themselves in normal circumstances, their clothing isn’t easy to take down or off.” By the same token, Jackie told us that school readiness meant that children know how to “Take care of their own needs—their hygiene needs like toileting.”

Dresses themselves. Georgina reported “not being able to put on their own shoes” meant that children were not ready for school. When asked what skill that was least important for a child to know before starting kindergarten, Jackie replied: “Tying their shoe. I have only met one or two children who have been able to master it, so it’s not that important.” Unless a child had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Jackie’s definition of school readiness included “a child who knows how to put on their coat.”

Feeds themselves. One teacher, Jackie, described a child who was ready for kindergarten as someone who “does things independently, like eating without any help from others.”

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to explore preschool teachers’ meaning of school readiness. Findings revealed that teachers mainly conceived school readiness in terms of (a) early literacy (emergent writing and reading); (b) socio-emotional development; (c) approaches to learning; and (d) motor development. Independence (self-care) was the least reported school readiness skill – only two teachers included independence (self-care) skills in their definition of school readiness. The prevalence of school readiness skills mentioned by teachers were: (a) emergent writing; (b)

emergent reading; (c) socio-emotional development; (d) motor development; (e) nominal knowledge; (f) general knowledge; and (g) independence.

All five teachers reported emergent writing, emergent reading, socio-emotional development, approaches to learning, and motor development as important for school readiness. Under emergent writing, a child knowing how to write was the most prevalent skill, with four teachers including this in their definition of school readiness. Identifying words/letters, a skill under emergent reading, was also reported by four teachers as the most important skill children needed to possess before kindergarten. Getting along with others, a socio-emotional skill, was the most pronounced skill under this domain reported by teachers. The most prominent approaches to learning skills that all teachers reported as important for children to possess was a child who was able to pay attention. Finally, all five teachers also agreed that motor development, particularly fine motor development (e.g., holding a pencil correctly, knowing how to cut), were important school readiness skills compared to gross motor skills.

Three teachers included nominal knowledge in their definition of school readiness. A child knowing their colors and numbers was reported by three teachers. Children knowing their name, a characteristic under general knowledge, was the only such skill mentioned and three teachers mentioned it. The least reported skill by teachers was independence. Bathroom hygiene and a child being able to dress themselves were the two most prominent skills, with two teachers believing it was an important skill for children to learn before kindergarten entry.

Unlike Hollingsworth and Winter's (2013) findings, which indicate that preschool teachers placed higher importance on socio-emotional skills than on literacy skills, our findings show that teachers believe that both literacy and socio-emotional skills are important. As stated above, all five teachers reported literacy and socio-emotional skills as important for children to possess before kindergarten entry. However, getting along with others (reported by four teachers) does align with Hollingsworth and Winter's (2013) focus group findings, which mentioned that preschool teachers believed friendships were important. In this study, teachers believed that children should be able to positively interact with peers, be considerate to their friends, cooperate with their peers, and be able to interact in socially acceptable ways with their peers. Findings from this study also differ from those of Lin et al., (2003) who found that early childhood educators were more likely to report problem solving as a key feature of school readiness. Only two teachers in this study found that problem solving was important.

Grace and Brandt (2005) found that physical health and well-being was the category seen as the most important and essential school readiness skills by survey respondents (preschool teachers). No teachers in this study included physical health and well-being as important school

readiness skills that children need to acquire before kindergarten. These findings are also different from those of Lee and Ginsburg (2007), where they found that teachers of low-SES children, compared to those of middle-SES children, believed that they should make academics a preschool priority. Findings from this study suggest that teachers with low-SES children (all children in this Head Start were considered low-income and at risk) believed that literacy, socio-emotional development, and approaches to learning were all important skills needed for children to learn before starting kindergarten.

Teachers in this sample shared with us a total of 77 school readiness skills that spread across all domains. The number of competencies that teachers included in their view of school readiness varied from 10 to 18 skills, with an average of 15 skills. One teacher (Sheri) mentioned the least number of school-related skills, 10, in her understanding of school readiness. One teacher (Jackie) included the greatest number of skills, 18. No teacher mentioned all eight domains when they described school readiness (See Table 27).

Table 27. Overall School Readiness Skills by Head Start Teacher (N = 5)

HS Teacher	App. to Learning	Socio-Emotional	Emergent Reading	Motor Dev.	Emergent Writing	Nominal Knowledge	Independence	General Knowledge	Total
Elizabeth	3	2	4	2	1	4			16
Georgina	6	5	2	1	1		2		17
Jackie	5	3	1	2	1	2	3	1	18
Sheri	2	2	1	2	1	1		1	10
Stacey	3	2	2	2	3	3		1	16
# of Teachers	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	3	77

Note: HS= Head Start

Similarities and Differences among Mothers' and Preschool Teachers' Meaning of School Readiness

Research clearly documents that children perform better in school when there is consistency in beliefs and practices between families and teachers (Barbarin et al., 2008; Diamond et al., 2000). Table 28 depicts mothers and preschool teachers conceptualization of school readiness from most cited to least cited skills. Findings suggest a small **misalignment** between low-income Latina mothers and preschool teachers' beliefs about the meaning of school readiness and pertinent skills.

Table 28. *Alignment or Misalignment between Mothers and Preschool Teachers Conceptualization of School Readiness*

Mothers	Preschool Teachers
Nominal Knowledge	Emergent Reading
Emergent Reading	Emergent Writing
Emergent Writing	Socio-emotional Development
Socio-emotional Development	Approaches to Learning
Approaches to Learning	Motor Development
General Knowledge	Nominal Knowledge
Independence (self-care)	General Knowledge
Motor Development/Physical well-being	Independence (self-care)

In general, both mothers and preschool teachers believe that academic skills (emergent literacy skills) *and* socio-emotional skills are important for school success compared to all other school readiness domains. The greatest misalignment between mothers and preschool teachers beliefs about school readiness were between the importance of nominal knowledge and physical well-being skills. Mothers gave more importance to nominal knowledge and emergent literacy skills than preschool teachers. Teacher in this sample did **not** report on any physical well-being components. Also, preschool teachers gave more importance to motor development (fine and gross) compared to mothers. Mothers *only* focused on fine motor skills and rated motor development the least important.

The following tables describe the differences and similarities of sub-domains, or categories of development within a domain, reported by mothers and teachers. Categories in red represent the differences categories mentioned by one group but not by the other.

Approaches to Learning

Table 29. *Differences and Similarities in Approaches to Learning*

Approaches to Learning (6 differences)	
Mothers (N=9)	Teachers (N=7)
Separates from parents	Separates from parents
Excited for school	Excited for school
Pays attention	Pays attention
Follows routine	Follows routine
Persistence	Persistence
Explores	Listens to teacher
Takes care of materials	Curious
Follows rules	
Patience	

General Knowledge

Table 30. *Differences and Similarities in General Knowledge*

General Knowledge (4 difference)	
Mothers (N=5)	Teachers (N=1)
Know own name	Know own name
Home address & phone #	
Name of family members	
Age	
Preschool name	

Nominal Skills:

Table 31. *Differences and Similarities in Nominal Skills*

Nominal Skills (2 differences)	
Mothers (N=3)	Teachers (N=5)
Numbers	Numbers/Counting
Colors	Colors
Shapes	Shapes
	Days of the week
	Telling time

Socio-Emotional Development

Table 32. *Differences and Similarities in Socio-Emotional Development*

Socio-Emotional Development (2 differences)	
Mothers (N=7)	Teachers (N=7)
Gets along with others	Gets along with others
Adjusts to K setting	Adjusts to K setting
Child is independent	Child is independent
Regulates emotions	Regulates emotions
Communicates with teachers	Communicates with teachers
Good manners	Good Manners
Turn taking	Problem solving

Emergent Writing

Table 33. *Differences and Similarities in Emergent Writing*

Emergent Writing (2 differences)	
Mothers (N=5)	Teachers (N=3)
Writes	Writes
Spelling	Spelling
Traces	Traces
Writes own name	
Drawing	

Emergent Reading

Table 34. *Differences and Similarities in Emergent Reading*

Emergent Reading (1 difference)	
Mothers (N=3)	Teachers (N=4)
Alphabet	Alphabet
Child reading	Child reading
Phonics	Phonics
	Identify words/letters

Independence

Table 35. *Differences and Similarities in Independence*

Independence (1 difference)	
Mothers (N=2)	Teachers (N=3)
Bathroom hygiene	Bathroom hygiene
Feeding themselves	Feeding themselves
	Dressing themselves

Motor Development & Physical Well-being

Table 36. *Differences and Similarities in Motor Development & Physical Well-being*

Motor Development & Physical Well-being (1 difference)	
Mothers (N=3)	Teachers (N=1)
Fine motor: can hold pencil	Fine: Zip jacket, turn pages in book, hold a pencil, cutting w/ scissors
PW: Adequate sleep	NO PW
PW: Well nourished	

Chapter 5: Beliefs and Perceptions about School Readiness and the Kindergarten Transition

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explored mothers' *beliefs* about school readiness and the kindergarten transition. The second section explored mothers' *perceptions* about the kindergarten transition as it relates to teacher-school expectations. In particular, the focus was on what mothers believed teachers would expect from their children, and what teachers would expect of them as parents of kindergartners. We also explored what parents expected of teachers.

Mothers' Beliefs about School Readiness and the Kindergarten Transition

The first section of this chapter focuses on mothers' beliefs about school readiness and the kindergarten transition. The following questions guided this section: 1) In your opinion, why is it important for your child to do well in kindergarten? 2) On a scale of 1-10, how ready would you say your child is for kindergarten? 3) In your opinion, what are the reasons that some children are ready for kindergarten, or not ready for kindergarten? We also examined mothers' beliefs about children's educational future. We asked mothers the following question: 1) Knowing your child, how far do you think your child will go in school? In their responses, mothers also shared with us why it was important for their child to have an education.

Mothers' Beliefs about the Importance of Kindergarten

Mothers unanimously believed that the transition to kindergarten was a critical period for their preschoolers. When I asked mothers why it was important for their child to do well in kindergarten, a dominant response was that it was fundamental for later grades and later life. Being a first-time mother and having had a previously negative transition experience influenced some mothers' beliefs about kindergarten.

Importance for later grades. Eleven parents believed that kindergarten was important for children to successfully conquer subsequent grades. For example, Irene told us that kindergarten was important because "It's another stage that Kayla has to pass." Similarly, Maribel said: "So Diana can be well prepared for elementary school." Marisol's response was comparable to Maribel's: "Kindergarten will help Jacob later when he goes to elementary school." Some mothers also believed that kindergarten was particularly important for the first few years of school. Kristina told us: "Kindergarten is a stepping stone to first grade." Amanda also agreed and said kindergarten was important "So that Jax can continue to do well in first grade." Ingrid and Alicia both believe that kindergarten would make "first and second grade easier." For Natalia, kindergarten had a domino effect: "Because if Nina does well in kindergarten, then she is going to do well in first, second, third grade, and so on." Flor had a similar response: "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.”

Two mothers (Jocelyn and Fabiola) who did not attend school in the U.S. and whose preschoolers, Alma and Javier, were their first-born and the first to enter the U.S. school system, told us that they didn't know how kindergarten was in the U.S. but still believed that it was important for later school years. Jocelyn, who didn't know if “kindergarten [here] is like how it is in Mexico,” said: “Kindergarten is to go ahead, to pass to other courses.” Fabiola, also from Mexico, told us: “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.”

Impact on children's view of school. Four mothers believed that kindergarten was important because their children's experience in kindergarten would influence how they viewed school in the future. Because this was Manny's “first change,” Alicia told us that if Manny liked kindergarten, he would enjoy going to school. She said: “If he doesn't become frustrated with school, he will have his mind open and learn a lot of things ... and then he will like it for good. If he's happy, it will be easier.” Laura gave a similar answer:

If Isa does well, I feel that she will be happy to go to first grade ... It will be easier for her to move forward if she likes school. If she feels rejected, she will not do well and not like school.

For Marcela, kindergarten was “the foundation for later learning.” She shared the following: “I know at this age they're sponges, so everything that they learn now is gonna' stick, and they are gonna' remember when they get older ... what they are taught now really sticks.” Kristina believed kindergarten was important because that would be the place where Kevin would have the opportunity to figure out his learning style. She said: “In kindergarten he is going to get his learning technique that will help him later on. I write everything, every single detail down but I don't know how he is going to learn.”

One mother described kindergarten and saw a link between kindergarten and future life earnings. Amanda said: “Because the more Jax learns, the more he knows, and the more he earns. He will have a brighter future with his employment ... more open doors. Better doors.”

Flor's understanding of the kindergarten transition derived from having an older child who had completed kindergarten. Here, she talked about the “difficulty” that her older daughter had going from daycare to kindergarten and how that experience would be repeated with her preschooler, Lucia. She told us:

There are a lot of changes when you go from one school to another; there are different people. That's what happened with Eleanora. When she was in daycare and they taught her in English, her Spanish was minimal, and then when she got into kindergarten she got a bilingual teacher and she taught her in Spanish, it was difficult for Eleanora. It will be the same with Lucia.

Summary

All mothers believed that kindergarten was an important period that set the tone for successive grades, impacted children's view of school, set the foundation for later learning, and influenced future earnings. While all mothers believed in the importance of kindergarten, first-time mothers who were not born in the U.S. and did not attend school in the U.S. struggled to understand how kindergarten in the U.S. operated. The data suggested that first-time immigrant mothers have little familiarity with U.S. schools and therefore have less knowledge compared to U.S.-born parents of the same or different race/ethnicity (Adair & Tobin, 2008; Fuller, 2008). Regardless of practical constraints, first-time immigrant mothers still saw the value of attending kindergarten. These findings are in line with existing research that shows that Head Start parents are aware that the kindergarten transition is a critical milestone (Malsch et al., 2011). These findings also align with literature that shows that immigrant families do place a high value on education (Ceballo, 2004; Durand, 2011; Valdés, 1996).

Assessing Children's Kindergarten Readiness

All mothers had an idea about their children's level of readiness for kindergarten. Mothers were asked: "On a scale from 1-10, how ready would you say your child is for kindergarten?" With probing, we then asked mothers to explain their ratings. Mothers' ratings reflected their understandings of the various competencies that children would need for kindergarten, and how well their children encompassed these abilities. Moreover, mothers' ratings exemplified children's strengths and weaknesses (See Table 37).

Table 37. *School Readiness Scores (N = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Sex of child	Score
Adriana (Lesley)	F	10
Fabiola (Javier)	M	10
Flor (Lucia)	F	9 /10
Jocelyn (Alma)	F	9
Irene (Kayla)	F	8
Kristina (Kevin)	M	8
Marcela (Daniel)	M	8
Maribel (Diana)	F	8
Alexa (David)	M	8/7
Natalia (Nina)	F	8/7
Alicia (Manny)	M	7
Delia (Josue)	M	7
Paulina (Hugo)	M	7
Laura (Isa)	F	7/6
Amanda (Jax)	M	6
Marisol (Jacob)	M	6
Ingrid (Nayeli)	F	5

Note: F= Female; M= Male

High School Readiness Scores

Four mothers assigned scores between 10 and 9. Two mothers, Adriana and Fabiola, had no reservations about their children’s readiness and gave their preschoolers perfect scores of 10. They mainly focused on socio-emotional skills. Flor and Jocelyn, who gave their preschoolers scores of 9, focused on acquired nominal knowledge skills, but acknowledged that their preschoolers still struggled with pre-literacy skills.

Adriana said: “Lesley picks things up early fast and she learns. She’s a fast learner, so I think she’ll do really well. She already knows a lot for a four-year-old!” Compared to her older brother, who had trouble writing his name at Lesley’s age, Lesley “already knows how to write it.” Fabiola gave Javier a 10 because he knows how to get along with others and has no trouble adapting to new environments. She said: “Javier is ready because as I said, he knows about environment changes, he knows how to interact with different people ... he adapts very well to other kids, different groups. He doesn't get scared; he is calm. He adapts very easily.” Jocelyn was unsure what score to give Alma: “I think a 9 because she already knows most of the things I want her to know, like colors, numbers, letters, but she doesn’t write letters clearly yet ... people cannot understand her writing.” Flor was “between a 9 and a 10” because Lucia still hadn’t mastered some nominal knowledge skills:

Lucia almost knows the entire alphabet, and she knows the numbers in English up to 15, and in Spanish up to 10. She knows the letters, not all but a lot of them. She sometimes differentiates between them ... she only sings the alphabet song, but it’s just that, a song, and she is just signing it without knowing the name of the letters. She knows her name ... but she doesn’t know how to read yet, but she tries.

Moderate School Readiness Scores

Ten mothers assigned moderately high scores of 8 or 7 to their soon-to-be kindergartners. Maribel and Irene, mothers of preschool-aged girls, included lack of nominal knowledge, emergent writing abilities, and socio-emotional skills as reasons why they rated their children an 8. For example, Irene told us that she gave Kayla an 8 because “I think that this is a difficult stage for her; she is nervous.” Not writing her name was the other reason: “She doesn’t write it properly.” Likewise, Maribel told us that Diana “knows a lot of things, but not everything completely. I know there are kids who already know the alphabet and the numbers ... Diana doesn’t know them all yet.” Maribel was also concerned about separation issues: “Diana still cries when her dad or I go away ... she has separation anxiety.”

Kristina and Marcela, mothers of pre-school aged boys, gave their incoming kindergartners an 8 because they had already acquired some, but not all emergent literacy skills and self-care skills. Kristina talked about Kevin’s already acquired emergent writing and reading skills: “Kevin writes really well, he understands what he is reading, he memorizes books.” Kevin also received an 8 because “he’s very social and can have a really long conversation with an adult.” Unlike Kevin, who knew how to spell, Marcela told us that Daniel “still needs to work on writing his name” although he does “know how spell his name.” In addition to these emergent writing skills that still needed some work, Marcela also didn’t give Daniel a perfect score because “we still need to work on the bathroom part.”

Two mothers, Natalia and Alexa, were torn between giving their preschooler a score of 8 or 7. Both were concerned about their children’s partial knowledge of nominal skills and emergent writing. Natalia told us: “Nina doesn’t know the alphabet yet ... she knows some letters. She doesn’t know all the colors and gets confused with numbers.” When Alexa was asked what score to give David, she replied with: “Oh, Lord! I don’t know...he is an 8...7...8...strong 8/7!” She was not worried because he was social but was concerned about his numbers:

Like I’ve said this whole time ... he’s very social. He mentally wants to go. Maybe it’s because I’m a perfectionist, but like his numbers ... He gets his numbers confused. He counts “twenty-nine, twenty ten, twenty eleven.” I’m like “No, what are you doing?” But I mean, most of the time he gets them [laughs].

Although Daniel was getting his numbers confused and “still needs help with his writing,” Alexa was not concerned about him: “I’m pretty sure he will learn them this summer when they send out that package for him to do.” When probed as to what package she was referring to, Alexa said:

It has two movies, Leap Frog and then this Spanish DVD because it's a dual-language school. And then this math thing that they have to work on and then a journal. He has to write in his journal every day. It doesn't matter what he writes, he could write "aaaaa bbbbbb" like that, doesn't matter as long as he's writing.

Alexa was the *only* parent who mentioned the Summer Package, although this package was sent to all new parents in the school district. A possible reason could be that her stepson was in first grade at the same school that Daniel would soon be attending. Thus, she was aware of what the school provided for incoming students.

Four mothers rated their preschooler a 7. Out of the four preschoolers with moderate scores, three were boys.

Delia and Paulina told us that their preschooler had yet to master the most basic skills. For example, Delia said: "Josue doesn't know his letters yet. He knows 'J' for Jason but that's it ... he knows some numbers, 1 to 10, but that's all. I repeat the numbers for him and he doesn't care." Comparably, Paulina said Hugo "was not ready" because "when we count from 1 to 20 he still gets confused. He writes his name backwards, can't really recognize the letters." On the other hand, Alicia and Laura felt their preschoolers were not ready because of behavioral challenges. Specifically, Alicia was worried about Manny's attitude. She said: "He's not patient, he gets frustrated easily. He needs to [learn to] ask for help because he wants to do everything by himself. ... That's what worries me more than anything, his attitude." During the interview, Manny asked Alicia to fix a toy remote and was attempting to open the battery case by himself. It was obvious that he was struggling but did not want his mother's help. Rather, he banged the remote on the desk and began to cry—still refusing help. Laura, who rated Isa "between a 6 and 7," admitted that she and her husband "spoil Isa," causing her to misbehave:

Teachers at the daycare tell me that she follows instructions, but not here at home. She throws tantrums. It's our fault; we spoil her. ... For us, it's hard to be strict. We only spend two or three hours a day at home, there are days when we don't see them. Maybe that's why it's hard for us to set rules or to punish them, to make them have consequences. I don't see her that ready.

Low School Readiness Scores

Three parents gave their children low school readiness scores of 6 and below. Out of the three preschoolers with low scores, two were preschool-aged boys.

Although Amanda and Marisol gave their preschool-aged boys a low score of 6 because of questionable behaviors, both were upbeat about their child's ability to learn. Marisol, who described Jacob as "mischievous," said: "I know that he is going to be able to do all the things in kindergarten, he learns, he is smart and learns fast, but being mischievous doesn't help him learn

more because he gets distracted easily.” Knowing your child was important for Marisol, who said she would never give Jacob a 10:

As parents we always want the best for our kids. I know that he is going to be all right, but if you really know your kid, you will know what to expect. I know that he is very mischievous. ... The teacher has told me that he says bad words in Spanish.

Equivalently, Amanda praised Jax’s ability to learn before admitting that he was lazy, yet excited to go to kindergarten:

He doesn’t know how to read or write very well, but he has a lot of mental ability to do it. I also see that in writing and reading he is a bit lazy, he doesn’t want to do homework at home. He’s not excited to practice at home but he’s excited about going to kindergarten!

Ingrid rated Nayeli a 5, the lowest score assigned by participants. In addition to not knowing any nominal skills, Ingrid also mentioned that Nayeli was not very social. She told us:

She doesn’t know a lot. She only knows the numbers 1-10 and then she gets lost ... she jumps from number to number. She also skips some letters in the alphabet, but she is ready with A, B, C, and D ... she only knows the song. She’s also really quiet and shy.

Summary

Mothers assessed children’s readiness for kindergarten based on their understanding of the skills children would need for kindergarten. Scores ranged from 5 to 10. Out of the 10 preschoolers who received scores between 8 and 10, six were girls and four were boys. Mothers of girls rated their preschoolers lower based on the abilities they were lacking, such as literacy skills, being nervous about kindergarten, and being too attached to their parents. Mothers of boys only focused on the lack of literacy competencies, with one mother adding bathroom hygiene as a skill that still needed to be improved. Five boys and two girls received scores between seven and five. Mothers of boys acknowledge that their children lacked nominal knowledge competencies and had behavioral challenges. In addition to lacking nominal knowledge skills, mothers of girls also cited that their daughters were too spoiled or too shy, which hindered their ability to be fully ready.

Similar to current research, mothers had a sense of how ready their children were for kindergarten (Miller, 2015). Unlike existing research, we provided a detailed description of how Latina mothers assessed their children’s school readiness, including: (a) nominal skills; (b) emergent reading and writing skills; (c) socio-emotional development; and (d) approaches to learning skills. In all instances, mothers remained positive about children’s competencies, irrespective of children’s perceived weaknesses. These findings suggest that mothers may be particularly concerned with the misbehavior of boys (e.g., having an attitude and being mischievous), while mothers were concerned about girls being too shy and having separation

anxiety. I hypothesize that mothers assessed boys' behavioral activities much more harshly than girls because they are aware of the punitive repercussions. Researchers have found that Latino students (and African-American students) are overrepresented in suspension/expulsion relative to White students at the K-6 and 6-9 grade levels (Skiba et al., 2011). For instance, according to the NCES (2002), Latinos make up 16% of students in the United States but 20% of all suspensions.

Mothers' Beliefs about Children's Educational Future

We asked mothers how far they believed their children would go in school. All mothers had aspirations for their children to get careers that required going to college. Many also wanted their child to have a career rather than a job.

College Bound

Twelve mothers were direct in their answer of how far their child would go in school. Fabiola alluded that she wanted Javier to go to college when she said: "I don't want Javier to stop at high school." Natalia said: "I want Nina to graduate from high school and get into college." Likewise, Paula told us that she wants "Hugo to finish high school and university." Similarly, Flor and Jocelyn said they wanted their daughters to "finish and graduate from college." Laura aspired for "Isa to go to college," and Amanda wanted Jax to "go to college." Kristina very confidently replied, "Kevin is definitely going to college," and Maribel would like Diana to "be a college girl. To study as far as she can." For Alexa, obtaining a Bachelor's degree was not even a question for David: "If I'm still alive and well, he *will* graduate with a Bachelor's degree." Two reasons existed for why Alexa wanted David to get a Bachelor's degree:

First, my whole family has at least a Bachelor's. And then, I've experienced firsthand how hard it is to not have a Bachelor's degree. How heartbreaking it is to hear you're really smart and really talented but 'you don't have that degree, sorry, we cannot give you this job,' and it's horrible.

Although Irene didn't necessarily say that she wanted Kayla to go to college, she did mention wanting Kayla to have an optimal quality of life, which only an education could grant. She said: "Kayla has to study to have a good lifestyle because here, at least in this country, you have to study to have that." Irene's exposure to American families as a house cleaner in very wealthy and privileged communities allowed her to see the difference "between them and us":

They [Americans] have a different mentality. They are calmer, more mature in everyday things. What I like about them [Americans] is that they study to have a better life so when they start a family, they can provide good things for their family ... they have goals. Not like Latinos. I have seen that the Latino young people have their kids very young, they don't know what they are doing with their lives. Because we work in a lot of different houses and most of the parents have teenagers getting ready for college, we see the difference. You get it?

Two mothers included higher education in their child's future. Adriana, Lesley's mother, told us: "I do want her to go to college ... I would say a Master's." Alicia not only wanted Manny to go to college but to also "have a Ph.D. in whatever he likes."

Career Choices

Four mothers of preschool-aged girls shared with us what they would like their daughters to be. Three said a doctor and one said a dentist. Jocelyn told us that she would like Alma to "have a career as a doctor." Ingrid's answer was comparable to Jocelyn's. She said: "I want her to have a career ... to be a doctor. I mean, which parent doesn't want good things for her kids?" Laura wanted Isa to be "become a doctor" but stressed that she wanted Isa to "be successful in whatever career she wants." She told us:

If she wants to be an artist and make sculptures, she can do it. If she wants to be an astronaut, she can do it. She can do anything ... I want her to be successful in whatever career she wants but she has to do it well and not get distracted.

One mother had other career aspirations besides being a doctor. Maribel told us she wanted Diana to "become a dentist."

Five mothers, four with preschool-aged boys, told us what their preschoolers said they would like to be when they grew up. They included: astronaut, police officer, and army recruit.

Marcela did not hesitate to tell us Daniel's future plans: "He wants to be an astronaut 'cause he's so in tune with alien." Although Marcela was confident that Daniel would become an astronaut, that did not keep her from reminding Daniel what would happen if he didn't continue going to school: "I tell him that he cannot give up because if he gives up, he's not gonna' be smart and then he's not gonna' have a job and that he'll live on the streets." Paula was not sure what Hugo wanted to be but based on his interests, she told us there was a possibility that he'd join the army:

Because he likes guns I feel like he'll end up joining the army. He likes to help. They go to wars, of course, but I also feel that they teach them other things that are good for them, like values.

Amanda shared with us that "Jax wants to be a police officer." When probed if she wanted Josue to have a particular career, Delia admitted that she hadn't thought about that but did share with us that Josue wanted to be a police officer too, although for the wrong reasons:

I ask him "Why do you want to be a police officer?" And he tells me "To be able to kill ... because they have pistols." The bad thing is that he watches cartoons, so I tell him "No, to kill, no! Baby, it's not like that, the police are different than that."

Flor, in the beginning, did not know what Lucia wanted to be when she grew up, but then Lucia interrupted and said she wanted to be a police officer. Flor replied with: "Oh, she wants to be an officer! If she wants to, why not?"

Reasons for Obtaining an Education

Nine mothers had very specific reasons why they wanted their children to attend college and have a career. These reasons included: not having the opportunity themselves to attend, family expectations, being a *different* Latino, and not wanting their child to be like them.

More life opportunities. Five mothers shared with us that they wanted their child to attend college because they have the opportunity to do so, unlike themselves, who did not.

When asked why that was important for Lesley to graduate college, Adriana, who graduated from high school in the U.S., replied: “Because I couldn’t go.” Amanda shared with us she wanted Jax to “advance in life” because she didn’t have the opportunity to do so herself. She told us:

I always wanted to go to college, but I couldn’t because of my economic situation in Colombia. But I think if I had gone to college, I would not be doing the work I am doing now, working at a McDonald’s ... no, I would be doing the work of a professional. I want that for Jax.

Amanda further stated that she wants Jax to have a better life: “I would love for my son to advance in life ... I would like that a lot.” One way to accomplish that was for Latinos like herself to separate themselves from the “others”:

Sometimes people think that all the Latinos that are here are like the ones that only come to this country to drink beer, to dance, that they don’t come to produce, because of a few they label us all. So we have to set goals for ourselves and differentiated ourselves from these others.

Because Fabiola also did not have the opportunity to “keep going” with her studies, she now has to “work, work, work,” something she does not want Javier to experience. While Ingrid had some high school experience in Mexico, she reflected on her own life and the opportunities that Nayeli possessed because she was born in the U.S.:

I tell her, “I came here having only attended elementary and middle school. My parents were not able to give me more education, there was not enough money, but thank God you are from here, and you have more privilege than we had.”

Natalie also didn’t have as many opportunities as Nina currently does. She explained: “Studies from my country don’t count in the United States. I didn’t have as many opportunities for learning the language.” To that end, she reminded Nina: “If you don’t study, you won’t be the owner of the house, but the one cleaning the house.”

Better life outcomes than mothers. When discussing what future they saw for their children, three parents made it clear that they didn’t want their children to be like them. Fabiola was adamant that she didn’t want Javier to be like her. She said:

Oh, no, no! I don't want him to be like me. I try to teach him that he has to keep going...that he shouldn't get stuck. He has more opportunities here. I imagine that for him it will be easier than it was for me.

Natalia also didn't want Nina to be like her. Natalia shared with us that when Nina was little; Nina said she wanted to be a mom when she grew up, a response that Natalia was not very pleased with:

I told her "No, you are not going to be a mom! You have to study first and then you can be a mom, you have the opportunity, if you want, to study and to be someone in life ... don't be like your mommy that has to run to work every day and work a really heavy job, where they sometimes yell at you and you earn little money.?"

Delia, who only received a 5th-grade education in El Salvador, could not read very well¹³, and didn't know what college was, knew that she didn't want Josue to be like her. She said: "I would like that he get a good career, something better than me ... That's what I want."

Anyone can have a job. For three mothers, there was a clear distinction between having a career versus having a job. For example, Alicia told us:

A career gives you choices ... you can get a job in anything that you like, you can work anywhere but a job ... you earn the minimum and don't even like it.

Fabiola had a similar response:

For me having a job is something like, me, I have a job ... A job is any job you can get. But when you have a career, something that you study for, that's very different. It's something that you like to do ... I feel it's better.

Like Alicia and Fabiola, Laura also agreed "everyone can have a job, but they do it because they need the money and have to survive." A career, on the other hand, provided a more comfortable life: "It will be a sacrifice, but in the long term they will have a better life. They will earn more money, and it will be less hard because they like it, because it will be less effort."

Summary

Researchers have found that parental aspirations in their children's educational attainment are significantly and positively associated with their children's setting academic goals, persistence in school, and attendance in college (Bronstein, Ginsburg, & Herrera, 2005; Kao & Tienda, 1998). However, much of the literature that explores parents' aspirations are based on samples of middle and high school students. There is one exception: Goldenberg and colleagues (2001) tracked children from the beginning of kindergarten to the beginning of sixth grade with the goal of learning more about immigrant Latino parents' aspirations and expectations. Similar to our findings, they found that more than 90% of Latino immigrant parents aspired their child to attend and complete a college degree. Our findings also align with Raleigh and Kao (2010), who

¹³ I helped her read the consent form and demographic form.

used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) to document differences in college aspirations among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian parents. They found that immigrant parents are more optimistic about their children's educational trajectories compared to native-born parents. Researchers have suggested that immigrant parents' aspirations are important because they have direct and mediated effects on children's levels of attainment. Parents' college aspirations for their children have also been seen as a type of intergenerational social capital (Coleman, 1988) where parents are able to transmit their aspirations for their children into academic achievement. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) and others have reported that immigrant Latino parents see formal schooling as a positive benefit for their children, and aspire for their children to receive the highest level possible.

This study adds to the literature by describing mothers' specific hopes for their children. In their responses about what careers they'd like their child to have, some gender differences emerged. Mothers of preschool-aged girls mainly wanted their daughters to be doctors, while preschool-aged boys chose careers that were considered much more masculine (e.g., army recruit, astronaut). The only exception was with one mother who wanted her daughter to be a police officer.

For mothers in this sample, there was a clear distinction between having a job versus having a career. Having a job was associated with low wages, little control, and doing it as a means of survival. According to mothers, anyone can have a job. A career on the other hand represented more control, better wages, and an easier way of life. Mothers stressed the importance of their child not having a job but a career, further distancing themselves from their parents. For some families, the importance of their child getting an education was a direct result of them not having had the opportunity to do so themselves. Mothers were also very clear that they did not want their child to grow up to be like them. These findings clearly demonstrate that low-income Latina mothers recognize the importance of an education (Valencia & Black, 2002). Further, Latina mothers not only saw education as a conducive to social and economic mobility, but also viewed formal education as a means of personal fulfillment (Goldenger et al., 2001).

Mothers' Beliefs: Who is Responsible for Children's Education?

Mothers had a clear idea on who should be responsible for preparing children for kindergarten. When we asked mothers about the reasons that some children were ready for school and some were not, the majority of mothers in this study overwhelmingly said that being exposed to preschool was a critical factor as to why some children were ready and others were not. Five mothers did not mention the influence of preschool. Rather, they believed that parents were children's first teachers and that parents were responsible for working with children at home to

prepare them for kindergarten. For some parents (n = 4), the responsibility for children's readiness fell to varying degrees between the parents and the preschool (See Table 38).

Table 38. Mothers' and Preschools' Role in the Kindergarten Transition (N = 17)

Preschools' Responsibility

1. Delia (Josue)
 2. Flor (Lucia)
 3. Fabiola (Javier)
 4. Ingrid (Nayeli)
 5. Laura (Isa)
 6. Maribel (Diana)
 7. Marisol (Jacob)
 8. Natalia (Nina)
-

Mothers' Responsibility

1. Alicia (Manny)
 2. Kristina (Kevin)
 3. Marcela (Daniel)
 4. Paulina (Hugo)
 5. Amanda (Jax)
-

Mothers + Preschools' Responsibility

1. Adriana (Lesley)
 2. Alexa (David)
 3. Jocelyn (Alma)
 4. Irene (Kayla)
-

Responsibility of Preschools

Eight mothers believed that children who were exposed to preschool were more prepared than children who were not. Learning how to interact with teachers and peers, being independent (self-care), and learning how to follow school rules were benefits of attending preschool. Also, because mothers had to work, they couldn't devote as much time to their children but teachers, who were trained and made learning fun, could.

For example, when Delia was asked why children were not ready for kindergarten, she immediately said: "Because they didn't attend pre-K and didn't learn to share, dress themselves, and talk with other children ... all of that." Laura believed that the reason why children were ready for kindergarten was because they attended daycare. She told us: "At daycare, children learn to be more independent ... they are not just at home anymore, they have to interact with other kids." Ingrid was candid when she said: "If I didn't put Nayeli here for preschool, I would have said that she's not ready. But she's ready." In addition to using her daughter as an example, she also used her goddaughter who had been in daycare "since she was very little" and learned how to write and draw very pretty: "I feel that girl was ready too."

Flor compared children who went to preschool and those who didn't attend. She said: "They are not ready because they didn't attend Head Start ... because when they enter preschool

they learn a lot, but when they are not in preschool, they don't learn ... it's more difficult for them when they start kindergarten." She proceeded to say: "Who will teach them [at home]? No one." Similar to Flor, Fabiola also viewed children who attended Head Start as knowing more. She told us: "Javier knows a lot of things, more than he would have known if I hadn't put him in the preschool." Without being exposed to preschool, Fabiola said that children like her son Javier would have been afraid and not been able to adjust to new settings and people: "The ones who don't go to preschool ... they just have more problems adjusting. In preschool there are more kids, teachers ... it's not the same at home." Fabiola saw teachers as having more time to dedicate to children than parents because "You have to do other things like work, so they just spend time playing, watching TV or with the iPad." Natalia told us that her children "are better prepared now that they are in preschool." Attending preschool also helped children be more independent, taught them how to interact with others, and also got them ready for kindergarten by teaching them their colors, numbers, and letters. Like Fabiola, parents have to work and can't stay with them all the time: "You are at work and you can't do it ... but the preschool can!"

Marisol agreed that parents also have to teach children at home, but she believed that unlike parents, teachers are trained and are much better at helping children learn than parents. She goes on to say: "Children have more fun in Head Starts because teachers know how to do it, they study to do it ... they make learning fun!" Like Ingrid, Marisol compared her aunt's son, who didn't go to kindergarten, to Jacob, who did. She told us: "He didn't even know how to write his name or how to hold a pencil. Jacob is much more advanced because we went to preschool." For Maribel, attending preschool was an advantage that children had because they already had a sense of how school worked. She said that preschool "helps children understand what comes before kindergarten ... it's something similar to kindergarten." She further stated:

Kindergarten will be new for them, but if they went to preschool, they already know some rules. The only difference is the place. They know how to interact with others, they know how to play with the material ... but when they are home, they are just playing.

Responsibility of Mothers

Five mothers reported that it was the parents' responsibility to help their child get ready for school. Spending time with their children, doing constructive activities at home, setting a good example, and leading them in the right direction were some of the reasons that parents gave.

Without any hesitation, Paulina told us that it was only the parents' responsibility. She said: "The parents, because the parents are the ones raising and educating their kids. We, the parents, are the guides for our kids." Like Paulina, Amanda also felt that it was the parents' responsibility to help children get ready, but more importantly, to help them fit into the U.S. culture. She said:

To some extent, parents are guilty that some kids are not ready for kindergarten. ... We are the ones that cause all the bad and good behavior in our kids, we are their example, who they will follow? The boy has to be like his dad and the girl like her mom. If they see us struggling in this country because the country doesn't want us here, they will feel it. We have to try to fit in this country.

Kristina believed that children ask for a lot of attention, and if parents want children to be ready they have to give them time and attention: "I think they are ready because the parent is more involved...they are not only doing their daily chores, but are putting attention to their kids." While the daycare does help get children ready for kindergarten, for Alicia, it's up to the parents, not the school. She told us: "It doesn't matter if they attend or not ... it's about the parents being involved. We have to prepare them." Alicia told us that the only reason that Manny was in Hazelwood was because it helped her do her job, not because she felt it was going to help him learn. However, if Manny hadn't attended Hazelwood, Alicia said she would "have had to prepare him more."

Not only did Marcela believe that parents mattered for children's school readiness success by "being more involved and direct with their child," but also that siblings or older peers played a vital role. She told us: "I think having other siblings kinda advances them ... they've already experienced it, so they already know what to expect ... they give them a heads up and are like a mini teacher to the younger siblings." While Diego was an only child, Marcela gave an example of how her sister's older sons, who are five and eight years old and lived with them, were helping Daniel get ready: "The oldest one will actually teach them how to do numbers on the whiteboard, and will read to them, which is amazing 'cause they're all grasping it. So they're all helping each other, which is great!" Parents and older cousins were not the only reasons why children were ready for kindergarten. For Marcela, children were also ready because of the activities they did at home. She shared with us: "I like to do puzzles with him and paint versus just putting on a movie or just buying a bunch of video games ... activities that will help them mentally develop."

Responsibility of Mothers and Preschools

Four mothers believed that both parents and preschools shared responsibility for children's readiness. Many mothers stated that preschool was important for their children to learn how to get along with others. Having dedicated teachers was also essential.

For Adriana and Alexa, children were ready because they attended preschool. Adriana said: "If they were kept at home and not exposed because you know ... preschool is like a mini school." Alexa believed that children were ready because children attended preschool and because they had dedicated teachers. She shared with us: "A child is ready because they went to preschool. Oh my God, definitely! It's really different ... you see the difference in having that experience early on,

compared to those who didn't go." It wasn't enough that children just go to preschool. For Alexa, the support from teachers was "super important":

If you have a teacher that is unmotivated and is just there for the paycheck ... then they're not gonna learn. With engaged teachers, you see them on the floor talking. You see them coloring with them, you see them having conversations ... the kid learns a lot with them.

For Irene, the daycare teaches children how to be independent, how to express their feelings, and how to interact with others. Specifically, Irene said, "Hazelwood has helped Kayla a lot. At home, you can't teach them the same as at the daycare." Similar to Irene, Jocelyn also believed that children who spent time at home with their mother instead of going to daycare were not ready. She shared with us the difference:

Children who don't know how to talk, express themselves, don't know 1 or 2 ... they are the ones who are with their moms at home. But once they get into daycare, they awake a little bit and learn their numbers, colors, letters, also how to make friends, and share toys.

While many mothers stated that preschool was important for their children to learn how to get along with others, they also reported that parents had to do their share as well.

Adriana told us that children are ready because "parents are involved": "I would say maybe their parents taught them things that they will do in kindergarten." Alexa believed that parents also had to play a role and do "their part" because "a school can only do so much." For her, parents were "children's first teacher. Why wouldn't you take part in your child's education?" When asked why a child was ready, Irene succinctly said: "Because parents are involved." Giving them your time and "being involved in their lives" was important for Irene. Although attending daycare was important for Jocelyn, so were parents. She believed that "it is our responsibility as parents to help them learn," but admitted that sometimes parents leave everything to the teachers. She said:

Sometimes we think that they have to learn everything there, but when kids come home we don't ask them, "Do you have homework?" Or if they ask for help, we say, "I can't because I'm cooking," or "I'm on the phone, don't interrupt me."

Summary

In general, mothers had a clear understanding of the reasons why some children were ready or not ready for kindergarten. The majority of mothers (N=8) believed that the biggest factor influencing children's readiness was their exposure to and attendance in preschool. Five mothers believed their children's academic success was the responsibility of the parents and only the parents. Finally, four parents shared with us that both the parents and the preschool were responsible for ensuring children were ready. There were no demographic differences and no differences between first-time and non-first-time mothers.

Previous work with Latino families has suggested that they draw a clear boundary

between the school and the home because they respect the teacher's authority and thus give full authority for the children's education to the teacher (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Goldenberg et al., 2001). This belief may lead Latina mothers to avoid involving themselves in a teaching role because it demonstrates disrespect for teachers' roles, knowledge, and expertise (Reese, 2002; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). While these findings partially align with Delgado-Gaitan's (2004) ethnographic work with Latino families and communities and others alike, our findings reveal that mothers' beliefs about who is responsible for their children's academic success is much more complex. These findings align more with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) revised model of the parental involvement process (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005), which identifies two constructs of parents' motivational beliefs: Parental role construction and parental self-efficacy. In their model, parents' role construction for involvement are examined for three patterns, which match findings from this chapter: (a) school-focused role construction, in which parents believe school is primarily responsible for the student's school learning and outcomes; (b) partnership- focused role construction, in which parents hold beliefs that they and the school share primary responsibility for the student's school outcomes; and (c) parent-focused role construction, in which parents hold beliefs that they are primarily responsible for the student's school outcomes. Self-efficacy is defined as a person's belief that he or she can act in ways that will produce desired outcomes (Walker et al., 2005).

Applied to parental involvement, mothers' self-efficacy suggests that parents make involvement decisions based in part on their thinking about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker, et al., 2005). Positive beliefs about efficacy for helping children get ready for school has been associated with increased parental involvement among elementary, middle, and high school students (see Walker et al., 2005), but no research has been done with preschool-aged children. I hypothesize that mothers who felt that it was the responsibility of the schools only had less positive beliefs about their ability to teach their children, compared to mothers who believed it was the parents' responsibility only. Regardless of who was responsible for children's readiness, all mothers were in agreement that children needed to be ready for the transition to kindergarten.

Mothers' Perceptions about the Kindergarten Transition

This second section focuses on what mothers believed teachers' expectations to be. We asked the following questions: 1) Now that your child is going to kindergarten, what kind of things do you think the kindergarten teacher will expect her/him to know and do? 2) Since your child will now be in school, what are some of the things that you think the school/teacher will expect from you? 3) What are some of the expectations that you have for your child's teacher?

Mothers' View: Kindergarten Teachers' Expectations of Children

Mothers were asked what they believed their child's kindergarten teacher would expect her/him to know and do by the time school began. Mothers gave a range of answers and focused on the following school readiness domains: (a) Nominal knowledge; (b) Emergent reading; (c) Emergent writing; (d) General knowledge; (e) Independence; (e) Socio-emotional development; (f) Approaches to Learning and; (g) Language and Communication. Mothers generally viewed kindergarten teachers as expecting children to come in knowing nominal knowledge skills such as numbers, colors, and shapes, as well as emergent reading skills (e.g., mastery of alphabet). The least reported skill that mothers anticipated teachers wanting related to approaches to learning skills (e.g., following instructions, routines) and language and communication skills (e.g., speaking English) (See Table 39).

Table 39. *Teachers' Expectations of Children (N = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Nominal Knowledge	Emergent Reading	Emergent Writing	General Knowledge	Independence	Socio-Emotional	ATL	Lang & Comm.	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X	X						3
Alexa (David)	X	X	X			X			4
Alicia (Manny)				X	X				2
Amanda (Jax)			X	X	X			X	4
Delia (Josue)	X	X		X	X	X		X	6
Fabiola (Javier)	X			X					2
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X						3
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X	X	X					4
Irene (Kayla)		X	X			X			3
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X	X		X				4
Kristina (Kevin)	X	X							2
Laura (Isa)	X	X			X	X	X		5
Marcela (Daniel)		X		X		X			3
Maribel (Diana)	X								1
Marisol (Jacob)				X	X		X		3
Natalia (Nina)	X	X							2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X							2
Total	12	12	7	7	6	5	2	2	53

Note: ATL= Approaches to Learning

Nominal Knowledge

When mothers were asked what they believed their child's kindergarten teacher would expect their daughter/son to know by the time school began, 12 mothers mentioned knowing their numbers, colors, and shapes.

Adriana began by saying that Lesley's teacher would want her to know "the basics," which included "Numbers ... maybe the shapes, and colors." Likewise, Paulina said: "For Hugo to know the basics. His numbers 1-20, his colors." Like Paulina, Natalia told us that Nina's teacher is expecting her to know "her numbers, even if it's just 1-10." She also focused on "basic colors." Maribel imagined that Diana's teacher would want her to "know groups of numbers, her colors. Those things." In addition to "identifying her numbers," Kristina expected Kevin's teacher to want Kevin to "know his shapes ... stuff like that." Identifying numbers was a skill that Laura also believed Isa's teacher was looking for, as well as "knowing her colors." Ingrid focused on the "basics" and said: "She'll want Nayeli to know the name of colors, numbers." Fabiola only focused on colors and said: "Maybe his teacher will want Javier to know his colors."

Four mothers solely focused on number knowledge. Jocelyn and Delia both expected their child's teacher to expect their preschooler to "know their numbers." Flor took it a step further and added "counting": "She would want Lucia to try to count her numbers." Alexa had a different perspective. Through her experience with her older step-son, she found out that teachers were not as worried about children knowing their numbers as much as she originally believed. She said: "I was really afraid of that, but I found out that's not true. Like he doesn't have to *know* his numbers. More like saying them out loud."

Emergent Reading

Twelve mothers included emergent reading skills, particularly alphabet mastery. However, one mother, Alicia, did *not* believe that teachers were expecting children to know their letters. Likewise, two mothers, Flor and Paulina, shared with us that kindergarten teachers would *not* be expecting their incoming students to know how to read (See Table 40).

Table 40. *Expected Emergent Reading Skills (n = 13)*

Parent (Target Child)	Alphabet Mastery	Reading ¹⁴	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		1
Alicia (Manny)	-X		1
Alexa (David)	X		1
Delia (Josue)	X		1
Flor (Lucia)		-X	1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X		1
Irene (Kayla)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Laura (Isa)	X		1
Marcela (Daniel)	X		1
Natalia (Nina)	X		1
Paulina (Hugo)	X	-X	2
Total	12	2	14

Alphabet mastery. Eleven mothers shared with us that alphabet mastery was a skill kindergarten teachers would want children to know. Natalia said: “The teacher hopes that Nina knows at least half of the alphabet.” Jocelyn, Alma’s mother, focused on alphabet mastery through singing, saying: “She’ll want her to be able to sing the alphabet.” Other mothers reported that teachers were expecting children to “know the basics.” Adriana reported: “I would say the basics like their ABCs.” Paulina’s account was similar, but she took it a step further and added letter recognition. She told us: “The basics. To know his alphabet and to recognize letters.” Paulina was not the only mother who felt that letter recognition was a skill teachers were looking for. Ingrid and Laura both said “identifying letters.” For Irene, it wasn’t enough for children to “know their letters,” but they also needed to “identify them.” Alexa shared the same sentiment: “She’ll want kids to know the basic of letter recognition.” Marcela shared that Daniel knew his alphabet, but identifying letters was another story. She said: “He knows his alphabet, but identifying them separately in a random order—not so much, and they may expect him to know that.” Kristina focused more on identifying words and said: “Kevin’s teacher would want him to identify like ‘cat, hat,’ all that stuff.”

Two mothers were unsure what their child’s teacher expected. Delia, Josue’s mother believed “that question is very hard” but after some probing said: “His letters.” Ingrid “did not know how kindergarten is here in the U.S.” and was unsure what answer to give: “I don’t know... I remember that in my kindergarten they taught us ‘a,e,i,o,u’ but here I don’t know if the teacher will. It’s my first time. I don’t know.”

Only one mother explicitly said that she did not expect her child’s teacher to expect him to know his letters. Alicia said: “I don’t think that she will expect Manny to know the letters because kindergarten is the beginning of that, right? They have to start with the alphabet, all of that.”

¹⁴ Two mothers specifically said that teachers were *not* expecting children to know how to read.

Reading. Two mothers explicitly said that teachers were *not* expecting children to come in knowing how to read. Flor believed Lucia was too young for teachers to expect her to read. She reported: “They will not expect her to read because she’s still little¹⁵ ... she is still developing, and again, she’s still little.” Paulina did not believe that children in kindergarten knew how to read, and thus did not expect Hugo’s teacher to expect that from him. She said: “I don’t know if she will want him to read. I don’t think kids know how to read when they enter kindergarten.”

Emergent Writing

A total of seven mothers believed teachers were expecting children to have emergent writing skills, such as writing their name and drawing. Five mothers reported that their child’s teacher would expect their child know how to write their name. One parent focused on writing words and letters. Two parents reported knowing how to draw as an important skill that teachers were expecting their child to know how to do (See Table 41).

Table 41. *Expected Emergent Writing Skills (n = 7)*

Parent (Target Child)	Writes Own Name	Drawing	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		1
Alexa (David)	X		1
Amanda (Jax)	X		1
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	2
Ingrid (Nayeli)		X	1
Irene (Kayla)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Total	6	2	8

Writes own name. Five parents shared with us that their child’s kindergarten teacher would expect their child to know how to write their name. Adriana, Lesley’s mother, said: “I would say maybe writing her name.” Very confidently, Jocelyn told us that Alma’s teacher would like for her to “be able to write her name.” Alexa was not very sure, but said: “Probably like write his name, maybe.” Irene, who has an older son in Kayla’s soon-to-be elementary school, shared a conversation she had with the principal. She said: “To write her name. That’s what the principal said, that she has to know how to write her name.” Amanda did not expect kindergarten teachers to want a lot from children, expect for children to know how to write their name. She reported: “I don’t think that she will expect a lot ... I think that the first thing she would want is for Jax to know how to write his name ... the basics.” One parent, Flor, did not expect teachers to want Lucia to write her name, but did expect her to “write some letters, words.”

Drawing. Two parents, Ingrid and Flor, believed their child’s teacher would expect them to know how to draw. For example, Ingrid said: “That Nayeli knows how to draw...to stay inside

¹⁵ The literal translation of “pequeña” is “little,” but Flor is referring to Lucia as being too young, not too little/small.

the lines.” Lucia’s mother Flor was not too worried about staying inside the lines, but rather focused on Lucia’s effort. She said: “She’ll want Lucia to draw ... to *try* to draw at least.”

Independence/Self- Help Skills

Knowing how to use the bathroom independently as well as being able to feed and dress themselves were skills that six parents felt teachers expected children to know how to do on their own (See Table 42).

Table 42. *Expected Independence Skills (n = 6)*

Parent (Target Child)	Bathroom Hygiene	Feeding Themselves	Dressing Themselves	Total
Alicia (Manny)	X			1
Amanda (Jax)	X			1
Delia (Josue)	X		X	2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Laura (Isa)	X	X		2
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Total	6	1	1	8

Bathroom hygiene. Six mothers focused on independence, particularly bathroom hygiene, as a skill that kindergarten teachers expected children to know upon starting kindergarten. Being able to go to the bathroom “all by himself” was a skill that Delia believed teachers expected Josue to know how to do. In addition to being “potty trained,” Jocelyn expressed that teachers expected Alma to also “let the teacher know that she needs to use the bathroom.” Marisol and Laura focused on going to the bathroom unaccompanied. Marisol told us that restrooms in elementary schools were at a distance from children’s classrooms: “His teachers are going to expect Jacob to go to the restroom by himself because, in schools, the restrooms are not in the classroom anymore ... they are far away.” Laura agreed with Marisol and gave a similar response. She said: “I think that she will expect that Isa goes to the bathroom by herself, without needing to take her.” For Alicia, teachers were not only expecting Manny to “use the bathroom by himself,” but also to “know how to wash his hands.”

Amanda illustrated that children knowing how to go to the bathrooms on their own was a “great responsibility” and something that parents, not teachers, had to teach children. She said: “That Jax know how to go to the bathroom by himself. That’s very important ... it’s a great responsibility to wipe their own butts. That’s something that their moms have to teach them before kindergarten.”

Independently feeding and dressing themselves. Two mothers included children feeding themselves and eating without assistance from others as skills that teachers were expecting. Laura told us: “That Isa eat by herself ... without anyone’s help.” Delia focused on Josue being able “to dress himself.”

General Knowledge

Seven parents included general knowledge, such as children knowing their name as well as the names of family members. Other skills included knowing where they lived and knowing how old they were (See Table 43). Parents felt that teachers expected children to come into the classroom knowing these skills.

Table 43. *Expected General Knowledge Skills (n = 7)*

Parent (Target Child)	Knows Own Name	Name of family members/Home Address/Age	Total
Alicia (Manny)	X		1
Amanda (Jax)		X	1
Delia (Josue)		X	1
Fabiola (Javier)	X		1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X		1
Marcela (Daniel)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X	2
Total	5	3	8

Knows own name. Five parents reported that teachers would expect children to know their own name. Marcela and Alicia succinctly said: “To know his name.” Fabiola wasn’t sure what teachers were expecting but told us: “I think maybe to know his name is Javier.” Ingrid’s account was similar. “I really don’t know ... I don’t know if they will ask us [parents], ‘Does your daughter know her name?’ Do they? I don’t know ... I think that she will want her to know her name.” Marisol stressed the importance of children knowing their *real name*, not just their nickname. She shared a story about her cousin, who has the same name as his father. At home he’s called Junior, but when they called his full name at school, he didn’t know they were referring to him. Marisol told us: “That he know his full name, not only his nickname. So when they take attendance, Jacob knows he has to answer or if they ask him his full name, he has to say what his name is.”

Names of family members/home address/age. Three parents told us that teachers would expect their child to know the names of their family members, where they lived, and their age. Delia said: “She’s going to want Josue to know the name of his mom and his dad.” In addition to Jax having to know “his parent’s name,” Amanda told us that his teacher would expect him to know “a little about where he lives.” Marisol not only included Jacob having to know the name of his parents, but also “the name of his brother.” She further added that his teacher is going to expect that he “know his age.”

Socio-Emotional Development

A total of five parents felt that communicating with teachers and peers, having good manners, being independent, and getting along with others were skills that teachers expected children to come in knowing (See Table 44).

Table 44. *Expected Socio-Emotional Skills (n = 5)*

Parent (Target Child)	Communicates with Teachers and Peers	Good Manners	Child is Independent	GALWO	Total
Alexa (David)		X			1
Delia (Josue)			X		1
Irene (Kayla)	X				1
Laura (Isa)	X			X	2
Marcela (Daniel)		X			1
Total	2	2	1	1	6

Notes. GALWO= Gets along with others

Communicates with teachers and peers. For two parents, Irene and Laura, being able to communicate with others in the classroom was a skill teachers were expecting. For example, Irene emphasized “That Kayla know how to express herself with her classmates and teachers.” Teachers also expected Isa to communicate her needs. Laura said: “I imagine that the teacher will expect her to communicate well, and to let her know what she needs.”

Good manners. As mothers of preschool-aged boys, Marcela and Alexa reported that teachers were expecting children to have good manners and behave properly in the classroom. For example, Marcela focused on Daniel not interrupting or talking back:

He needs to understand that teachers are usually right, for the most part [laughs]. The teacher will want him not to talk back, to raise his hand and not interrupt. Not to be too talkative because he likes to talk a lot [laughs].

While both mothers focused on behavior, Alexa, David’s mother, emphasized teachers wanting children to know how to be “civil” with other children. She stated: “Not being rude, not pushing or shoving other children [laughing] and keeping his hands to himself. Like civil things.” She reflected on getting phone calls from her older son’s teacher and told us she “hated it”: “It’s so embarrassing when they call you and your child is not behaving. Oh, my God, I hate it. I don’t want that with David.”

Child is independent and gets along with others. Delia reported that Josue’s teacher would expect Josue “to be an independent child.” Laura told us that Isa’s teacher would want Isa to “know how to interact with her classmates.” She was worried about Isa “isolating herself” and hoped teachers would be watchful of Isa’s behavior.

Approaches to Learning

Two parents included children knowing how to follow instructions and routine as skills that their kindergarten teachers were expecting them to know (See Table 45).

Table 45. *Expected Approaches to Learning Skills (n = 2)*

Parent (Target Child)	Follows Instructions	Follows Routine	Total
Laura (Isa)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)		X	1
Total	1	1	2

Laura told us that if Isa didn't know how to follow instructions chaos would erupt. She said: "Isa's teacher will want her to follow instructions because if she doesn't follow the instructions, there's going to be chaos." Knowing how to follow class routine was a skill that Jacob already knew how to do, and a skill his teachers would be expecting. She stated: "I already told you ... because he attended preschool, he already has an idea about the things he will do. Like how to get in line, to sit down, to be quiet ... he knows about his class routine."

Language and Communication Skills

Knowing how to speak English was a skill that Delia and Amanda believed their child's teacher was going to expect. For Delia, even a small amount was good enough. She said: "That he can speak English. At least a little bit." If Jax were questioned in English, Amanda believed teachers would want him to respond in English. She said: "That he knows some English in case they ask him, 'What's your name? Where are you from?'"

Summary

Findings from this section revealed that mothers expected kindergarten teachers to want their children to come in knowing a number of skills and abilities. The two most notable skills mentioned included nominal knowledge (e.g., numbers, colors, and shapes) and emergent reading skills (e.g., alphabet mastery). These findings paralleled mothers' understanding of school readiness, as 17 mothers mentioned nominal knowledge, while 16 mothers mentioned emergent reading.

These findings suggest that parents at this stage are already thinking about what their child's teacher would want their child to know. Further, it suggests that parents' emphasis *is* on academic knowledge (e.g., nominal knowledge, emergent reading, emergent writing), rather than the socio-emotional and approaches to learning skills that most kindergarten teachers are expecting (Barbarin et al., 2008; Piotrowski et al., 2001). Mothers' expected school readiness skills also differ from preschool teachers, who report problem solving as a key feature of school readiness (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2009). In general, both groups of teacher differ from mothers and place academic skills at or near the bottom of their readiness priorities (Lin et al., 2003; Wesley & Buysse, 2003).

Mothers' Views: Kindergarten Teachers' Expectations of Parents

Mothers were asked what they believed kindergarten teachers would expect them as new parents of kindergartners to do once their child entered school. The majority of expectations focused on home-based activities, including parental assistance (e.g., assisting with homework and partnering with teachers), reinforcing school learning at home, monitoring children's progress, sending children to school in a respectable fashion, and encouraging children's moral development. Mothers also expected kindergarten teachers to want them to participate in school-based activities, such as attending parent meetings and volunteering in school. Demonstrating teacher appreciation was also mentioned (See Table 46).

Table 46. *Teachers' Expectations of Parents (n = 14)*

Parent (Target Child)	Home-Based Involvement				School-Based Involvement		
	Parental Assistance	Reinforcing school learning	Monitoring children's progress	Sending children to school in a respectable fashion	Fostering children's moral dev.	Participating in school activities	Demonstrating teacher appreciation
Adriana (Lesley)		X				X	
Alexa (David)	X		X			X	
Amanda (Jax)	X						X
Fabiola (Javier)				X			
Flor (Lucia)				X			
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X					X	
Irene (Kayla)		X					
Kristina (Kevin)						X	
Laura (Isa)	X					X	
Marcela (Daniel)					X		
Maribel (Diana)	X						
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X					
Natalia (Nina)	X	X					
Paulina (Hugo)			X				
Total	7	4	2	2	1	5	1

Home-Based Involvement

Mothers reported several home-based activities that they felt their child's kindergarten teacher would expect from them. These expectations included parental assistance (e.g., assisting with homework and partnering with teachers), as well as parents reinforcing school learning at home, monitoring children's progress, sending children to school in a respectable fashion, and encouraging children's moral development.

Parental assistance. Seven mothers reported that teachers would expect them to provide assistance to their children. Parental assistance was viewed in two styles. The first style focused on parents helping children with homework. The second style was much more general and emphasized partnering with teachers to assist with child's learning and supporting child's interests.

Assisting with homework. Six mothers shared with us that kindergarten teachers would expect parents to help their children with homework. Maribel said: "I think that she would want us to be attentive, that we help her with homework, that we don't forget anything. That's what teachers ask for, that we are checking homework." Laura believed that teachers know when "kids are supported" by their parents by seeing who brings their homework in and who does not: "I think that she expects us to help them with their homework, that we help Isa with it." Alexa gave a comparable response. She told us: "I feel like teachers could see if a parent is involved. Even if parents don't ever show up in school, they can see that parents are involved because the child's homework is done." When asked what teachers expected from Ingrid, she initially said: "To be honest, I don't know." After some probing, Ingrid said: "I think that she expects that I help my daughter with homework ... if she doesn't know how to do something that we are going to help her." According to Amanda, a responsible parent was someone who helped children with their homework, a task she believed teachers would want from her. She said: "That we help them with homework so the next day everything is ready for the teachers ... it is logical, right?" Unlike the previous mothers, who believed kindergarten teachers would want parents to *help* their child with their homework, Natalia thought otherwise. Instead of *helping* children complete their assignments, Natalia stressed how teachers expected parents to make sure children were *doing* their homework. She reported: "She'll want me to be sure that Nina is doing her homework every day."

Partnering with teachers was another mechanism that two mothers expected kindergarten teachers to want. Amanda felt that teachers would expect parents to be "equals" with them. She said: "The teacher's expectations are that we become equals. 50, 50. She does her half at school, and I do my half at home. We cannot expect everything from the teachers ... school doesn't stop

when the kids leave the class.” Marisol agreed that it wasn’t “only the teacher's responsibility” and believed parents “have to help too”: “She’s expecting that we help him because [then] they’re going to understand better.”

Reinforcing school learning. Four mothers shared with us that teachers expected parents to reinforce school learning at home. Natalia began by saying that teachers are expecting “more support from parents.” When asked to describe what that meant, she said: “That I help her at home to continue what she is doing in class.” Supporting children at home and school was what Irene expected Kayla’s teacher would want from her. She said teachers would expect “That we support Kayla at home and school because it’s important that we are involved in both things.” Marisol believed teachers would want parents to help with children’s projects at home: “Sometimes they ask them to do some projects. We have to be involved with that at home.” She went on to give an example and said: “For instance if at school they are learning about seasons, at home you have to practice that too.” Adriana told us that in kindergarten, children do not have “much time to practice” and thus teachers are expecting parents to step in and help at home. She said: “I know in kindergarten they’re not going to have much time to practice certain things that they’re learning in school, so they expect you to do it at home. That’s basically the only way they’re going to really learn.”

Monitoring children’s progress. Two mothers, Paulina and Alexa, shared with us that teachers expected them to monitor their children’s progress upon entering kindergarten. Alexa said: “She’ll want me to ask how David is doing ... to follow up [with her] if something is wrong.” Paulina’s account was similar: “To ask questions about him and tell the teacher how my son is [doing].”

Sending children to school in a respectable fashion. Two parents reflected and told us that teachers are expecting parents to send their child to school in a respectable fashion. For Fabiola, Javier’s mother, that meant having their “backpacks ready” and “uniforms clean.” Flor’s account was similar. She said that teachers expected parents to send their children to school clean. Flor would not have any trouble meeting this expectation as she already sent Lucia and her older daughter “clean and with nice hairstyles.” She shared with us: “I have always liked to send them well. Their clothes may be old, but clean.” When asked why that was important for her, she said: “Because it looks bad that a kid goes dirty to school, it’s not a shame for the kid but the parents. The kid represents you.”

Fostering children’s moral development. One mother, Marcela, shared with us that teachers would be expecting parents to “guide children in the right direction.” Marcela had different ideas of what that looked like. First, she said that it’s important for her to “be involved

in his personal life.” She did not suggest “following him” or “eavesdropping on him,” but monitoring him. Next, she felt that it was important that Daniel felt “comfortable” telling Marcela anything. She said: “If there are any problems, to make him feel comfortable to come to me. You know I wouldn’t want him to go to someone else and have them misguide him.” To do so, Marcela believed she had to build a “partnership” with Daniel: “I’m trying to develop not only a friendship, but also a partnership. I want him to feel comfortable that Mommy’s not gonna’ hate you or be mad at you [if you did something wrong].”

School-Based Involvement

Mothers also anticipated that teachers would expect them to participate in school. School-based involvement entailed attending parent meetings and volunteering in the classroom. Demonstrating appreciation for their child’s teacher was also an expectation mothers believed teachers had for them.

Participating in school activities. Five mothers stated that teachers would be expecting them to participate in school activities such as attending parent-teacher meetings and volunteering in the classroom. Laura, Isa’s mother, told us: “She will like that we participate in activities [at school] and that we collaborate with them.” For Adriana, being involved in school was multifaceted. She said: “I would say to go to like the parent-teacher conferences, to know everything that they’re doing in school, and to be up to speed with your child.” After some reflection, Kristina told us: “Maybe be present when she is having meetings or parent-teacher conferences ... maybe be involved in some of the activities at school. Or maybe volunteering or even helping when they make projects because she is only one teacher, she needs help.” Ingrid was also unsure but felt that if teachers didn’t see her at school, they would think she didn’t love her children. She said: “I think that she [the kindergarten teacher] has to see you at school a lot, if not she will think that I don’t love my kids or that I am not taking care of them.” If Ingrid wanted to know how her children were doing, attending school meetings was the way to go. She said:

If they have a meeting and we don’t attend, then how are we going to know how they are doing at school? As I said before, I work in the morning and my husband in the afternoon; if the meeting is in the morning he can come, if it’s in the afternoon, I can come.

Teacher appreciation. Amanda shared with us that teachers are expecting a “thanks” from parents since it’s not easy to take care of so many kids. She elaborated and said: “Sometimes it can be hard with only one child at home and they have to take care of that many kids ... it’s not easy. They also get tired! God bless them ... poor things.”

Summary

Overall findings suggest that parents were aware that teachers expected parents to contribute to their child's learning. How they contributed differed from parent to parent. There was a general consensus, however, that teachers would mostly expect home-based involvement from parents. Home-based involvement included assisting with homework, reinforcing school learning at home, monitoring children's progress, sending children to school clean and well-dressed, and encouraging children's moral development. Participating in school-related activities, while mentioned, was not as prevalent as being involved at home. These findings are in line with current research that shows that families of color often view involvement as being more home-based than school-based (De Gaetano, 2007; McWayne et al., 2013; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). However, many teachers and administrators expect parents to help their children succeed in school by attending school functions and events (Jones & Valez, 1997; see Ramirez, 2003). One study found that teachers believed that parents who volunteered at school valued education more than other parents. This belief about parents' values was in turn associated with the teachers' rating of student academic skills and achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003). I hypothesize that children may be at a disadvantage when parents and teachers hold different values with respect to desired involvement practices. For example, parents who are not visibly present at the school may be viewed as uncaring, an attitude that may have negative consequences for their children (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Mothers' View: Their Expectations of Kindergarten Teachers

Mothers were asked to share with us some of the expectations they had for their child's kindergarten teacher. Three findings emerged. The first focused on the teacher qualities that mothers expected teachers to have. These included educating children and being passionate about teaching. The second finding centered on the nature of parental relationships, specifically parent-teacher communication and collaboration. The third finding highlighted mothers' expectations about how teachers should interact with their children. Key qualities included being patient with children, being friendly and loving towards children, respecting children, and intellectually challenging children (See Table 47).

Table 47. *Mothers' Expectations for Kindergarten Teachers (n = 16)*

Parent (Target Child)	Teacher Qualities	Parental Relationships	Teachers Interactions with Children	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X			1
Alexa (David)			X	1
Alicia (Manny)		X	X	2
Amanda (Jax)		X	X	2
Delia (Josue)	X		X	2
Fabiola (Javier)	X		X	2
Flor (Lucia)			X	1
Jocelyn (Alma)			X	1
Ingrid (Nayeli)		X		1
Irene (Kayla)			X	1
Laura (Isa)			X	1
Marcela (Daniel)			X	1
Maribel (Diana)	X	X		2
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Natalia (Nina)		X		1
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X	X	3
Total	6	6	11	23

Teacher Qualities

Educating children and being passionate about teaching were the two qualities that six mothers expected from their child's kindergarten teacher.

Educating children and being passionate about teaching. Delia was succinct and told us: "She has to teach them things." Fabiola gave a comparable statement: "She has to teach them. To educate them." For Marisol, it was important for Jacob's teacher to take the time and make sure that Jacob understood what she is teaching. She said: "If he doesn't understand a subject that she will explain in a one-on-one basis." When asked what she expected from Diana's kindergarten teacher, Maribel stressed the importance of teaching Diana the "necessary" information so she could excel in elementary school. She reported: "Well, to be able to teach them and while she is in kindergarten, she teaches her the necessary stuff that she will need in elementary school. I think that's the thing a kindergarten teacher should do." Encouraging children and being positive were markers that Adriana, Lesley's mother, was looking for in Lesley's new kindergarten teacher. She stated:

To help them when they need the help. Encouraging them and being positive even though children don't know it yet, but being positive that they will [learn] if they keep practicing. Just being positive around the child, because I feel like that's what they need.

As part of their responsibility as teachers, one parent pointed out that teachers had to be passionate about teaching. Paulina said:

Well, more than anything, that she is a person happy with the things she is doing, that she has a passion for her job. Because if she is passionate about her work, I think that she will understand the students better. Also, it will inspire them to go to class happy ... to participate.

Parental Relationships

Six parents expected that their child's teacher would communicate with parents regarding their child's learning trajectory, behavioral problems, or anything related to their child's well-being. One mother also expected that she and the teacher would collaborate to help her child learn.

Communication and collaboration with parent. Maribel would like to get regular calls from Diana's teacher. She said: "If she could call me every week or every other week to tell me how she's doing—that I'd like!" Open communication was important for Paulina and something she was expecting from Hugo's teacher: "Another [expectation] is to be communicative and open about a lot of things. To talk with the parents about the kids." Similar to Paulina, Ingrid was expecting a teacher with whom she could have back-and-forth dialogue. She shared: "If she tells me things about Nayeli then I can also tell her that I feel that maybe my daughter is not learning or doesn't understand at school ... so open communication. I would like that." Alicia agreed with Paulina and Ingrid on the importance of open communication. However, she was also expecting a teacher who would be creative when solving problems: "To communicate with me. Open communication and obtain solutions for any problem." For Amanda, she expected that teachers contact her first to let her know "everything" that's happening with Jax. She reported:

I have to be the first person she calls. Whatever it is, that they inform me about things that are happening with my son at school. To me that is very important, I expect that from teachers. That they tell me everything.

Natalia shared with us that she would like to call Nina's teacher, but knows she is unable because she does not speak English. She said: "That if I were to call her, she would answer. But I can't because of the language." She has an older daughter who is in the first grade and knows that "in the schools, the teachers only speak English."

Teachers' Interactions with Children

Eleven parents expected their child's teacher to possess the following affective attributes when interacting with their child: being patient, being friendly and loving, and respecting their child. Although parents expected teachers to have the stated qualities, some mothers still believed that teachers had the instrumental task of challenging students intellectually.

Patient with children. Five mothers expected their child's teacher to be patient. Delia said: "She has to be patient with the kids." Jocelyn told us that some teachers get "desperate when kids cannot learn" but hoped that Alexa's teacher was patient. She said: "They have to be patient ... Alexa's teachers need to be patient with kids." Flor followed suit and shared that there are situations where teachers are not patient with children and thus resort to yelling. She said: "Only that she is patient with the kids because there are a lot of situations in which they are not patient

with the kids, they yell at them or tell them things.” Being more “social with kids” was one way to mediate teachers losing their patience and yelling, according to Flor. Fabiola was unsure what to expect from Javier’s teacher. After some probing, she told us “patience is the key” and if the teachers wanted children to learn, they not only had to be patient but also willing to repeat themselves multiple times. She said:

She must be patient. Patience I think is key, for her to teach and for him to learn because if you are forcing them to do this or that, they get frustrated. That's why I think patience is basic. The teacher has to be patient to teach them. If she teaches them and they don't learn the first time, she has to explain it a second time.

To be a kindergarten teacher, Alicia believed teachers had to be patient. She elaborated and said: “Patient. I think that she has to be patient to be a kindergarten teacher [laughs]. Kids have good and bad personalities, so she has to know all of that is coming [laughs]!”

Friendly and loving towards children. Three parents reported that they were expecting their children’s teachers to show affection towards their child. In addition to having someone “who is good with the kids,” Laura wanted Isa’s teacher to be sympathetic. She said: “I hope she is friendly, that she guides the kids with love. Someone fair ... someone who sets the rules, but doesn’t have an attitude.” Irene shared with us that when Kayla gets frustrated, her teacher shows affection: “I have seen that when Kayla is frustrated, the [preschool] teacher holds her in her arms, she gives her love. I feel that she is not only her teacher but her friend.” This type of behavior and attention was what Irene also expected from Kayla’s kindergarten teacher. Delia told us that children would not like their teacher if she were not courteous with them or didn’t show love towards them. She shared: “She has to be amicable with them... imagine if she doesn’t do that! Then they are not going to like her!” In addition to being amicable, Delia also expected Josue’s kindergarten teacher “to treat him well”: “She has to be nice with them ... I think that sometimes teachers don’t show love to the kids. It is important that they show love, if not they are going to hate her, she is not going to be loved.”

Amanda believed that caring teachers did not mistreat their students. She said: “That she [the teacher] will not hit him or yell at him because that’s something that always happens at school. That’s what I expect from his teachers.” Laura also suggested loving teachers protected children from class bullies: “I hope that she [the teacher] has the capacity to identify if there’s a bully in Isa’s classroom, someone who is bothering the other kids, or someone being discriminated [against].”

Challenging children intellectually. Although displaying affective qualities was important for many mothers because it showed that they were strongly committed to children’s

well-being and learning, three mothers believed that teachers still had the instrumental tasks of challenging students intellectually.

More than anything, Paulina wanted Hugo's teacher to "motivate him." Marcela was expecting Daniel's teachers to stimulate and excite him without making him lose interest in learning. In other words, teachers should find a balance between encouraging children without pushing so much that children no longer enjoy learning. She said:

I would really want them to keep pushing him and not to let him give up... to urge him to find other solutions and not just to give him the answers. I want someone to challenge him. You know, not to challenge him where they push him away and make him lose interest, but to just kinda guide him.

Alexa gave an equivalent answer. She shared with us that if the teachers see that David is lazy, they should propel him to learn: "I want his teacher to make sure that he's being pushed. If they see that he's being lazy or something, to challenge him." She went on to explain that David is just like his father and gets bored easily. She said: "I see David has his dad's personality. He needs to stay busy and be challenged. If he's being challenged he will keep an interest in whatever he's doing." Giving children a nudge was acceptable in Alexa's eyes. She said: "There's nothing wrong with giving a kid, you know an extra push ... they have to be challenged."

Summary

Mothers in this study had an idea of how they would like their child's kindergarten teacher to behave towards them, but also towards their child. Being passionate about their job and making sure that teachers were educating their children were the qualities that parents expected from teachers. Mothers also told us that they expected to have a relationship with their child's teacher. How teachers interacted with children was very important for mothers. Many made it clear that they were expecting their child's teacher to be patient and be willing to repeat themselves until the child learned. Other behaviors that facilitated the learning process included being friendly and loving towards their child, as well as respecting (e.g., not hitting or yelling) children. Although mothers believed it was important for teachers to display affective qualities, some parents still believed that teachers had the task of challenging students intellectually. These findings suggest that parents are interested in their child's education and safety starting at an early age (Mapp, 2003; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010).

Chapter 6: Meaning of Parental Involvement

This chapter focuses on the meaning of parental involvement from the perspectives of mothers and preschool teachers. We asked mothers the following question: If someone asked you to define parental involvement, how would you define it? Similarly, we asked teachers: As a teacher, what do you think Latino families of children transitioning to kindergarten should do to prepare them?

Mothers' Definition of Parental Involvement

When asked to define parental involvement, mothers provided a range of answers that were divided into home-based involvement and school-based involvement. This first section will cover home-based involvement, which entailed giving children time, helping children with homework, asking children questions, supporting children's interests, and knowing children's friends (See Table 48). A total of 14 mothers included home-based involvement activities as part of their understanding of parental involvement.

Home-Based Involvement

Table 48. *Mothers' Home-based Involvement (n = 14)*

Parent (Target Child)	Spending time with children	Assisting with HMK	Asking questions	Supporting child's interests	Knowing child's friends	Total
Adriana (Lesley)			X			1
Alicia (Manny)		X				1
Amanda (Jax)	X		X		X	3
Delia (Josue)	X					1
Fabiola (Javier)		X				1
Flor (Lucia)		X				1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X					1
Irene (Kayla)				X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)			X			1
Kristina (Kevin)					X	1
Laura (Isa)				X	X	2
Marcela (Daniel)			X			1
Maribel (Diana)	X	X				2
Paulina (Hugo)				X		1
Total	4	4	4	3	3	18

Note: HMK= Homework

Spending time with children. For four mothers, spending time with their children was part of their understanding of parental involvement. Maribel, Diana's mother, told us: "Giving them time to read to them, play, and taking them to the park." Comparable to Maribel, Josue's mother Delia said: "Parental involvement is someone who focuses a lot on their kids. If they say 'Take me out to play' you take them out for a bit." She later admitted that it's not always possible since "sometimes you don't do it because you are tired from work." Amanda viewed parental involvement as "quality over quantity": "It doesn't matter if it's 15 or 30 minutes.... We have to

dedicate quality time to our kids. In this country, it's all running, and we have forgotten that the first thing, even before God, is family."

When asked to define parental involvement, Nayeli's mother Ingrid gave an elaborate response. She shared the following with us: "I think it's when they get involved in what the kids are doing." For her that meant making sure her children "are not doing bad things" such as "ending up on the streets or involved with gangs or stealing." Ingrid believed that children who are into "bad things" were a result of parents ignoring them and never taking them anywhere. Because she wanted her children "to go to school and be educated" as her and her husband were "not able to have an education," they dedicated Sundays to being "Family Day." She said: "We go out to eat with them, take them to the inflatables, sometimes we go to the theater or Chuck E. Cheese." For Ingrid, it was important that Nayeli remembered that she spent time with her family and not that her parents were only working. Another reason Ingrid was so adamant to spend time with her children was because she believed that kids were a replica of their parents. She said: "Kids are a reflection of what parents are. I don't want them to be rebellious or disrespect us. ... It's only one day, but we think it's important."

Assisting with homework. In their understanding of parental involvement, four mothers included helping their child with homework. Flor, Lucia's mother, was a bit hesitant but after some probing said: "I don't know ... when parents help them with their homework." Similarly, Maribel, Diana's mother, said: "When you are making school activities at home, like doing homework with them." While Alicia also believed that helping children with their homework was part of parental involvement, she noted that not everyone could do that:

Ideally, you would sit beside them and help them ... not all parents have the opportunity to sit beside their kids. You can't do it. There's no time. So if you can't do it, at least remind them and see if they have homework.

Fabiola, who was not worried about Javier because "he's ready," admitted that she was not very involved, but was still "aware of what Javier had to do for homework." She said:

I don't always help him with homework because he knows. But last year they gave him a bag and every week it was a different letter, and he had to fill the bag with things that had that letter. I got involved when I helped him find things with that letter.

Asking questions. When asked to define parental involvement, four mothers mentioned asking children questions. For example, Jocelyn, Alma's mother, said: "Parental involvement is if a parent is aware of what's going on and asks 'How is kindergarten going?'" In addition to "going out of the way to make sure they're learning," asking questions was what parental involvement meant for Adriana, Lesley's mother: "And just really getting to know your child by asking questions like 'What did you learn in school?'" Daniel's mother Marcela said asking

questions was important, but for her, she used it as a way to learn if children needed guidance and support. She reported: “Parental involvement is asking questions to see if there’s a problem. If there is a problem, then figuring it out together so that the child doesn’t feel like they are alone.” Contrary to Marcela, Amanda felt it was important to ask children questions to find out if children were safe while at school and treated well by teachers. She told us:

When kids come home, parents feed them, then sit down and talk with them. It doesn’t matter if it’s right away or at night ... but to talk to them about what happened to them during the day. Asking them “How did they treat you at school?” “How did the teacher interact with you?” “What did she say to you?” Because it has happened in a lot of countries that even at school, kids are raped.

Supporting children’s interests. Three parents included “being aware of child’s interests” in their interpretation of parental involvement. Irene told us: “Getting involved in everything, everything Kayla likes to do.” Laura provided more detail in her definition of what parental involvement meant to her: “Being involved in all of your kids’ interests. Isa likes ballet and gymnastics. I’m looking for a place for her so she can practice both.” Laura also points out that her older son, Julian, is also in Taekwondo classes, emphasizing that Laura knows her kids’ interests and acts upon them. Finally, Paulina, Hugo’s mother, had a different insight. She focused less on what Hugo wanted to do, and more on making sure his needs were met, particularly emotional needs: “Parental involvement is noticing if the child is happy. ... An involved parent seeks a lovely, harmonic place where the kid will feel loved and never rejected.”

Knowing children’s friends. Three mothers highlighted that an involved parent is someone who knows who their child’s friends are. For example, Jax’s mother Amanda said: “A parent who takes the time to know who his friends are is an involved parent.” Kristina, Kevin’s mother, shared with us that children have a life at school as well as at home. She said: “It’s important to know who they are hanging out with because from there you can read what your kid is on.” She further elaborated that while growing up, her mother “did not want anyone in the house,” which is why she wants Kevin to have friends over the house so she can know who he’s spending time with at school. Similarly, in Laura’s understanding of parental involvement, she replied: “Knowing their friends.” Because she wants Isa to be happy and knows that “friends are important to Isa,” she sets up play dates with Isa’s friends: “If I am planning to take Isa to the pool, I try to invite other kids too.” She also added that she tries to “become friends with the parents because then you have a better idea of what kind of house they live in.”

School-based Involvement

School-based involvement consisted of attending school events (e.g., PTA meetings, workshops, volunteering) and being in touch with children’s teachers (See Table 49). A total of eight mothers included school-based activities as part of their understanding of school readiness.

Table 49. *Mothers’ School-based Involvement (n = 8)*

Parent (Target Child)	Attending School Sponsored Events	Communicating with Teachers	Totals
Adriana (Lesley)	X		1
Alicia (Manny)		X	1
Flor (Lucia)	X		1
Irene (Kayla)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X	2
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)		X	1
Natalia (Nina)	X		1
Total	6	3	9

Attending school-sponsored events. For Irene, “attending school activities” was one way to be involved at school. Similarly, Jocelyn said: “Always attending [school] meetings.” Adriana, Lesley’s mother, said: “Volunteering at the school” when she was asked to define parental involvement. Flor included attending school events and meetings: “Taking children to school social events ... being involved means going to meetings at school to know how the kid is doing.” Natalia, Nina’s mother, felt that parental involvement meant attending workshops that helped mothers be better parents. She said:

Going to the meetings and parent workshops where they teach you how to educate your kids, how to discipline them. Those are involved parents ... the ones who try to learn new things so their kids can be better prepared for school.

When asked what parental involvement meant to her, Kristina told us: “Attending PTA¹⁶ meetings, or if they don’t have time for that, attending parent-teacher conferences.” Kristina was the only parent who in her definition included school-centric terms such as “PTA” and “parent-teacher conferences.” A possible reason for her use of such terms could be that she was born and educated in the U.S. Because she went to grammar school and high school, she knew how the system worked, as well as the terms that schools used.

Communicating with teachers. Three parents included being in touch with their children’s teachers to inquire how their child was doing.

Jocelyn, Alma’s mother, told us: “If you receive a note from the school, then you go to the school to ask what’s going on.” For Jocelyn, inquiring about your child showed teachers that “you’re interested in their well-being.” Marisol, Jacob’s mother, had a similar response: “To be involved is to see everything they do school, you see what is happening with your child at school

¹⁶ PTA= Parent-teacher Association

... if you have questions you go and investigate, you ask how they behaved. You ask at school how they are doing.” Alicia, Manny’s mother, also focused on “being in touch with the teachers, talking to the teachers, being in contact with the school.”

A possible reason why these three mothers mentioned being in touch with the teachers and school compared to the parents who did not was because these three mothers had experience receiving services from the school. Jocelyn’s younger son had a speech impediment and was being bused to the District’s learning center every afternoon from Hazelwood. Likewise, Marisol was in the process of scheduling a visit to the psychologist to inquire about Jacob’s behavior. Finally, Alicia’s 13-year-old son had Tourette’s. Because of his disability, she was constantly “taking to his teachers” whether it was by phone, e-mail, or in person. Another potential reason could be that both Marisol and Alicia’s English fluency was high, making them more comfortable talking with teachers than mothers whose English proficiency was low. Jocelyn’s English was low, but she was vocal about her needs to the Head Start. During my time at the site, she would always be asking questions about services for her children. Jocelyn was also one of the mothers who kept and continues to be in touch with me. She often messaged me asking for school information or if I could accompany her to register her children.

Summary

In line with the literature on low-income Latina mothers, parental involvement was mostly defined as home-based (De Gaetano, 2007; Garcia Coll & Pachter, 2002; Ramos, 2014; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). Spending time with their children, helping with homework, asking children questions, supporting children’s interests, and knowing children’s friends were all in-home activities that parents were doing to be involved in their preschoolers’ lives. While home-based involvement was most pronounced, mothers in this sample also defined parental involvement as being school-based. The most frequently mentioned activity entailed attending school events, such as attending parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, and volunteering in the classroom. Communicating with teachers was also mentioned. These findings are consistent with McWayne et al. (2013), where they found that Head Start mothers distinguished between home- and school-based involvement. English language facility likely allowed mothers to communicate with teachers and staff. Prior research supports these findings. Latino parents, particularly those who are non-English speaking, are less likely to attend school events and less likely to communicate directly with school staff and teachers (Maríñez -Lora & Quintana, 2009).

Mothers helping their children with homework, communicating with teachers, and volunteering at school-related events are three of the six domains of parental involvement in Epstein’s model (1996) that research has found promote academic success. While low-income

Latina mothers did conceptualize parental involvement among some of the lines of Epstein's model, this study found new conceptualizations. In distinction to other studies, low-income Latina mothers' conceptualize parental involvement also included (a) spending time with children; (b) supporting children's interests; and (c) knowing children's friends. These findings add to scarce literature about parental involvement in the early school years among low-income Latinos (see Durand, 2011).

Teachers' Definition of Parental Involvement

Head Start teachers were asked what they believed Latino parents at Hazelwood should do to prepare their children for the transition to kindergarten. Teachers described both home-based and school-based activities. Home-based involvement included: (a) socio-emotional skills; (b) emergent writing; (c) emergent reading; (d) approaches to learning; (e) independence; (f) motor development/physical well-being; (g) nominal knowledge; (h) general knowledge; and (i) asking questions (See Table 50).

Table 50. *Teachers' Home-based Involvement (N = 5)*

Head Start Teacher	Socio- Emotional	Emergent writing	Emergent reading	ATL	Independence	MD/PW	Nominal knowledge	General knowledge	Asking Qstns	Total
Elizabeth		X							X	1
Georgina	X	X		X	X	X		X		6
Jackie	X	X	X		X		X			5
Sheri	X			X		X				3
Stacey		X	X							2
Total	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	17

Notes: ATL= Approaches to Learning; MD/PW= Motor skills/physical well-being; Qstns= Questions

Home-based Involvement

Socio-emotional development. Three teachers included socio-emotional skills in their beliefs about what parents should be doing to help prepare children for the transition to kindergarten. Two teachers specifically focused on children being independent. For example, Georgina said, “Parents need to make the child more independent.” On a similar note, Jackie said, “They need to help the child have overall independence.” Sheri focused more on what the parent needs to learn regarding the kindergarten setting and expectations and suggested a parent boot camp. She told us:

We need like a parent boot camp so that they know that this is what it needs to be ... You call the school when your kids gonna’ be out. Parents have to really know that they’re gonna’ have their own set of expectations.

Emergent writing. Three teachers focused on parents helping children with spelling and writing. Georgina said: “They should be helping children learn how to spell their name.” Jackie focused on writing and told us “Parents need to work on writing with their children.” Lastly, Stacey told us that parents “should set aside some time to have their children practice writing their name.”

Emergent reading. Two teachers emphasized parents working with their children on the alphabet and reading with them. Jackie said: “Parents needs to work on letters with them.” Stacey gave a slightly more elaborate response:

Working with them on a daily basis, like reading to them and going to the library. I think it’s really important for the parents to incorporate that during the week—even if it’s just for a little while each night. Just set aside some time.

Approaches to learning. Two teachers emphasized approaches to learning skills. Georgina said, “They [parents] need to encourage children to problem solve on their own.” On the other hand, Sheri emphasized parents making kindergarten “like an adventure.” She shared with us:

Children in the beginning are excited about school but then as it gets to June, they start crying about it. They don’t want to go to the new school. I think parents have to try to play it up as being something really, really exciting for them! Like an adventure!

Following a routine was also important for parents to learn and follow, for example, knowing that in kindergarten children will have to be dropped off at a certain time and whatever deadline the school gives would be final. Sheri said:

There’s no responsibility here for the parents. They drop their kids off anytime. They can do that kinda thing here but when they go to the school, it’s gonna’ be different. I think we need to get parents in the mindset that they can’t drop off their kid by 9:30 or 10 o’clock or whenever. ... Next year when it’s the child’s first day, they’re gonna’ have to get their selves moving!

Teachers also believed that mothers needed to be aware that the transition to kindergarten was not just happening to children, but also to families. That meant that parents needed to understand that in kindergarten, they would no longer be humored and may no longer receive reminders in their native language. Sheri reported:

It's the parent's transition to kindergarten too. The parents have to know that they may not get what they want in school ... if the school says no, it's gonna' be a no. If the school says this has to be turned in by that day, they're gonna' stick to that. They're not gonna' get a reminder note like they do here 'cuz we do kinda coddle them and the notes they get may not be in English and Spanish either.

Data from field notes and observations are consistent with Sheri's report. Mothers at Hazelwood did receive multiple reminders from Hazelwood. Reminders largely consisted of the preschool prompting parents to return forms and payments. They were also reminded about children's doctor and dentist check-ups, as well as when the preschool would be closing or having a half day. There were times that the secretary or one of the family coordinators would chase the parent out the door to remind them about something or have them sign a form.

Independence/self-help skills. Georgina and Jackie mentioned independence skills, such as children being able to dress themselves and go to the bathroom independently. Georgina said: "Parents need to encourage the child to have self-help skills, like to dress themselves for school." She boasted about her students who had self-help skills and was "hopeful" that parents were teaching them this at home. She told us: "I'm seeing that my kids do have self-help skills, so I'm hopeful that the parents are encouraging those self-help skills at home too." Jackie emphasized the importance of parents helping children use the bathroom independently. She told us: "They need to help with potty-training before going to kindergarten."

Motor development/physical well-being. Two teachers mentioned skills that fell under this domain. Particularly, teachers felt that parents needed to send their child to kindergarten well-nourished and with fine motor skills such as knowing how to zip their backpack. For example, Sheri said: "Parents have to know they're gonna' have new expectations and they're gonna' have to get them up and feed them before going to school." Sheri's comment may stem from parents depending on Hazelwood to feed their children breakfast every morning. It is a possibility that when children enter kindergarten, breakfast will not be provided. Georgina focused on fine motor skills that parents should be teaching their children. Georgina told us:

If the child is not able to unzip their backpack, parents shouldn't run over and unzip it...they should talk them through it. It's at first tricky, but they need to tell their kids, "Sometimes you need to hold it up here and pull here at the same time. So why don't you give it a try?"

If the child was hesitant, Georgina suggested that parents make it into a game. She said: “Parents can say, ‘Ok, let’s make a compromise. I’ll hold it, you pull it’ and then that way parents can do fun games by helping them learn.”

Nominal skills. Jackie felt it was important for parents to help children with their numbers. She said: “Parents should be working on numbers with their child.”

General knowledge. Georgina told us that children needed to learn their name versus their nickname. She said, “Parents have to help their children understand the difference between ‘this is your nickname’ and ‘this is your actual name.’ That will be important for kindergarten.”

Asking questions. Elizabeth believed it was important for parents to “touch base” with their children about their day, and that parents should continue that behavior into kindergarten. She said, “Parents need to continue touching base with their children and asking them what they learned. I know a lot of them do ask them, ‘What did you do in school today?’” Although Elizabeth had seen that a lot of parents ask their children questions, she’s also aware that mothers have other responsibilities: “I think my parents are doing pretty well. I understand that they have other kids and stuff, so it’s hard for them to be able to focus all of their attention on one kid. I get it.”

School-Based Involvement

Two teachers included school-based activities, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and attending meetings (See Table 51).

Table 51. *Teachers’ School-based Involvement (n = 2)*

Head Start Teacher	Attending parent-teacher conferences	Attending meetings	Total
Elizabeth		X	1
Stacey	X		1
Total	1	1	2

Stacey emphasized the importance of parents attending parent-teacher conferences. She said:

They really need to come to parent-teacher conferences and communicate with the teachers so they know that this is what we’re working on ... that way they get an understanding of what they’re learning at school and when they go home, they can also learn it and know it.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, focused on parents attending the meetings that Hazelwood hosted. She told us: “Attending those parent meetings, which I know a lot of my parents attend. They attend a lot of those, and I think that’s really helpful ‘cause they do a lot of kindergarten readiness there.”

Overall, teachers had a range of activities that parents should be involved in with their children as they prepare them for kindergarten. The majority of activities mentioned involved home-based activities that emphasize socio-emotional development and emergent writing skills.

Summary

Head Start teachers had a clear idea of what they believed mothers at Hazelwood should be doing to help their child prepare for kindergarten. Findings were divided into home-based involvement and school-based involvement. Some of the ideas that teachers had were not only for what parents should do to help children, but what parents also needed to do to help themselves as they were also transitioning. Helping children be more independent was a key skill that teachers emphasized. This finding was consistent with the literature, which reports that preschool teachers place higher importance on socio-emotional skills compared to other school readiness skills (Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013). Helping children learn how to spell and write their name was reported as an activity that parents should be doing at home with their children. Teachers also indicated that parents needed to help children learn their alphabet and incorporate daily reading into their routine. Skills related to approaches to learning were also mentioned by teachers. Getting children to problem solve on their own and getting them excited for kindergarten were other skills that teachers felt parents should be doing. Unlike other studies where parental involvement has been understood in terms of specific, organized at-school practices (Lopez, 2001; Hill & Torres, 2010), preschool teachers at this site wanted parents to be involved at home more than in school. In particular, they wanted mothers to focus their involvement activities around academic skills (e.g., alphabet mastery, spelling, writing their name, daily reading). It is possible that children's race/ethnicity played a role in the activities that teachers wanted parents to focus on. In their study with preschool teachers working with low-income children in federally and state-funded programs, such as Head Start, Lee and Ginsburg (2007) found that teachers placed greater emphasis on pre-reading, pre-writing, and literacy-related skills compared to teachers working with more affluent students.

Some teachers not only focused on what parents should be doing to help children but also on the skills and information that parents needed to know and do to have a smooth transition. As one teacher reported, the kindergarten transition was not just happening to children but also families, and families need to be aware of what that entails. One teacher felt it was important for mothers to be aware that children had to be at school at a certain time and mindful of the fact that they would not receive as much close attention in kindergarten. These findings are consistent with the literature, which shows that early childhood programs are often family-focused (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005) and partner with parents to provide for young children (Sandall et al., 2005). Because they are *family friendly*, parents may foster more informal parent-teacher professional communication, particularly during school drop-off/pick-up, where they may receive reminders. In this case, the reminders came from the secretary and family coordinators.

Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (1999) also found that regardless of preschool program, family-school contacts were more frequent in preschool than in kindergarten. Furthermore, they found that family-school communication in preschool was more positive and less negative than kindergarten contacts. Thus, families of students transitioning from a supportive preschool program, like Hazelwood to kindergarten, may experience less overall contact and quality of care (McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, Reed, & Wildenger, 2010).

Similarities and Differences between Mothers' and Teachers' Definition of Parental Involvement

Mothers and preschool teachers had some similarities and differences in their conceptualization of parental involvement. Regarding home-based involvement, mothers and preschool teachers only agreed on one activity (i.e., asking children questions). However, they were on the same page when they described school-based involvement (i.e., attending parent-teacher meetings and participating in school-related events). The biggest difference between mothers' and preschool teachers' understanding of parental involvement was in their understanding of the type of home-based activities.

Similarities

Under home-based involvement, mothers and preschool teachers agreed that asking children questions about their day and what they did/learned in school was part of parental involvement. While mothers asked their children questions for very specific reasons (to help children solve problems and to make sure that they are not being abused in school), teachers' meaning behind asking questions was mostly to "touch base" with children about their day. In general, mothers and preschool teachers placed more emphasis on home-based activities than school-based activities. Mothers focused on spending time with their children and helping children with homework, while preschool teachers wanted mothers to focus on more building academic skills. Yet, mothers and preschool teachers emphasized home-based activities over school-based activities in their conceptualization of parental involvement. Concerning school-based involvement, both mothers and preschool teachers also believed that parental involvement at school entailed parents attending parent-teacher meetings to see how their child was doing, as well as parents attending school related events (i.e., workshops). However, relative to home-based activities, school-based activities were not as prominent.

Differences

Although mothers and preschool teachers conceptualized parental involvement in similar ways, differences did exist (See Table 52). Consistent with prior literature on low-income Latino parents, our findings suggest that they view parental involvement in terms of informal home-

based activities that focus on life involvement over academic involvement activities (De Gaetano, 2007; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007; Zarate, 2007). Teachers are more concerned with children’s academic development: They conceptualize involvement in terms of multiple developmental domains associated with children’s school readiness.

Table 52. *Mothers and Teachers Home-based Involvement Activities*

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

Chapter 7: How Mothers are Actively Involved in their Children's Education

This chapter explores what mothers are doing to help prepare their child for the transition to kindergarten, as well as teachers' view about parental involvement. We organized this chapter into three sections. In section one we focus on mothers' own experiences growing up and their parents' involvement in their education. This includes a description of how their parents were involved and the advice they provided around education. We also report on the barriers that mothers felt impeded their parents from being involved.

In section two we examine mothers' in-home school readiness practices. We describe school readiness activities that mothers reported doing, and the messages they gave children to support their readiness for the transition to kindergarten. We further detail mothers' reliance on extended kin to help prepare preschoolers for kindergarten. We also describe families' in-home activities and involvement through photographs that illustrate how mothers and family members (i.e., siblings) are involved. In this section we also describe mothers' use of Head Start to promote their child's transition to kindergarten, as well as the barriers that mothers faced when getting their child prepared for kindergarten.

In section three we end our discussion of parental involvement practices with a focus on teachers. We describe how preschool teachers viewed mothers' school readiness practices. Teachers' consideration of mothers' strengths in preparing their children for kindergarten, as well as their concerns, are presented.

Mothers' Early Educational Experiences

In section one, we first begin with mothers' own experiences of parental involvement growing up as it gives us a glimpse of the activities that their mothers did (or did not do). Mothers were specifically asked:

- a. How were your parents involved in your schooling at home? At school?
- b. What did your parents tell you about school/education while you were growing up?

Findings revealed that as mothers talked about their experiences of parental involvement growing up, they articulated their understanding of activities that constituted parental involvement. It entailed home- and school-based activities that were indirect, direct, and verbal support of educational striving.

Parental Home-based Involvement

Nine mothers shared with us that they remembered their parents being involved at home while growing up. Home-based involvement was indirect and direct. Indirect involvement took

the form of parents *encouraging* the completion of homework and purchasing school supplies, while direct involvement included *supporting* the completion of homework (See Table 53).

Table 53. *Parental Home-based Involvement (n = 9)*

Parent (Target Child)	Indirect		Direct	Total
	Encouraging the completion of hmk	Purchasing school supplies	Supporting the completion of hmk	
Adriana (Lesley)			X	1
Alexa (David)	X			1
Fabiola (Javier)	X			1
Flor (Lucia)	X			1
Irene (Kayla)	X			1
Kristina (Kevin)			X	1
Marcela (Daniel)		X		1
Maribel (Diana)		X		1
Paulina (Hugo)		X		1
Total	4	3	2	9

Note: hmk= Homework

Encouraging the completion of homework. Four mothers told us that while their parents never helped them complete their homework, they always made sure that they were *doing* their homework. For example, Irene shared with us that her mother never helped but was involved. She said: “My mom would always ask, ‘Do you have your homework ready?’” She was involved that way ... always on top of that.” Flor remembered that as soon as they came home from school, they had to do their homework: “When we came home, we had to do homework first before anything else. They would always ask if we did it.” Flor believed that she learned those habits from her parents because she acts similarly with her own daughters:

It’s the same I am doing with them. When they come from school I ask them “Do you have homework?” If they say yes, then they have to start doing it and then they can play because if you come home and have homework but start to play before doing it, you forget about it and then late at night or early in the morning you are doing it.

Similarly, Fabiola told us that she was not allowed to leave the table until her homework was complete: “The only thing I remember is that when you didn’t do your homework, my parents would keep us at the table doing it. We were not able to leave until you finished it ... we *had* to do it.” Alexa, who lived with her grandmother, father, and mother at different points throughout her life, remembered how each encouraged her to complete her homework in their own way. Alexa’s grandmother utilized a well-known Latino tactic to make sure that Alexa did her homework: “My grandma, if I was not doing my homework like I was supposed to be, she would hit me with a chancala¹⁷! No joke, she would hit me!” Looking back, Alexa believed that she got her perfectionism from her father, who didn’t allow Alexa to “half-ass” her homework. She reported: “One time I half-assed my whole homework and my dad ripped the page, crumpled it

¹⁷ Translation: Sandal

into a ball, threw it in my face and said, “This is garbage. Do it again.’ ... I will never forget.” To make sure that Alexa was doing her homework, her mother would bribe her: “My mom would pay me to read and do my homework [laughs].”

Purchasing school supplies. Three mothers shared with us that their parents were indirectly involved by purchasing necessary school supplies. For example, Marcela told us: “They always provided like the computer or other [school] supplies.” Maribel remembered that whatever she needed for school, her mother was able to provide: “She always bought me everything they [the school] asked me to bring ... she always gave me all that I needed.” While Paulina was not able to have a new backpack like her peers at the beginning of the school year because her family “didn’t have any money,” she always had a “new notebook”:

It had very simple pages ... we always used pencils because sometimes we didn’t have enough pages and my mom told us to erase pages and reuse them. As I said, it’s all we had but it was new, so it made us happy.

Paulina felt that her mother was doing “everything in her hands” and that while she wasn’t there economically, she was “involved in other ways.” She gave an example of when teachers asked that books be covered in plastic for protection: “My mom would buy the colored plastic to wrap our notebook. It was nice to see her sitting and cutting the plastic. Those things were most valuable. It’s not what you give, but the love you show.”

Supporting the completion of homework. Home-based involvement was also direct. Two mothers shared with us that their parents were directly involved in helping them complete their homework. Kristina, who only lived with her mother due to her parents’ divorce, still utilized her father. She told us: “My dad is really good at math, so I would call him and he’d help me understand math without showing me in handwriting. It was hard, but he helped.” Adriana’s mother would sit with her and use a dictionary to assist. She said: “My parents would help me as much as they could. My mom would sit down with me and she would try to help me with homework. If she didn’t know something, she would get a dictionary and look it up.”

Parental School-based Involvement

Unlike home-based involvement, parental engagement at school was only through direct engagement. Direct engagement at school took the form of parents attending parent-teacher meetings and communicating with teachers (See Table 54).

Table 54. *Parental School-based Involvement (n = 9)*

Parent (Target Child)	Attending parent-teacher meetings	Communicating with teachers	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		1
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	2
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X		1
Irene (Kayla)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Total	6	1	7

Attending parent-teacher meetings. Six mothers reported that their parents were directly engaged in their education by attending parent-teacher meetings or school-related events. Kristina recalled that her mother would “go to parent-teacher conferences ... that’s it.” Similarly, Ingrid told us that her mother “was the one that went to the school meetings ... not my dad” because her father worked in the fields, which were “really far away.” Although Flor’s parents couldn’t read, they were “in all the school meetings.” Adriana recalled that her mother “would go to the parent-teacher conferences ... she would be there as much as she could.” When parents were not able to attend school-related events, other family members stepped in. Jocelyn’s grandmother would be present on behalf of her mother: “My mom wasn’t able to go to school because she worked, but my grandmother was the one that attended the meetings ... she was at school all the time.” Irene only remembered her mother being directly engaged in all kindergarten activities. She reported: “She always participated in the activities of kindergarten, like Mother’s Day, Children’s Day ... she was there.” Reflecting on why her mother was only present in kindergarten, Irene said: “I think that she only attended then because she didn’t know how to read or write.”

Communicating with teachers. One parent, Flor, shared that her parents went to the school to talk to her teachers about how she was doing in school. She said: “They went to see us in class and asked the teachers, ‘How is my daughter doing?’ Even when they didn’t know how to read, they made sure we were doing well.”

Parental Advice about Education

We asked mothers to share with us what advice their parents told them about education while growing up. Alicia and Amanda reported that their parents didn’t give them any advice. Fabiola could not remember. Findings from the remaining 13 mothers suggest that their parents supported their education through direct and direct practices. In general, parents provided an assortment of guidance that focused on the importance of staying in school. Parents saw schooling as a matter of social mobility. Their parents told them that having an education was the only way to have better life opportunities. Parents also encouraged them to stay in school so they

would not follow in their footsteps and emphasized that education was the key to being someone in life. Indirectly, parents also supported their education by providing encouraging counsel (See Table 55).

Having better life opportunities through education. Seven mothers reported that their parents told them that if they wanted to have better opportunities in life, that education was the way to go. For some parents, having a better life meant having a career instead of just a job. Laura shared that her parents “wanted me to have a career or they would get angry with me.” Maribel recalled that her mother would tell her she would “land a career” if she studied a lot. She said: “She always told us that if we didn’t finish school, we were just going to have a job, but not a career that you can land with an education ... and that we would get paid better with a career.” Natalia reported that her mother threatened to take her out of school and have her help out at home if she didn’t take advantage of her education:

My mom said we had to go to school to study and learn and to have a career. If I didn’t want to take advantage of an education she said she would take me out and have me help at home and that would be my destiny.

Jocelyn remembered that her father supported her dream of becoming a teacher, a career he wanted her to have. She said: “I wanted to be a teacher and he wanted to give me everything so I could fulfill my dream. He said that only death would prevent him from doing that ... and, well, he died and I only finished high school.” Alexa’s grandmother would often remind her about the importance of receiving an education: “My grandma is my biggest fan and would say, ‘School is very important. Just have your degree, and you’ll see how many doors will open for you.’”

Two mothers said that education would grant them “a better life,” according to the indirect advice they received from their parents. For example, Irene said: “My mom always told us that in order to have a better life we had to study ... if we didn’t go to school that we were not going to have a good life.” In a similar manner, Adriana told us that her mother would say that school would be an asset for her: “My mom would say that it was really important and that I have to go and learn ... how it would benefit my life. I had no choice [laughs]. Yeah, it wasn’t an option not to go to school.”

Table 55. *Parental Advice about Education (n = 14)*

Parent (Target Child)	Direct			Indirect	Total
	Having better life opportunities through education	Not following in their parents' footsteps	Being someone in life	Supporting education	
Adriana (Lesley)	X				1
Alexa (David)	X			X	2
Delia (Josue)		X		X	2
Flor (Lucia)				X	1
Ingrid (Nayeli)				X	1
Irene (Kayla)	X	X			2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X				1
Kristina (Kevin)			X		1
Laura (Isa)	X				1
Marcela (Daniel)		X		X	2
Maribel (Diana)	X		X		2
Marisol (Jacob)				X	1
Natalia (Nina)	X		X	X	3
Paulina (Hugo)		X		X	2
Total	7	4	3	8	22

Not following in their parents' footsteps. Four parents recalled that their parents encouraged them to stay in school so they would not follow in their footsteps. Irene said her mother wanted her to remain in school so she wouldn't have to endure hard labor conditions: "She always told us that she didn't want to see us working on things like the ones she had to work ... she had really hard jobs in Mexico." In a similar tone, Marcela shared: "My mom never finished, so she told us to go to school. She didn't want us to be like her." Delia's parents did not want her end to up like them either:

My mom used to advise me to study because she didn't want me to be like them, uneducated—they didn't know how to read or write. So they would tell me, "We don't want that for you." They wanted the best for me.

Paulina's parents also were unable to receive an education and "wanted the best" for her: My mom always told us that she wasn't able to study ... so we had to study and not become burros¹⁸ and not be like her. ... Without an education, without a job and living the minimum. She wanted us to have a better life and she stressed how important education was ... that it takes you to other levels.

Being someone in life. Three mothers shared with us that their parents emphasized the importance of education if they wanted to be someone in life. Natalia's parents told her she had to go to school to "become prepared and be someone." Getting good grades was important for Kristina's parents as that would lead her to different places: "My mom would say, "you have to get good grades, you're not going to get anywhere if you don't get good grades." Finally, if Maribel wanted to "advance in life," she needed to stay in school: "My mom would say that school was very important if I wanted to be someone in this life ... that it was important to advance in life."

Supporting education. Eight mothers shared with us how their parents indirectly supported their education. How parents showed support varied greatly. Some mothers moved to different states or neighborhoods to provide their children with more opportunities, while others made sure that they attended school by waking them up. Bringing lunch to school and supervising behavior were other ways that parents supported their child's education. Offering advice on the importance of education was also another way that parents showed their support.

Paulina's mother moved her and her 11 siblings to a new town to give them "more opportunities." She reported: "We came from a very small town, but she moved us to another one. Thanks to that, she was able to give us more opportunities." Alexa's mother wanted her to stay away from trouble and did not let her attend her neighborhood high school in Chicago, which

¹⁸ Translation: Direct translation is a jackass but she refers to being a 'dumb' person.

was known for gang activity. Instead, her mother moved to Florence so she could attend a better high school: “My mother told me that my local high school was full of gang bangers and that I was crazy if she thought she would let me go ... so we moved to Florence.” Regardless of how much Delia did not want to go to school because she was tired from “making tortillas,” Delia told us that her parents “focused on us attending school by waking us up early every day.”

Ingrid recalled that in Mexico, schools did not provide lunch for their students. As a result, her parents gave her money each day for food. However, there were times where money was scarce and instead of not sending them to school, her mother would bring them lunch. She told us:

My parents had to give us four or five pesos¹⁹ to buy food at school. But sometimes we didn't have money. ... It was sad to see the other kids eating and we didn't have money but they told us we had to go. I'm sure it was easier for her to say “we have no money; don't go to school today,” but she sent us anyway. My mom proposed that she was going to bring us food at lunchtime and I think that was her way of being involved.

Supervising behavior was another way that parents indirectly supported their child's education. Flor's father did not like that she or her sisters played with boys and told us:

If he saw us playing with us boys, he will reprimand us. He would show up at school at different hours and days to check what we were doing. He went at lunchtime, recesses, at the end of the school. We never saw him, but he was watching us.

Marcela's parents were also strict with her. Looking back at it now, she told us it helped her stay away from the wrong crowd:

I didn't think it was a good idea back then, but it helped us not get involved with the wrong people, and gone in a bad route, or get pregnant earlier thanks to them. 'Cause if they were lenient and let us go out anytime, I probably would've had like six kids or something.

Giving advice about the importance of education was another way mothers' parents showed support. For example, Delia remembered that her parents “always wanted me to go to school”: “They were involved ... they always told us to go and encouraged us too. They woke us up every day.” Ingrid's parents told her “education was important”: “They encouraged us to go, but we didn't listen.” Not dropping out of school was emphasized to Irene and Flor. Irene said: “They only thing she told us was to work hard at school, not to drop out and that it was important that I keep going at school.” Making sure that Flor stayed away from boys was an indirect way that Flor's father encouraged her to continue with school: “I don't remember much, but the only advice my dad gave us was to never get out of school because of boys. So we were never allowed to play with boys...we had to play with only girls.”

¹⁹ Pesos are Mexico's currency.

When Marisol did not want to continue with high school, she recalled her parents encouraging her to “to keep going”:

When I didn’t want to go, my mom told me, “No, you have to keep going. While we can help you, you have to keep going.” My dad would also say, “While I am the one supporting her, she will be going.”

Natalia, whose father was “uneducated and an orphan,” encouraged her to go to school and told her “education was important”: “He would say I had to be smart, that I wasn’t just going to warm the bench, but that I had to learn something.” Similarly, Alexa’s mother did not want her to waste her intelligence: “My mom would always say how smart I was and not to waste it . . . not to let my intelligence go to waste and not finishing school would be a waste of my intelligence.”

Summary

Research has shown that when a child starts school, the parents’ own school memories are likely to become activated (Räty, 2010). Parents’ school recollection is suggested to be one potential mechanism through which the meanings of education are transmitted from one generation to the next. There is little empirical research on parents’ school recollection, although there is consensus that parents’ recollections show up in many ways once their children enter school (see Räty, 2007). These findings are beginning steps to further understanding how mothers’ own school memories influence their own children’s schooling. Mothers shared with us how their own parents were involved in their education while they were growing up. Involvement was mostly home-based, with indirect and direct involvement. Indirect involvement entailed parents encouraging the completion of homework and purchasing school supplies. Direct home involvement consisted of mothers getting direct help from parents. Mothers also reported that parents were involved by attending parent-teacher meetings and communicating with teachers, although the latter one was only mentioned by one mother.

While parents supported mothers’ education in ways that are readily apparent to teachers and that teachers typically encourage (i.e., helping with homework, attending parent-teacher meetings), findings also revealed that parents supported mothers’ education in ways that reflect Latino cultural values, or cultural forms of parental engagement (Ramos, 2014) such as *consejos* (advice), *apoyo* (moral support), and *sacrificios* (sacrifices). Parents reminded mothers that education granted them the ability to be someone in life, as well as the ability to have a better life. Providing advice was universal among mothers’ parents and was organized, in part, around parents’ cultural beliefs about the importance of education. The advice given to mothers to do well in school was given without explicit or concrete guidance. These findings align with Ramos’ (2014) study, where she found that 43 Latina mothers who had a child enrolled in public preschool promoted cultural forms of engagement in the hope that this could increase their

children's motivation to do well in school. Thus, mothers' forms of engagement were all directed toward their children's educational success. Despite parents' limited formal education, parents' mothers in this study emphasized the importance of education, repeatedly telling them that they need education to "be someone in life" and have a professional career. Parents wanted mothers to have a better life. I hypothesize that parents in this study knew what it was like to work physically taxing jobs and used their own experience as an example for their children to avoid. These findings also align with prior literature that shows that Latino/a parents, like many other parents in American society, strongly believe in education as a means to enhance their children's opportunities (Saracho, 2007).

Barriers to Parental Involvement in the Grandparental Generation

Eleven mothers shared with us why they believed their parents could not be involved. Reasons included: (a) having parents that worked a lot; (b) limited parental education; (c) limited time with parents due to having too many siblings; (d) language barriers; and (e) having different cultural expectations about education. Other hindrances included familial stress and lack of access. One family who could not be directly involved was involved indirectly when they hired a tutor to help their daughter with school (See Table 56).

Parents are working a lot. Six mothers shared with us that because their parents were always working to provide for their family, they could not be involved. For example, Marisol told us: "They worked a lot. My dad had two jobs, and my mom worked too." Similarly, Marcela recalled both her parents were "working all the time": "My parents weren't really involved education-wise because they were working all the time, both of them ... always working." Amanda, who was raised by a single mother, said: "My mom spent the day working a lot and came home at night, tired." Alicia, who was also raised by a single mother, gave a comparable answer to Amanda. She told us: "My mom worked a lot at a factory. She didn't have time ... she was not involved because she was working." Alexa also remembered her mother working: "She worked a lot so bless her heart ... I had everything because of her, but because of that she wasn't involved." Kristina had to teach herself because her mom was too busy working: "My mom never helped me in school, never, nobody ever did. I am the oldest so I had to teach myself ... but my mom was too busy, too much work."

Table 56. *Barriers to Parental Involvement (n = 11)*

Parent (Target Child)	Parents are working a lot	Limited parental education	Too many siblings	Language barrier	Different cultural expectations	Other	Total
Alexa (David)	X				X		2
Alicia (Manny)	X						1
Amanda (Jax)	X	X	X				3
Delia (Josue)		X					1
Fabiola (Javier)		X				X	2
Kristina (Kevin)	X			X			2
Laura (Isa)						X	1
Marcela (Daniel)	X						1
Marisol (Jacob)	X			X		X	3
Natalia (Nina)		X					1
Paulina (Hugo)			X				1
Total	6	4	2	2	1	3	18

Limited parental education. Four parents suggested that their parents could not be involved because they could not read nor write, and thus were unable to help. Delia believed that if her parents were more educated, they would have been more involved. She said: “My parents were not able to help us with homework because they didn’t know how to read or write. I think that if they had known how to read they would have helped me.” Natalia’s parents also had limited education and, like Delia’s parents, could not read:

They never helped us with homework or taught us because my dad only attended school for two years ... my mom didn’t finish elementary school so it was hard for her to read or add. They didn’t know the subjects ... they had minimal education.

Fabiola doesn’t remember her parents being involved and felt it was because “they couldn’t do it”: “We used to live in little ranch ... I don’t remember them supporting me or cheering me to go to school. I mean, why would they be excited about something they were unable to give?”

Amanda felt that her parents were not involved because they were from the country and felt they were ignorant: “They were country people, they didn’t know ... she was a bit ignorant. Also, my mom was 72 and in those times parents were not worried about their kid’s education like now.”

Having too many siblings. Two mothers suggested that their parents could not be involved because they had too many siblings, which took up a lot of their time. For example, Amanda said: “We were a lot...we were seven siblings. My mom didn’t have a lot of time to be involved...she was always very busy.” Likewise, Paulina was one of 12 siblings and told us: “I remember that my mom didn’t have a lot of time ... there were 12 of us.” While her mother could not be directly involved, she was indirectly involved by dropping them off and “making sure that we went in.”

Language barriers. Marisol and Kristina, who were both born in the U.S., recalled that their parents could not be involved because they did not speak English. Marisol said: “My mom didn’t speak any English. I think it was difficult for her to be involved.” Because Kristina’s mother did not understand English, she was unable to help: “My mom never helped ... she was like, ‘I don’t understand. It is in English, can’t help you, sorry.’”

Different cultural expectations. Alexa, who was born in Colombia but was mostly educated in the U.S., shared with us that her mother was not involved because she was unaware that schools in the U.S. expected parents to be involved, whereas in Colombia the schools had sole responsibility. Alexa told us:

It’s not the culture of Colombia for parents to be involved. You pay a lot of money for your kids to go to a private school and ... well, it’s the schools responsibility. But here the culture is different. Here they try to get parents involved ... so maybe it was because that was their culture in Colombia. ... Maybe if my mom knew more about this culture, maybe she would have made an attempt.

Other factors. Familial stress and lack of access were other barriers that mothers mentioned impeded their parents from being involved. Marisol, who shared that her family filed for bankruptcy after her father lost his job, said: “They were under a lot of pressure with the problems they had ... they couldn’t help.” Fabiola, whose family lived on a ranch in a small town, said: “We used to have only a middle school ... they now have a high school. They didn’t stimulate me because of the lack of resources.” While Laura’s parents were not able to be involved themselves, they were indirectly involved in her education when they hired a tutor to help her. Laura recalled: “They never helped us ... not my mom or dad. They never sat down with me, but they hired a tutor to give me math lessons. She couldn’t help, but at least she was worried.”

Summary

Mothers provided insight on why their parents were unable to be involved in their education growing up. The most salient barrier was their parents working long hours, followed by having low educational attainment, parents being too busy caring for siblings, not speaking English, and having different cultural expectations of what constituted parental involvement. Familial stress and lack of access were additional barriers mentioned. Unlike Becerra’s (2012) findings that that Latino parents may feel discouraged from investing in educational pursuits because of the lack of opportunities afforded them, findings from this study highlight mothers’ resiliency. Despite facing diversity, mothers were still involved in children’s education and emphasized the value and importance of education (Ceballo, Jocson, & Alers-Rojas, 2017). We also showed that mothers’ lack of involvement is due to socioeconomic and structural barriers rather than deficits in family cultures.

Mothers’ School Readiness In-home Practices

In section two, we describe the school readiness practices that mothers reported targeting through their in-home practices. When asked what mothers were doing to prepare their children for kindergarten, they identified: (a) early literacy skills; (b) nominal skills; (c) motor development/physical well-being; (d) socio-emotional development; (e) language/communication and; (f) approaches to learning skills. They also detailed how they promoted these abilities (See Table 57). Only one mother, Fabiola, said that she didn’t do very much because Javier “already knows.” She elaborated and told us:

I do colors, letters, and give him blank sheets to write his letters and numbers, but he already knows. I feel that’s the reason behind him not helping him because he knows it ... I know that he practices it every day at daycare. I’m not stressed. I am not worried. If he didn’t know stuff, then I’d be worried. But I told you, he knows. He’s ready.

Table 57. Mothers' In-home Practices (n = 16)

Parent (Target Child)	Emergent Reading	Emergent Writing	Nominal Knowledge	MD/PW	Socio- Emotional	Language & Communication	ATL	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X	X	X				4
Alexa (David)	X	X						2
Alicia (Manny)	X		X	X	X			4
Amanda (Jax)	X					X		2
Delia (Josue)	X	X	X					3
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X					3
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X			X				2
Irene (Kayla)	X		X	X				3
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X	X					3
Kristina (Kevin)	X	X	X		X			4
Laura (Isa)	X	X		X				3
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X			X			3
Maribel (Diana)	X	X	X	X				4
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Natalia (Nina)	X		X					2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X		X		X	X	5
Total	16	11	10	8	4	3	2	54

Note: MD/PW= Motor Development/Physical well-being

Emergent Reading Skills Targeted Through In-home Practices

Sixteen mothers reported doing emergent reading activities at home to help prepare their child for kindergarten. In-home emergent reading skills including reading books to children, visiting the library, and helping children master the alphabet (See Table 58).

Table 58. *In-Home Emergent Reading Skills (n = 16)*

Parent (Target Child)	Reading Books	Alphabet mastery	Visiting the library	Total
Adriana (Lesley)		X		1
Alexa (David)	X			1
Alicia (Manny)		X	X	2
Amanda (Jax)	X			1
Delia (Josue)	X			1
Flor (Lucia)	X			1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X			1
Irene (Kayla)	X		X	2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Kristina (Kevin)	X			1
Laura (Isa)	X		X	2
Marcela (Daniel)		X		1
Maribel (Diana)	X	X		2
Marisol (Jacob)	X		X	2
Natalia (Nina)	X	X		2
Paulina (Hugo)	X			1
Total	13	5	4	22

Reading books. Laura shared with us that her aunt is a writer and sent Isa books: “She writes poetry and has written lots of books for kids ... she sends us lots of her books, and we read those to them.” Laura also mentioned that family friends, “an American couple that are old but are like angels,” sends Isa and her older brother books for their birthdays. She explained: “Their gifts are always books, all the time books, books, books [laughs]. We have so many books that we are forced to use them!” Although Kevin doesn’t know how to read yet, he has a “bookshelf full of books.” Kristina elaborated and said: “He loves us to be reading together. I read to him. ... We read before going to bed.” Alexa, who “loves to read,” also “reads a lot to David.” She told us: “I have been into Harry Potter [laughs] and David would be ‘read it to me,’ so I read it to him until he falls asleep.” Because Alma gets impatient, their story-time gets cut short. Jocelyn explained: “We sit together to read ... sometimes she doesn’t let me finish the stories, she just changes the pages. She’s impatient.” For Irene, it’s important that she “sit with Kayla at least for a bit and read to her.” Maribel said that Diana brings her books to read and then asks Diana to tell her what the book is about.

Marisol, who told us that Jacob was part of the Raising a Reader²⁰ program at Hazelwood where he received a bag with books, reads “to Jacob at night.” Natalia also “tries to read with Nina at night.” Likewise, Alicia attempts to read to Manny “before he goes to bed” but admits that it’s “not every night.” Although Paulina doesn’t read to Hugo every night, they do read every day. She shared: “I read to him, he reads to me, we change all the time ... we don’t do it every night, but we read every day ... We have a lot of books, he doesn't need more.” Finally, Marcela told us that she is “doing more reading” with Daniel.

Four mothers read to their children in Spanish because they do not know how to read in English. For example, Flor told us: “Sometimes I read with Lucia, but I read in Spanish because I don’t know how to do it in English.” Amanda also cannot read in English and she hasn’t been able to “find a lot of Spanish books to read to him.” Instead of reading books, Amanda reads Jax Bible stories for kids: “I read him a lot of those stories, every night before bed.” Like Flor and Amanda, not knowing how to speak English did not stop Delia from reading to Josue. She said:

We read, not every day but sometimes we read the ones they give him here [Hazelwood], but the books are in English and I cannot read them so I only look at the pictures. ... The pictures not the words guide me. I ask him “What is the boy doing?” And he tells me “he’s playing, he’s sleeping” ... things like that.

Similar to Delia, Ingrid tried her best to read the English books that were given by Hazelwood by using the drawings to help illustrate what was happening. She told us:

If we read, we do it in Spanish, but they only gave us books in English so that kinda’ limits me ... but I try my best. I never say “Because I don’t know to read in English I am not going to read to her,” I just do it. I make an effort. I try my best. With the words I don’t understand I just make them up with the drawings.

Ingrid believed that if they gave Nayeli more Spanish books, then she would “read more often.”

Alphabet mastery. Five mothers reported helping their child master the alphabet.

Maribel worked to teach Diana her letters by “gluing letters together,” and Ingrid sat down with Nayeli “for 20 minutes to practice her letters.” Natalia also did flashcards to get Nina ready for kindergarten: “Right now I am teaching her with letter flashcards. To be honest, I am only working with letters.” Alicia, too, used letter flashcards to help Manny:

He knows the ABCs but only the song. I tell him: “Don't sing; we can't sing all the time, we are not going to sing. Now, we are going to pronounce,” so I show him that ‘M’ is for ‘Manny’ ... But I have to wait a little because he gets frustrated.

²⁰ The Raising a Reader program marries two of the Early Childhood Care + Education Centers’ goals: 1) to ensure that children are “kindergarten ready” when they leave the program at age five and 2) to work with parents and caregivers to support their involvement in the education of their children.

Since Daniel already knows his ABCs, Marcela was “working with him to identify them.” She knows that in class, they do a letter per day and then work on that letter throughout the week. Marcela thought it was a “really smart strategy” that she also started doing at home: “I’ll do a random letter and words a day and then we practice it together. So one day, I’ll do ‘F’ and then I’ll do ‘S.’” She related the letters and words she chose to an animal because Daniel learns it faster that way: “Like ‘B’ for ‘Bat.’ I bought him the bat and I taught him the word and then I’ll have it next to him while we’re doing the letters.” Adriana utilized the chalkboard and easel to help Lesley “practice her alphabet.” She said: “I just go one by one and tell her to tell me what they are and then she’ll tell me. She really likes it ... she gets excited!”

Visiting the library. Four mothers mentioned that one way to help their child get ready for school was by going to the library to check out books to read at home. However, parents had mixed experiences. For example, Laura illustrated: “I take her to the library every Monday. We get them books to read at home ... it’s a treat for them when they behave.” Marisol had a similar response. She said: “We also to together to the library. His dad, him and I ... If he likes the books, we take them home, and we read it to him at night.” Unlike Laura and Marisol, who had no trouble taking their children to the library, Alicia described it as a “disaster”: “I tried to take him to the library, but it was a disaster [Laughs]. I wanted him to be more interested in the books, but he was far more interested in the toys.” Not all mothers were able to go to the library. Irene’s job got in the way: “It’s rare we go to the library because of my job.”

Emergent Writing Skills Targeted Through In-home Practices

In addition to reading activities, eleven mothers included emergent writing activities that they were doing at home (See Table 59).

Table 59. *In-Home Emergent Writing Skills (n = 11)*

Parent (Target Child)	Writes	Draws/Traces	Spells	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X			1
Alexa (David)	X		X	2
Delia (Josue)	X			1
Flor (Lucia)	X			1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Kristina (Kevin)		X		1
Laura (Isa)	X			1
Marcela (Daniel)	X			1
Maribel (Diana)		X		1
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Paulina (Hugo)	X			1
Total	9	2	1	12

Writes own name and letters/words. To get Isa prepared for kindergarten, Laura helped Isa write. She told us: “Sometimes she wants to make a card for her brother and she tells me what

she wants the card to say ... I show her how to write and tell her each letter.” Alexa “helps David write” by having him write his name. He’s also shown an interest in writing words. She told us: “David will ask me, ‘How do you write I love you?’ So I help him write it.” Like Alexa, Paulina also helped Hugo write by “telling him to write his name out.” Jocelyn also made Alma “write down numbers and letters many times.” Likewise, Marisol kept Jacob busy by sitting beside him as he “writes pages of his name in his special notebook.” Flor also asked Lucia to not only “write her name” but also “write the alphabet and numbers out,” but admitted that there were “some letters that Lucia cannot write yet, but she tries.” Delia bought Josue a piece of cardboard from the Dollar Store and taped it to her wall so he could “practice writing his numbers and words.” Marcela utilized a whiteboard and a chalkboard in Daniel’s room to help him write. She shared the following: “I’ll write a word, and I’ll try to have him copy it, and then if he has a hard time, I’ll use my hand and kinda’ guide him with it.” Like Marcela, Adriana also utilized a chalkboard and an easel to help Lesley write.

Draws and traces. Maribel told us that she “draws with Diana,” and Kristina has Kevin “trace letters.”

Spells. Alexa shared with us that David has been interested in spelling words, which she helps him do. She said: “Lately he’s been asking how to spell things and asks me ‘How do you spell cat?’” And I’m like ‘Okay, what does cat begin with?’”

Nominal Knowledge Skills Targeted Through In-home Practices

Ten mothers reported that they were promoting nominal knowledge skills at home to prepare their preschoolers for kindergarten. These skills include numbers/counting/adding and colors/shapes (See Table 60).

Table 60. *In-home Nominal Skills (n = 10)*

Parent (Target Child)	Numbers/counting/adding	Colors/Shapes	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X	2
Alicia (Manny)	X		1
Delia (Josue)	X	X	2
Flor (Lucia)	X		1
Irene (Kayla)	X		1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Maribel (Diana)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)		X	1
Natalia (Nina)		X	1
Total	8	4	12

Numbers/counting/adding. Flor told us that she helped Lucia get ready for kindergarten by “asking her to write the numbers down.” Maribel said that “in the evenings or when there’s nothing on TV” she helped Diana count. She said: “Diana looks in my purse and says ‘you have

three of this.' She also counts us, her family and lets us know how many we are." Kristina kept Kevin busy at home by helping Kevin "identify his numbers, counting, adding, and playing number memory games." While Jocelyn is cooking, Alma is not only assisting her mother but also learning: "When we are cooking I ask her to help me get two tomatoes or four eggs ... I teach her." Similarly, Irene involved Kayla in the kitchen while she cooked: "She likes to count the time it takes to cook the rice ... I tell her that she has to count during 20 minutes ... so she counts and counts [laughs]." She sometimes asked Kayla to count when she's eating chips or climbing stairs. Kayla also practiced her numbers when she helped her mom do laundry. She said: "Kayla counts the pairs of socks." When they see other kids outside, Irene also asks Kayla to count: "I ask her, "how many kids are there?" and she starts counting...she misses sometimes." Delia also supported Josue by asking him to count. She commented: "I ask Josue how many colors are there when he's coloring." She also asked him to "repeat the numbers" back to her and they "sometimes count."

Adriana utilized learning material to help Lesley with her numbers. She shared with us: "We do puzzles and flashcards that focus on numbers." They also count together: "When we are going up the stairs, we'll count how many stairs and then count the steps to the car and back." Alicia, who worried about Manny's behavior, took deliberate pauses while she helped him learn his numbers so he wouldn't get frustrated: "I don't want him getting frustrated, so we take breaks ... same thing with numbers because of his attitude." Learning while helping in the kitchen or doing laundry was only mentioned by mothers of preschool-aged girls, not boys. Behavior issues were only mentioned by Alicia, Manny's mother.

Colors and shapes. Natalia tried to teach Nina the colors by "using the colors around us." Delia also focused on teaching Josue the colors: "I ask him 'Where's the color blue?' I pretend that I don't know and he tells me 'It's this one.'" Adriana also utilized flashcards to help Lesley learn her shapes and colors. Also, while driving, Adriana played games with her focused on shapes and colors. She shared: "I'll assign a color, and she has to find things that start with that color. I'll also do that but with shapes." Marisol helped Jacob learn his shapes by asking him "to tell me what shape that is."

Motor Development/Physical Well-being Targeted Through In-home Practices

Eight parents included motor development and physical well-being activities that they were doing at home (See Table 61).

Table 61. *In-home Motor Development /Physical Well-being Skills (n = 8)*

Parent (Target Child)	Fine Motor	Gross Motor	Physical Well-being	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		X	2
Alicia (Manny)	X			1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X		2
Irene (Kayla)	X			1
Laura (Isa)	X			1
Maribel (Diana)	X			1
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Paulina (Hugo)	X			1
Total	8	1	1	10

Fine motor skills. Maribel shared with us that she has Diana “practice [cutting] with the scissors.” Holding a pencil was another fine motor skill that two parents, Alicia and Ingrid, worked on with their children at home. Alicia said: “I tell him ‘My love, your little finger has to be in the line,’ and I move his hand, but he doesn't let me ... he takes the pencil away from me.” Likewise, when Ingrid sat down with Nayeli for 20 minutes, she taught her “how to hold a pencil.” In addition to teaching them how to hold a pencil or cut with scissors, five mothers mentioned doing puzzles with their children. For example, Laura, Irene, Marisol, and Adriana said: “We do puzzles together.” Paulina echoed them by saying: “I work on puzzles with Hugo.”

Gross motor skills. Ingrid mentioned the importance of motor skills (physical activity): “I try to take her on walks at least 30 minutes.” When probed on why that was important, she said: “I think at school they take them out to run, right? I have seen older kids running at the school ... I don't want in the future people saying ‘Your mom never took you on walks? You never used a bicycle?’”

Physical well-being. Adriana told us that she attempts to buy healthier foods to feed Lesley. She said: “I make sure I get organic foods instead of getting junk or cheaper food.” Alicia also shared with us that she reminds Manny to wash his hands after going to the bathroom because he “always forgets that.”

Socio-Emotional Development targeted Through In-home Practices

Four mothers mentioned that they were helping their children with socio-emotional skills (See Table 62). These skills entail adjusting to the kindergarten environment and regulation emotions.

Table 62. *In-home Socio-Emotional Skills (n = 4)*

Parent (Target Child)	Adjusting to the kindergarten environment	Regulating Emotions	Total
Alicia (Manny)		X	1
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Marcela (Daniel)	X		1
Marisol (Jacob)		X	1
Total	2	2	4

Adjusting to the kindergarten environment. Kristina shared with us that she “does homework, like kindergarten stuff” with Kevin. She further elaborated on an activity that she borrowed from one of Kevin’s previous teachers. Kristina recalled that one of his teachers sent sheets for children to do at home and Kevin liked doing them because he was able to get stickers. He later moved to a classroom with a teacher who did not use them, but Kristina recalled how much Kevin enjoyed them, so she started printing them out herself. She said: “I do it at home now. I tell him it’s from Miss Kelly ... I also give him stickers, but he doesn’t know it’s me ... he’ll freak out!” She further told us she does these homework sheets “at least three times a week” and when they sit down together, they do “three worksheets at a time because those are easy and Kevin does them fast.” Marcela also shared with us that she played school: “I try to play school with them ... I pretend I’m the teacher and they’re my students ... we’ll also do circle time. I do some of the things I know they do in school.”

Regulating emotions. Jacob’s teacher told Marisol that he couldn’t focus during group time and thus was disruptive and misbehaved. Because Marisol was worried about Jacob’s lack of focus, she is taking him to see a psychologist and a counselor. She explained: “As I told you before, he is very anxious ... they are going to give him therapy and help him at home.” Alicia, like Marisol, worried about Manny’s behavior and took a different approach to helping him. She took breaks while teaching Manny because “with his attitude, he needs more conversation and fewer reprimands.”

Language and Communication Targeted Through In-home Practices

Three mothers, Amanda, Paulina, and Marisol included teaching their sons how to speak both English and Spanish. Some of the reasons included assimilating into the United States, being able to talk to family members who only spoke Spanish, and how being bilingual would help them in their future (See Table 63).

Table 63. *In-home Language and Communication Skills (n = 3)*

Parent (Target Child)	Teaching English and Spanish to children
Amanda (Jax)	X
Marisol (Jacob)	X
Paulina (Hugo)	X
Total	3

Amanda believed that because they are living in the United States, they have to “fit into this country.” She elaborated and shared the following:

We have to try to fit in this country ... we have to try to get into their culture and get used to it. First of all, we have to learn to speak English. This is a different country, and we have to live like the people from here.

While Jax already “fits in” because he speaks English, at the same time, Amanda would not like for him to forget his home language. She said: “He tells me things in English and I tell him how to say it in Spanish, like ‘Ten’ and I say ‘Ten in Spanish is diez.’” Amanda also believed that “communication is very important,” which is why she always talked with Jax: “I talk to him a lot in Spanish.”

Paulina explained that it’s important for Hugo to speak Spanish since she heard that kids who speak more languages are smarter and she “wants that for Hugo.” However, that was not the only reason why “Hugo can only speak Spanish at home.” Paulina wanted Hugo to speak to her mother, who was in Mexico and didn’t speak English: “I feel bad because my son cannot have a conversation with her ... I want him to be aware of his roots, from where we came from ... to know that English isn’t his only option because he is here.” Unlike Paulina, who wanted Diego to *learn* Spanish, Marisol wanted Jacob to “speak proper Spanish *and* English.” Focusing on Spanish, she said: “If he speaks it wrong, I make him say it again.” Marisol provided an example: “He cannot say ‘pájaro,’²¹ he says ‘parajo’ and I tell him, ‘No, that’s wrong. You say it like this.’” When probed why that was important for her, she said, “Because in the future it will help him. When he gets a job, he will be able to translate from English to Spanish. That will help a lot.” Marisol also helped Diego speak proper English. She told us: “He tells me ‘I want to go make the pee pee’ and I tell him ‘No, you say I want to go to the bathroom.’”

Approaches to Learning Targeted Through In-home Practices

Two mothers included approaches to learning skills: child follows rules, child is persistent, and child takes care of materials as activities they are teaching their child at home (See Table 64).

²¹ Translation: Bird

Table 64. *In-home Approaches to Learning Skills (n = 2)*

Parent (Target Child)	Child follows rules	Child is persistent	Child takes care of materials	Totals
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X		2
Paulina (Hugo)			X	1
Total	1	1	1	3

Child follows rules. At home, Marisol tried to show Manny that in school he'll have to follow rules, one of them being to pick up after himself. She said:

I let him play and then make him pick up his toys. I feel that will help him in kindergarten because in kindergarten they have to pick up their stuff. I'm trying to do stuff at home that they would do at school.

Child is persistent. After watching a program on TV, Marisol learned that one should not tell a child "you can't do it" but instead parents have to "motivate them, always." She said: "I feel that I always motivate Jacob never to say 'I can't do it,' I tell him, 'You can do it, you only have to try several times.'"

Child takes care of materials. During the interview, Paulina pointed to her living room, where Hugo had his own drawer for all his books, puzzles, and flashcards. However, it wasn't just a drawer. For Paulina, it also taught him how to take care of his things. Paulina continued: "I gave him that drawer because I wanted him to have his own space ... he has to take care of it. That's his chore: to keep his space clean and organized."

Summary

Unlike previous research that suggests that there is limited involvement among low-income Latina mothers (Hill et al., 2004), findings from this section revealed that not only are mothers involved in preparing their child for kindergarten, but they also focus on various school readiness skills. Emergent reading activities (reading books, mastering the alphabet, and visiting the library) were the most pronounced activities that mothers reported doing. These findings support prior literature that Latino families, primarily Mexican families, provide their children with an array of literacy experiences (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1993; Ortiz, 2004). They also support findings that find that ethnic minority families place greater emphasis on academic skills (Halloway et al., 1995; McWayne et al., 2008). They also coincide with research conducted by Sonnenschein and colleagues (2016) that found that 88% of Latino families endorsed the importance of children reading at home. Finally, these findings contrast with previous research that suggests that young children from low-income families are exposed to low levels of average cognitive stimulation, including less book reading (Hart & Risley, 1995; Raikes et al., 2006). Contrary to Kim, Murdock, and Choi (2005), who found that parents of preschool children view learning social interaction skills as more important than academic

learning, our study found the opposite. Mothers placed more value on academic learning than social interaction skills. This is not surprising because there has been a great push at this time for high academic achievement among young children and less emphasis on young children's social interaction skills (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

These findings also contradict prior studies that suggested that Latino families do not necessarily value book reading with very young children (Goldenberg, Reese, & Gallimore, 1992). Our families viewed reading as a home activity rather than solely a school activity. Information from studies on Latino families have also suggested that book reading does not occur frequently nor is it highly valued in preschool-aged children. For example, in their national study, Yarosz and Barnett (2001) found that 48% of non-English Latino/a parents with less than 12 years of education reported that they never read to their preschoolers. Out of the 16 mothers who reported that emergent reading was important, 13 read to their children and/or believed reading was important. Activities related to approaches to learning (child follows rules, child is persistent, child takes care of materials) were the least pronounced activities that mothers reported doing. Mothers borrowed ideas from their child's teachers and utilized blackboards, easels, and whiteboards to help children learn.

Mothers who did not speak English were still committed to their child's readiness. Although several mothers reported they could not always read or understand what the books were saying, these factors did not discourage them in their efforts to become engaged in children's academics. Rather, they used the illustrations in the book or found books in Spanish. These findings are consistent with Durand (2011), who found that mothers were still committed to their role in facilitating children's academic development at home even when their English proficiency was low. One mother also used a Spanish Bible to read to her son. The use of religious material such as a Bible is not the typical reading of children's storybooks. In a recent study by Kelly, Jarrett, and Williams-Wheeler (2016), they found that African-American mothers of preschool-aged children used religious material such as Bibles to promote children's literacy development. With regards to Latino families, Caspe (2009) found that 38.4% of Head Start Latino parents prayed or read religious materials as one their family literacy activities every day. Torres and Hurtado-Vivas (2011) stated that while many Latino parents engage in literacy activities that are not the type that schoolteachers may expect from parents, they are still engaging in genuine literacy activities and are genuinely involved.

In general, mothers engaged in a number of home-based transition activities to help families familiarize children with kindergarten and school. However, mothers in this study did not mention transition activities outside of the home. These results are inconsistent with research

from La Paro, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta (2003), who found that families participated in transition activities at the school. For example, using data from the National Center for Early Learning and Development's Kindergarten Transition Project with over 80 high-risk children and their families (three were Latino), La Paro and colleagues (2003) found that 96% of families visited a kindergarten classroom, 80% met with a non-specific kindergarten teacher, 79% met with the elementary school principal, and 78% toured the school, to name a few. There are two possible reasons why mothers in this sample did not include school-based transition activities. First, the majority of interviews were conducted in the beginning of Head Start's academic year (August), and many of Florence's kindergarten transition activities begin in late February and last until April, resulting in parents not knowing about these activities at the time of the interview. However, after being informed by Hazelwood about these activities, several mothers did attend the Kindergarten Open House as I accompanied them. Second, because registration did not begin until late February, mothers were not aware what school their child would belong to. This could have led them not to engage with the school until after their child was registered. While mothers in this sample did not participate in school-based transition activities, they did participate in home-based transition activities.

Similar to findings from LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, and Pianta (2003), this study also found that mother discussed behavior expectations with their child, discussed meeting new classmates and teachers, and discussed the nature of school work. Findings from this study are also similar to findings from a large national survey that found that the overwhelming majority of parents spend time involved in educational activities with their children (NHES, 1996).

Mother-Child Communication about the Kindergarten Transition

Mothers prepared their children for kindergarten by talking to them about this transition. When they were asked what they told their children about going to kindergarten, findings revealed that mothers' messages reflected their understanding of school expectations, such as having new academic responsibilities, learning how to properly behave in kindergarten and the importance of maintaining personal boundaries. Mothers also focused on the change in setting, the new people that children would encounter in kindergarten, and helping children manage the fear of going to kindergarten. Mothers' conversations also allowed them to gauge children's feelings towards kindergarten.

New Academic Responsibilities

Three mothers told their preschoolers that in kindergarten, they would have new responsibilities such as being expected to do homework, not being lazy, and being more organized. Mothers also talked

about kindergarten in a fun way and told their children what kind of activities they should expect to do once they enter kindergarten.

Two parents told their preschooler that in kindergarten they will have homework. For example, Amanda told Jax: “You’re going to have homework in kindergarten” which Jax would reply: “I know, Mommy.” Johnny, Alexa’s older step-son, was not always helpful and sometimes teased David by saying “Oh, you’re gonna’ have *soooo* much homework,” to which Alexa jumped in and said, “Oh, but we’re gonna’ do it together!”

Aside from telling him he’ll soon be leaving Hazelwood, Amanda also told Jax that he’ll have more responsibilities. She said: “I tell Jax that it won’t be like right now where he comes home and plays Nintendo, no, he will have a lot of responsibilities ... he cannot come home to watch T.V. He will have less time for that.” Jocelyn told us that she tells Jocelyn that in kindergarten, “she’ll have to wake up earlier and be more organized.” She further explained:

I told her that she will have to wake up early, to have her backpack ready, take care of her things, she cannot depend on us anymore. One day she will have to bring the green book, another day the red one, she will have to know which book belongs to which day.

Alexa helped David get acquainted with kindergarten by “taking about it and making it fun!” For example, she shared that when she dropped David’s step-brother Johnny at the corner to be picked up by the bus, she would tell him: “Oh my God, you’re gonna’ be able to ride the bus next year!” Alexa also got help from Johnny: “He tells David that they’re going to learn about the letters and then they’re going to go on field trips and they’re gonna’ have the chick project ... things like that.”

Learning how to Behave in Kindergarten

In particular, four parents of preschool-aged boys (only) told us that knowing what is appropriate behavior in kindergarten was a common topic of discussion. Kristina told us that she told Kevin that he cannot be lazy in kindergarten because “they will not want you there ... they want kids that are not lazy.” She also told him that he has to clean up after himself since “nobody is going to do it for you.” Paulina, who described Hugo as “hyperactive” and “rough,” reminded him that he has to careful with other people:

I tell him that there are kids that are shyer ... that he can't touch them because they are softer and that he has to be careful and behave nice with other people, to respect them. He needs to know how to keep his distance with girls and be softer. It’s different to be with boys than with girls.

How to behave was not the only advice that Paulina was sharing with Hugo. She also shared: “I tell him that there are also things that you don’t say, like bad words.” Alicia also focused on behavior and reminded Manny how things would be changing once he started kindergarten: “I tell

him about all the things that will change, all the things he will have to do. Tell him what's good and what's wrong." Remembering that Manny has difficulty behaving, she felt it was important to remind Manny of the rules at school: "I tell him that there are rules at home, rules in the street, rules at school, rules in the park ... I always remind him of this because he likes to scream a lot. ... Those things more than anything." Marcela also focused on behavior, but in a different way. She reminded Daniel that he has to listen to his teacher and "stand up for himself" if he encounters any bullying, and to report it to his teachers. Marcela was also passing down wisdom from her father to Daniel: "I tell him not to give up, if things get hard you don't walk away." This was something Marcela's father taught her while growing up.

Maintaining Personal Boundaries

When talking about kindergarten, two parents told their children that no one should touch their private parts. Although Jacob had visited his new school to watch a movie, Marisol reminded Jacob that no one should be touching him: "I always tell Jacob that if he is at school and someone tries to touch his private parts he has to tell his teacher, he has to be careful." Like Marisol, Flor also reminded Lucia that no one should be touching her. She said:

I tell Lucia that she needs to know the body parts that one can touch. I tell her "It's important that you never allow a boy to touch you. If a boy comes and touches you, you have to go to your teacher and let her know because that's not OK."

Flor further added that although boys also face this risk, "it's more dangerous for girls ... teaching this to girls is more important."

Attending a New School

In their conversations about kindergarten, seven mothers told their transitioning preschooler how they would soon be attending a new school. Paulina told Hugo that "this year you're going to attend another school" to mentally prepare him that he will not be going to daycare anymore. Maribel also shared with us that she "wants Diana ready for kindergarten" so they often talk about how "she'll be going to another school soon." In addition to reminding Nayeli that "she's a good girl," Ingrid also told her that "her new school is good, so she has to go." Fabiola told us that she hasn't told Javier very much but will do so when the date is closer. She said: "I only told him that he is going to another school." Amanda reminded Jax "this is your last year at daycare, and next year you're going to be in a new kindergarten class." Laura told Isa about the changes that will soon take place: "First that it will be a different place, and about the time she will spend there." Irene also reminded Kayla that "this is just a stage that she has to pass" by driving to the new school. She told Irene: "You'll be going to kindergarten here with your friend Lucia! Next year your brother will be the only one going to the small school, not you."

Meeting New Friends and Teachers

Five mothers also focused on the new people children would encounter in kindergarten. For example, Laura told us that when she talked about kindergarten with Isa, she “gets calmer”: “I tell Isa that in kindergarten she will learn a lot of things and make friends.” Similarly, Maribel reminded Diana that she’ll soon “meet new friends and have another teacher.” Amanda also told Jax that in kindergarten “he’s going to have some new friends!” Fabiola shared with us that so far, she had only told Javier “that there are going to be more kids” in kindergarten, but when the date is closer, she “will tell him more.” Delia commented that when talking about kindergarten to Josue, he expressed he didn’t want to go but she knew a way to get him excited. She said: “I tell him that we don’t have other kids here to play with him, but over there [kindergarten] ... there are a lot of kids and they have toys,” which gets Josue excited.

Managing the Fear of Kindergarten

Five mothers of pre-school aged girls (only) shared with us that their daughters told them that they were afraid of going to kindergarten. Knowing this, mothers specifically talked to their daughters and tried to reassure them that there was nothing to fear.

For example, Adriana used her older son as a way for Lesley to cope with the fear of attending kindergarten. She said: “I tell Lesley not to be afraid because she’ll be there with her brother.” Laura responded to Isa’s feelings about being scared because she’ll be going to a new school “with bigger kids” by “talking to her about kindergarten, so she will not be scared.” Ingrid reduced Nayeli’s anxiety about kindergarten by having her think about it. She told us: “I am putting that idea in her head, so when the time comes for her to go to school, she will not be afraid.” Because Kayla told Irene that she’s nervous about going to kindergarten since “she won’t see her friends and teachers anymore,” Irene talked to Kayla and said: “I told her she cannot be at the same place ... there are stages that she has to overcome.” To further ease Kayla’s nervousness, Irene showed Kayla online videos from YouTube that showed how children were happy to be in kindergarten:

I want her to see the fun side of it. She loves those videos of kids at school with their friends, the teacher is teaching them things, and then it shows them at recess, and then their break time. Kayla gets excited! She asks if she is going to do those things as well. I tell her “Yes!”

Diana has told her mother Maribel that she’s afraid of being bullied by other kids when she goes to kindergarten. Maribel shared the following conversation they often had:

Diana told us “there’s going to be older kids, mommy, and those kids will bully us.” But I told her that those kids are not going to be in the same classroom than her and that we hope that they don’t bully her outside. Her dad and I are always telling her that she has to tell the teacher or us if those kids tell her or do anything to her, that we need to know to be able to help her. We want her to be comfortable at school, not afraid.

Preschoolers' Feelings towards Kindergarten

Mothers were specifically asked what their child said to let them know they were ready (or not) for kindergarten. Preschoolers' feelings towards kindergarten entailed positive and negative feelings (See Table 65).

Positive Feelings

The majority of preschoolers had positive feelings about going to kindergarten. Feelings of excitement were widely described, as well as feelings of curiosity. Preschoolers displayed their excitement about going to kindergarten through a variety of avenues: wanting to take the bus, having a backpack, attending a new school (which also entailed going to school with their siblings and participating in school activities), and wanting to learn and do homework.

Taking the bus. Five preschoolers displayed their excitement about going to kindergarten by asking questions about taking the bus or letting parents know that they would finally be able to take the bus once they go to kindergarten. For example, Kevin would often ask Kristina: "When am I going to ride the bus [to kindergarten]?" Natalia told us that Nina "wants to go to school and ride on the bus." Taking the bus was the only reason why Jocelyn wanted to go to school. Alma told us: "She only wants to go because she is going to ride the bus. She is excited about that!" Whenever Jax saw the bus, Amanda reminded him that he'd soon be taking it, which thrilled Jax. Amanda said: "When the bus passes I tell him 'Sweetie, this year you are going to take that bus,' and he says 'Yippie' ... He gets very excited!" Taking the bus made Manny feel like a "big boy," something he was very much looking forward to being. Alicia commented: "Manny doesn't ask about kindergarten, but he asks about the bus. I think he associates kindergarten with the bus ... but he's excited because he feels older."

Table 65. *Preschoolers' Reactions to the Transition (n = 16²²)*

Parent (Target Child)	Positive Feelings				Negative Feelings			Total	
	Taking the bus	Having a backpack	Attending new school	Wanting to learn	Curious	Sad	Disinterested		Resistance
Adriana (Lesley)			X	X					2
Alexa (David)			X						1
Alicia (Manny)	X								1
Amanda (Jax)	X								1
Delia (Josue)							X		1
Fabiola (Javier)			X						1
Flor (Lucia)				X					1
Ingrid (Nayeli)		X							1
Irene (Kayla)		X	X			X			3
Jocelyn (Alma)	X								1
Kristina (Kevin)	X				X				2
Laura (Isa)		X	X		X				3
Maribel (Diana)		X							1
Marisol (Jacob)								X	1
Natalia (Nina)	X	X							2
Paulina (Hugo)				X					1
Total	5	5	5	3	2	1	1	1	23

²² Marcela (Daniel) did not have a response.

Having a backpack. Five girl preschoolers showed excitement about the prospect of starting kindergarten because they would be able to have their very own backpack. For them, a backpack symbolized kindergarten. Natalia shared with us that when she bought her oldest child a backpack, Nina made Natalia buy her one too: “Nina forced me to buy her one ... she has it well guarded until she goes to school.” Nayeli also asked Ingrid to get her a backpack so she could carry all her school supplies. She said: “Right now she doesn’t have anything in the backpack, but I tell her that soon she will be carrying a notebook, pencils ... she gets excited about that.” Laura, who also bought Isa a backpack, told us: “She puts on her backpack and tells me, ‘Bye Mommy, I am going to school.’ She also asks me to play school where she pretends that she goes to school with her backpack ... I see that she wants to go.” Maribel, who has yet to buy Diana a backpack, told us: “Diana wants her bag to carry the 20 books she thinks she will carry [laughs].” Kayla also reminded Irene that she’ll need a backpack soon. She said: “Kaya tells me that she’ll have more books and that we have to buy the backpack and school supplies.”

Attending a new school. Five preschoolers displayed excitement about the transition to kindergarten because that meant that they would be going to a new school. When they visited the school, Javier told Fabiola: “He liked it and that he wanted to go to that new school right away.” Kayla also told Irene that she was excited to go to kindergarten when they walked into the school to drop off her older brother. Irene shared with us Kayla’s reaction: “She said, ‘Mommy, this will be my school!’ She was very excited! You can just tell, she just wants to be in school already.” Also, whenever Kayla’s older brother had school activities, Kayla told Irene: “I can’t wait to go too!” Alexa gave a comparable response. She told us that David had seen her planning Jairo’s Halloween and spring parties and how David always complained of having to wait to go to kindergarten to do that. She said: “He’s always asking ‘Why can Jairo go in pajamas and I can’t?’ and ‘Why does Jairo have breakfast with mom and dad?’”

In addition to being in a new school, two preschoolers were also excited because they would be going to school with their older brother. Laura, Isa’s mother, told us that when she dropped off Miguel at school, Isa tells her: “Mommy, this will be my school very soon, and I’ll go with Miguel!” Similarly, Adriana shared with us that Lesley was “excited to go to the same school that her brother goes to” and also have the same teacher that he had when he was in kindergarten: “She gets even more excited about that [laughs].”

Wanting to learn. Three preschoolers were looking forward to learning and doing homework in kindergarten. Flor shared with us that Lucia is excited to go to kindergarten to learn. She said: “She always tries to get books and read but doesn’t know what is written, but she imagines she’s in kindergarten doing it.” Adriana also told us that Lesley wanted to stay at

“Jesus’ school every time I drop him off” because “she just wants to go ... she loves learning!” On a similar note, Hugo was excited to go to kindergarten to do homework. When they go to Target, Paulina asks Hugo what they need to do his homework, and he’ll say: “Oh, Mommy, I think I’ll need crayons and this and that.” That signaled to Paulina “he’s motivated to learn.”

Curious about kindergarten. Two preschoolers were curious about kindergarten and asked questions as a way to confirm that they *would be* going to school soon. For example, Laura told us that whenever she dropped off Miguel at school, Isa would ask: “I am coming here for kindergarten, right? Which one is going to be my classroom?” Likewise, Kevin asked his mother, Kristina, if he was ready for school. She told us:

Kevin will ask, “I am a big boy because I can put on my clothes. I’m ready to go to kindergarten, right?” or “I write my letters at school, so I’m ready, right?” and “When is it going to be my first day there?”

Negative Feelings

A few preschoolers expressed more negative feelings about going to kindergarten. They shared feelings of sadness, disinterest, and resistance with mothers.

Sadness about going to kindergarten. Although Kayla was excited to go kindergarten and “makes lots of new friends,” Irene told us that she still gets sad when she thinks about she has to leave behind. She said: “Kayla gets sad and cries because she knows she won’t see her friends and teachers anymore.”

Disinterested in kindergarten. One preschooler, Josue, was disinterested in kindergarten. Delia shared with us: “Josue doesn’t mention anything about kindergarten.”

Resistance to kindergarten. Jacob, who Marisol told us was “very enthusiastic” about going to school, shared with us that he’ll soon be saying he doesn’t want to go. She said:

It will be the same thing as he does in the daycare. I have asked him why and he says, “No, I don’t like it,” but I feel that it’s because the teachers are strict and tell him “don’t do this.” He knows that kindergarten will be different.

Summary

Adding to the limited research on what mothers are telling their children about kindergarten, findings from this chapter offer a detailed account of the messages provided to children, including the content of the message, how information was shared, and preschoolers’ feelings towards kindergarten. Mothers honed in on their preschoolers’ weaknesses and fears and used that as a guide for what they should be telling their children about kindergarten. These exchanges allowed mothers to reinforce school readiness competencies, remediate problematic behaviors, and promote a positive, albeit serious view of kindergarten. Findings suggest that mothers may be particularly concerned with the misbehaviors of boys, as only preschool-aged

boys were given messages about proper behavior in kindergarten. Research suggests that African-American and Latino children, especially boys, may be judged more negatively by teachers for misbehaviors (Skiba et al., 2011; Stagman & Cooper, 2010). Similar to findings from Durand (2011), this study found that mothers were concerned that children keep them abreast of potentially dangerous situations that may occur while children are at school and out of their care (e.g., making sure no one inappropriately touched them). Mothers emphasized that children should tell them and be forthright with them. In this way, mothers viewed their roles as constant guardians and protectors of children (Durand, 2011). Overall, mothers in this study were aware that the kindergarten transition was a critical milestone (Malsch et al., 2011) and believed it was important to talk to their children about kindergarten (La Paro et al., 2003).

This study also found that the majority (13 out of 16) of low-income Latino/a preschoolers who were in the process of transition were excited about kindergarten. Daniels (2014) found that children who are more enthusiastic about their school entry were considered by their parents and teachers to have a better approach to learning and adapting to the class routine during the first months of the school year. A positive school-related attitude has also been shown to be important as they inspire approach rather than avoidance behavior in the classroom (Hyson, 2008; Snow, 2007). Indeed, Ladd, Buhs, and Seid (2000) found in their sample of 200 children (2% Hispanic) that children's liking of school at the beginning of kindergarten was distinct from entry factors (e.g., family background) and predicted their cooperative participation in classroom activities and subsequent achievement. Similarly, the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project, which included ethnically-racially diverse kindergartners who had attended Head Start (53% White, 27% African-American, and 9% Hispanic), found that the majority of children (74%) had an extremely positive view about kindergarten (Ramey & Ramey, 1998).

Like this study, the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Demonstration Project found that a minority of children (7%) expressed a dislike for school. Boys were more likely to fall in this category. The two children who have negative feelings (disinterest and resistance) in this sample were also boys. Negative emotions in the beginning of the school year have been found to be related to poorer academic achievement and more teacher-child conflicts (Hernandez et al., 2016). Prior research has suggested that positive emotions are related to better academic achievement since they encourage children to explore new environments and interact with new teachers and peers, as well as facilitate problem-solving skills (Frederickson, 2001). More generally, the research suggests that the majority of children from low-income homes enter kindergarten with positive attitudes. Although this study does align with previous findings, it goes

beyond previous research and beyond the positive and negative dichotomy of children's feelings towards kindergarten. This study adds to the limited literature on *why* children are excited for school from the perspective of mothers, who are the unit of analysis and source of knowledge. It further shows that Latino parents strongly value education (Fuligni, 2007).

Using Extended Kin as Support

Mothers were asked who the people helping them prepare their children for kindergarten are. In addition to their own reported activities, 16 mothers described support from other family members, including partners (12), siblings (5), aunts/uncles (3), grandparents (2), and cousins (1). Laura's family included a trusted family friend who took care of Isa. Manny's mother Alicia was the only parent who did not mention a family member assisting in Manny's kindergarten transition. She shared that she didn't know what Manny's father Marco, who she shared custody with, does with Manny: "To be honest I don't have an idea of what Marco does with Manny to get him ready for school. I haven't discussed the subject with him yet." A total of 24 assistants were mentioned (See Table 66).

Table 66. *In-home Maternal Assistants (n = 16)*

Parent (Target Child)	Partners (Fathers)	Siblings	Uncles/Aunts	Grandparents	Cousins	Trusted Friend	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X	X					2
Alexa (David)	X	X					2
Amanda (Jax)	X						1
Delia (Josue)	X						1
Fabiola (Javier)	X		X-A				2
Flor (Lucia)		X					1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X						1
Irene (Kayla)	X						1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X						1
Kristina (Kevin)	X			X			2
Laura (Isa)	X	X				X	3
Marcela (Daniel)			X-A	X	X		3
Maribel (Diana)	X						1
Marisol (Jacob)	X						1
Natalia (Nina)		X					1
Paulina (Hugo)			X-U				1
Total	12	5	3	2	1	1	24

Note: A= Aunt; U= Uncle

Fathers

Twelve mothers said husbands or companions who were also children's fathers were a source of support. Fathers assisted with the following school readiness skills: (a) Emergent reading skills; (b) nominal knowledge skills; (c) socio-emotional skills; (d) emergent writing skills; and (e) independence/self-care skills.

Fathers supporting emergent reading skills. Eight mothers reported that their husbands/companions assisted in emergent reading skills. These skills entailed: reading to child, storytelling, and helping children learn new words (in Spanish) (See Table 67).

Table 67. *Fathers and Emergent Reading Skills (n = 8)*

Parent (Target Child)	Reading to Child	Storytelling	Learning new words	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		X	2
Amanda (Jax)		X		1
Delia (Josue)	X	X		2
Fabiola (Javier)	X			1
Irene (Kayla)	X			1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Maribel (Diana)	X			1
Marisol (Jacob)	X			1
Total	7	2	1	10

Reading to child. Reading was an important activity mentioned by seven mothers. Adriana's husband Gabriel "reads to Lesley, but in Spanish." Fabiola's husband, who is more confident in his English abilities, reads to Javier: "Gustavo reads more books to Javier since all the books are in English." Delia shared that "Edwin reads with Josue." When Irene is cooking, her husband Eduardo reads to Kayla: "He reads with Kayla ... so I cook, and they read together." When Jocelyn and her partner Caleb used to live together, she told us: "Caleb and Alma used to read books together." She admitted that she doesn't know what they do now since she doesn't see him very much. Depending on Kevin's mood, Kristina told us "Chris likes to read to him." Maribel disclosed that Diana's father "loves to be with her and helps her more than I do ... they read a lot." Marisol's husband Berto accompanied Marisol and Jacob to the library where they checked out books to read at home, but due to Berto's work schedule, Marisol is the one who does the reading: "I read to him because my husband works a double shift at night."

Storytelling. Amanda proudly told us: "Jaime tells Jax a lot of stories ... stories about cartoons from long ago. He tells him stories that this one did that, this one does the other, things I don't pay attention to." Delia, whose husband works as a mechanic, tells Josue stories about "how many cars he has."

Learning new words. Adriana admitted that her husband "focuses more on Spanish" than she does and told us: "He'll teach her a word randomly throughout the day, and then he'll be like

‘Do you know what this means? It means this in Spanish.’ He’ll go out of his way to help Lesley with her words in Spanish.”

Fathers supporting nominal skills. Seven fathers assisted in helping children learn nominal skills, which included numbers/counting and colors (See Table 68).

Table 68. *Fathers and Nominal Skills (n = 7)*

Parent (target child)	Numbers/Counting	Colors	Total
Alexa (David)		X	1
Delia (Josue)	X	X	2
Ingrid (Nayeli)		X	1
Irene (Kayla)	X	X	2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X		1
Laura (Isa)	X		1
Maribel (Diana)	X		1
Total	5	4	9

Numbers/Counting. Fathers helping with numbers was another activity mentioned. Delia shared with us: “Josue’s father will ask him ‘Tell me the numbers.’” Irene said of her husband: “Eduardo makes Kayla count colors, everything. He also makes her practice her numbers a lot ... she skips numbers, and we want her to solve that.” Similarly, Jocelyn said: “Caleb makes Alma practice her numbers.” When Laura’s husband Jorge is helping their older son with math homework, Isa jumps in to do the same: “She asks a lot about mathematics, like ‘how much is this?’ Her dad helps her with that.” Diana’s father also “helps her count.”

Colors. Assisting with colors was also an activity that fathers were involved with. Alexa told us: “They color a lot and then Jacob talks with David about coloring while they’re coloring [laughs].” If Josue, Delia’s preschooler, did not tell his dad the colors, he wouldn’t be able to play on his phone. She said: “Edwin helps with colors ... one thing that he does is that he asks him to name the colors. If he doesn’t want to answer, then he doesn’t lend him his phone.” Irene said of her husband: “He tells Kayla to tell him the names of the colors.” Ingrid also shared with us that her husband Arturo teaches Nayeli about colors while using traffic lights and stop signs as examples. She said:

Her dad tells her a lot about yellow and blue. He’ll tell her that blue is for boys, and that yellow is like the traffic lights where you have to slow down, and red when you cannot pass, and green you can go. It’s the same with the ‘Stop’ sign. He tells Kayla that’s ‘rojo.’²³

Fathers supporting socio-emotional skills. Three fathers assisted mothers with one socio-emotional skill: kindergarten expectations (See Table 69).

²³ Translation: Red

Table 69. *Fathers and Socio-emotional Skills (n = 3)*

Parent (Target Child)	Kindergarten Expectations
Alexa (David)	X
Kristina (Kevin)	X
Maribel (Diana)	X
Total	3

Kindergarten expectations. Alexa shared with us that her partner talked to David about kindergarten, and has also gone with him to visit his new school. She said:

They talk about kindergarten ... just anything like “Oh, you’re gonna have so much fun,” and encouraging him not to be scared. He’s also been telling him like what he’s supposed to do during the summer, like “Just wait David, you’re gonna have to watch those videos,” even though David has watched them.

The videos that Alexa is referring to come in the Kindergarten Packet that David’s new school sends to all incoming kindergarten students during the summer. David and his father have also visited his new school: “They have gone to David’s new school ... I dunno what they do when they’re there [laughs].” Kristina also shared with us that Kevin’s father “is always advising him.” She said: “My husband will tell him ‘When you go to school you gotta do this, that,’ stuff like that so that it helps him.” When Kevin feels lazy, Kristina told us that Chris tells Kevin: “If you’re lazy you’re not going to kindergarten ... they are not going to want you there because they want kids that are not lazy.” Similarly, when Kevin doesn’t want to pick up after himself, Chris would say:

You gotta pick it up because when you go to school, you’re going to have to clean [up] after yourself, nobody is going to do it. If you want to go to kindergarten, you have to clean up for yourself.

Marisol, whose partner is out of the state, told us that Berto and Jacob talked on the phone every day. She shared: “Berto will tell him ‘Don’t give up, be nice to your mom, and listen to the rules ... don’t talk back, be strong, don’t let anyone bully you, stand up for yourself.’”

Fathers supporting emergent writing skills. Mothers shared with us that two fathers assisted with emergent writing skills, which entailed helping children to write and draw (See Table 70).

Table 70. *Fathers and Emergent Writing Skills (n = 2)*

Parent (Target Child)	Writes	Draws	Total
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X		1
Maribel (Diana)	X	X	2
Total	2	1	3

Writes and draws. Ingrid shared with us that when she comes home from work, he leaves for his job and they don’t spend a lot of time together with the children unless it’s on the weekends. However, she did tell us: “Arturo is the one that bought Nayeli the notebook and the

pencils. He's also the one that tells them to write on the chalkboard that his friend gave to the kids as a gift." Likewise, Maribel said: "My husband does a lot of activities to teach Diana things ... he helps her write and they draw a lot together." Delia also told us that her husband helps Josue "write his letters."

Fathers supporting independence/self-care skills. One mother, Delia, told us that her husband helps Josue with hygiene, which included helping Josue brush his teeth, bathing him, and helping Josue get dressed in the morning. Delia said: "In the morning, Josue tells my husband 'You brush my teeth, you bathe me.' He helps him a lot. He even helps him get ready in the morning by putting his clothes on for daycare."

Siblings

Five mothers reported that older siblings provided assistance. They helped with nominal skills, emergent writing, emergent reading, and socio-emotional skills. Mothers also reported that siblings helped children complete their homework (See Table 71).

Kindergarten registration. Older siblings played two key roles. First, they helped the transitioning preschooler with various school readiness skills. Second, because they were older and had already undergone the transition to kindergarten, mothers were already aware of what to expect. Laura told us that she knew what school Isa would be attending because her older son was already registered at that school. She said: "The school had already sent me kindergarten information because of my older son ... but Hazelwood did try to guide me, but I already knew because of my son." Similarly, Alexa had already gone through the kindergarten process with her stepson, Jairo: "He's going to the same school as his older brother, Jairo, so I already knew." Flor described that Lucia is her second child and that the registration was much easier the second time around:

They gave a lot of information, but I already knew where she was going because of Eleanora. When it's with the first one, you don't know a single thing, not when the registrations are, what to bring ... but with the second one, you already know. The first one is more difficult.

Table 71. *Older Siblings Assisting (n = 5)*

Parent (Target Child)	Emergent Writing		Emergent Reading		Nominal Skills		Socio-Emotional	Total
	Kindergarten registration	Drawing	Reading	Homework	Adding/ Counting	Colors	Kindergarten Expectations	
Adriana (Lesley)		X	X	X				3
Alexa (David)	X						X	2
Flor (Lucia)	X	X	X	X	X			5
Laura (Isa)	X							1
Natalia (Nina)						X		1
Total	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	12

Emergent writing skills. Two mothers, Adriana and Flor, reported that their older children helped their preschoolers to draw. Adriana told us that Lesley and Jesus “draw a lot together”: “He’ll take the easel out sometimes and then he’ll just start drawing on there with her, or he’ll start telling her ‘Ok, now it’s your turn. Draw X,’ and then she’ll draw it.” Eleanora and Lucia also draw together. Flor shared: “When they have a new coloring book, they draw in it and color together.”

Emergent reading skills. Similar to emergent writing skills, Adriana and Flor said that their older children also helped their preschoolers to read. Lesley’s older brother, Jesus, will “read to her at night before bed.” Because Flor cannot read in English, Eleanora would help Lucia read. Flor said: “Eleanora is the one that helps her the most ... she reads her books. When Lucia gets a new book, Eleanora reads with her.”

Homework completion. Two mothers, Adriana and Flor, reported that their preschooler’s older sibling helped their preschooler with homework. Adriana shared with us that Jesus, Lesley’s older brother who is seven years old, exposed Lesley to the concept of homework. She said: “He’ll try to teach her stuff, or if he’s doing his homework and she’s sitting next to him, he’ll try to explain it to her what homework is and teach her everything he knows.” Eleanora, Lucia’s older sister who is in fourth grade, also helped Nina with her homework. Flor said: “She helps Lucia with her homework. She teaches her what she can’t do. They do it in the afternoons when they are back from school and in the evenings after they play.”

Nominal skills. Two parents shared with us that their child’s older sibling helped children with adding/counting and colors.

Adding/Counting. Flor mentioned that Eleanora helps Lucia with addition and counting. She told us: “Eleanora sometimes teaches her with an addition book that I bought her. She teaches her the results so Lucia can learn it. They also do a book where you count the drawing and you cross the numbers out.” Eleanora also reminds Flor of the kind of books that Lucia may need: “When we are at the store she tells me, ‘Look, Mommy, Lucia will need this book to learn how to count.’”

Colors. Nina’s older sister Ariel, who is seven years old and in the second grade, not only tells Nina how to behave, but also helps Nina with her colors. Natalia, who refers to Ariel as a “Little mother” said: “She tells her things like ‘Don’t do that or you’re going to fall. Don’t do that because you’re going to hurt yourself ... do it this way, not that way.’” Ariel would also correct Nina if she got a color wrong: “If Nina looks at something yellow and says that it’s green, Ariel tells her, ‘No, that color is called yellow.’”

Socio-emotional skills. One mother, Alexa, told us how her older brother helps David to know what to expect in kindergarten since David will be going to the same school as Jairo. She said: “Jairo tells him that they’re going to learn about the letters and then they’re going to go on field trips and they’re gonna’ have the chick project ... things like that.”

Uncles/Aunts

Three mothers shared with us that their siblings also provided support. Paulina’s brother, who she and Hugo lived with and whom she referred to as Hugo’s “second dad,” helped Hugo to read, took him to the movies and library, and helped him socialize. She said:

Sebastian has him read, they go to the movie theater a lot, and when he has the time he takes him to the library. He helps him socialize. He takes him out a lot, and they do a lot of fun activities like going somewhere with his friends ... he takes him to play with other kids.

For two mothers, Fabiola and Marcela, support from their sisters was more indirect than direct. While Hazelwood provided information regarding their child’s neighborhood school, Fabiola and Marcela told us that it was their sister who actually told them which school they belonged. For example, Javier’s mother Fabiola, who lived and worked in the same restaurant as her sister, said: “I knew he was assigned to Alvin because my sister’s kids go there. She told me.” Marcela, whose sister was also living with her, echoed Fabiola’s comment and said: “My sister was transferring her children, so she found the one that we were assigned to. So she mentioned it to me.”

Grandparents

Two mothers reported that their mothers would also assist in getting their child ready for kindergarten (See Table 72).

Table 72. *Grandparents Assisting (n = 2)*

Parent (Target Child)	Taking child to the library	Teaching child Spanish	Total
Kristina (Kevin)	X		1
Marcela (Daniel)		X	1
Total	1	1	2

Taking child to the library. Kristina shared with us that since Kevin is a “big reader,” her mom will take him to the library: “Whenever there’s an activity going on at the library, Yolanda will take him with her ... they would go every Tuesday since we lived a block away and it was the summer. He loved it.” Now that they moved, they don’t go as often since it’s far away: “He’ll now ask me if they are going to the library and I tell him, ‘Yes, we are going,’ but we don’t because it’s so far.”

Teaching child Spanish. Marcela’s mother Florencia liked to teach Daniel Spanish. She shared with us the following: “She’ll talk to him in Spanish and then she’ll teach him how to say

words in Spanish and then she'll quiz him after." Although she's jealous that her mother did not that do with her because Marcela's Spanish "isn't too good," she's impressed with how well Daniel is catching on: "His Spanish is pretty well ... I'm like 'Good job!'"

Cousins

Marcela's nephew, who was eight years old, helped Daniel get ready for school. Anthony read to Daniel and asked him to follow along, taught him to spell, add, and how to follow instructions. She shared with us the following:

They will sit down and do activities together. Anthony will read to him ... we'll have duplicate copies of the same book so everyone can have one, and he'll just follow along, and then if they're ever stuck on a word, they'll ask, and we'll give them a definition.

Marcela believed that this activity was helping Daniel understand what the words mean, giving him the ability to use it later as Daniel "has a really good memory." Anthony is also teaching Daniel "how to spell different things, how to add, how to play certain toys and games, how to follow instructions."

Family Friend

Although technically not family, Laura considered Betty, Isa's babysitter and trusted friend, "A gift sent from God." Betty, who is a 62-year-old White American who was undergoing chemotherapy before becoming Isa's babysitter, read in English, helped with colors, had conversations with Isa, and knows things that Laura doesn't know. Betty also has given structure to Isa's daily routine. Laura shared the following about Betty, who spends most of the time with them and who "they are very happy with": "She reads to them mostly in English, they like to color books together, and they have conversations ... she'll also take them to make crafts, the pool ... she doesn't want them to be locked up at home." Betty has also rules in the house, and the kids now have a schedule as well: "We didn't have rules before ... the kids did whatever they wanted, but now it's different. She has rules set, a schedule for them." Finally, she is also teaching Laura. Laura said:

She knows things that I don't know. For instance, on Valentine's Day, you have to send the kids to school with treats for their classmates, it's a tradition here, or in Easter, the girls have to put on a dress and find Easter eggs, things like that. Because I wasn't born here, I wasn't raised here, I didn't go to school here, I don't know these things, but she knows them.

Further Insights from Photos Illustrating Families' Transitioning Activities

Photo-elicitation interviewing offered insight into what *mothers* regarded as important and integral (Taylor et al., 2015) to the process of preparing their child for kindergarten. The use of photographs aided and illustrated the diversity and behavioral patterns that exist within groups (Gold, 2004), challenging stereotypes of Latina mothers and their role in their children's

education. Ten mothers completed the photo-elicitation interview. The following photos depict activities illustrating school readiness domains that mothers felt were important for their child to learn prior to kindergarten. They include: (a) Nominal knowledge; (b) emergent writing; (c) emergent reading; (d) socio-emotional development; (e) approaches to learning; (f) motor development; (g) independence; and (h) language development. Photos illustrating how children use tablets and how parents spend time with their children are also depicted. Finally, support from siblings ends this section.

Nominal Knowledge (Numbers, Colors, Shapes)

Image 1



Paulina (Hugo): We buy him puzzles. If you see here, he has some of numbers and pictures. He also has things to learn his ABCs, numbers, colors. We took that picture in the morning, if you see he is still wearing his pajamas. He wakes up and starts getting everything out!

Image 2



Adriana (Lesley): Here we were practicing the numbers and I was telling her to tell me what they were ... I wrote these. ... And then I was telling her “where’s 7” and “where’s this” and she was pointing to the numbers that I was calling out.

Image 3



Adriana (Lesley): And then we do blocks, she loves blocks. Sometimes I have her count how many she used so we use them for counting. And also for the colors ... I’ll ask her what colors she used.

Image 4



Adriana (Lesley): She likes to count her steps. She'll count how many steps it takes to get to the car, how many steps it takes back, like it takes to get back or stairs ... when we do stairs that when she does it the most. She can count I think up to probably ... I would say around 30 but she gets confused after 15 so she just skips to 30 [laughs].

Image 5



Adriana (Lesley): What we do too is I'll have them draw things on here, like I'll tell her like draw a circle and then she'll do it. Or I'll ask her to draw shapes and then that way she can get practice with it.

Emergent Writing (Writes words, writes own name, drawing, spelling, tracing)

Image 6



Adriana (Lesley): And then this Lesley ... we were just writing simple words. I do really easy words with her to try to get her to learn. Because this is something that I didn't do with her older brother and I feel like it will help her, just to recognize even just simple little words.

Image 7



Adriana (Lesley): And then we were practicing writing her name because her brother had trouble in kindergarten with his name and last name, especially. So with her I want to make sure that she has practice. So I was having her practice her name.

Image 8



Flor (Lucia): This is their drawing book, it's for drawings and letters. I also got one for letters, to trace the letters.

Image 9



Paulina (Hugo): There he is at my workplace. He takes the sticky notes and puts them in the wall. There he has them in the desk, he writes on them. Sometimes numbers, sometimes drawings of people, it depends. When we are there and there are people around, he makes them things. Like drawings, numbers, landscapes. He draw for them, and when he is done he tells them "Take this, I made it myself!"[Laughs].

Image 10



Alicia (Manny): He prefers to be alone while he is drawing. He draws faces, rainbows ... he draws mom, dad, himself, his brother. ... I think that right now it helps because he doesn't know how to hold the pencil properly. I want him to be independent in kindergarten with the teacher. That when she says 'Write your name' he can do it. I have seen that now they give them pieces of paper and they have to write their name on it.

Image 11



Ingrid (Nayeli): Here it's after school and she is drawing and making lines.

Image 12



Paulina (Hugo): Here he is coloring. He also likes to collect coloring books, he loves it. I really like that now he stays within the line ... He gets distracted easily. He is very hyperactive. But when he colors he calms a little bit, and I love it. Right now, wherever we go he takes a coloring book with him.

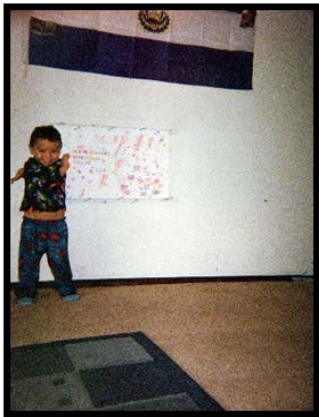
Emergent Reading (Alphabet mastery, child reading)

Image 13



Adriana (Lesley): This is our routine at night right before bed. If you open it up it has like a side where you can tell time, it has the ABCs and I think it has flashcards for shapes colors and numbers. ... So every night before we go to bed that's the routine, so we were practicing her ABCs.

Image 14



Delia (Josue): I glued a piece of cardboard to the wall so he can practice his letters because he was writing on the wall. I wanted him to keep practicing.

Image 15



Laura (Isa): This is her brother's homework, a package they gave us in his school. She doesn't know her letters yet but she was identifying the objects and practicing the first letter of the word from each object. I was helping her ... I think it's super important she do that because I don't see her have a lot of knowledge of the letter. We do this maybe twice a week when I'm home but it's usually the babysitter who helps them.

Image 16



Alicia (Manny): We were doing puzzles and he was practicing his letters, after he finished with his letters, he did his shapes. We play with the puzzles so he can practice his numbers, he knows them very well ... he learns the numbers faster in English than in Spanish. He has more problems with letters, but with these puzzles I tell him, where is the 'A' and he looks for 'A.'

Image 17



Ingrid (Nayeli): This is after school and she is sitting here practicing her letters. She does it for about 20 minutes each day.

Image 18



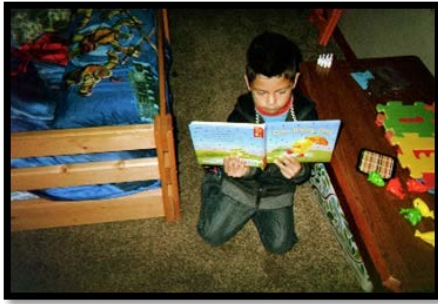
Paulina (Hugo): We are in the car. He is in his booster seat, and we always have books. There he has his drawing notebook and his books. This book is a book to read ... I always have different activities books for him in the backseat of the car, if not he gets bored. I tell him to read to himself or to read to me. He doesn't know how to read yet, but he makes up the story.

Image 19



Irene (Kayla): There she is seated in the sofa and she is reading a book. It's a hobby for her. When she is frustrated she sits and read. I read to her in Spanish and then she reads to me ... she only pretends that she is reading, she sees the images. I think that it's very important that she likes books; I think that it will be easier for her to focus in the things that she will have to do at school.

Image 20



Alicia (Manny): That's the photo in which we were reading, that's one of his favorite's books, it's about rain. We were in his bedroom. We were reading ... he reads now and he tells me "Look mom, here it says..." And he says what he thinks it supposedly says ... He sees the pictures and makes his own story. I think that it will help him to get the habit of reading. It will help him his whole life. I have seen that in my oldest son, and I wasn't able to read with him because I used to work

more and now it's difficult for him to get hooked by a book ... He doesn't have that interest, he never says "This book looks interesting, I am going to read it."

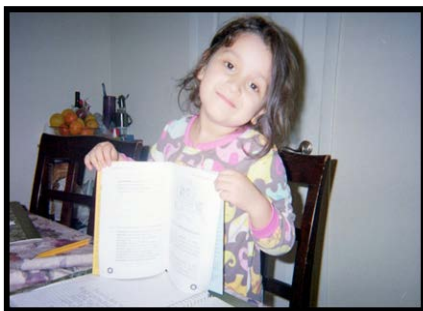
Image 21



Adriana (Lesley): And this is her after we're done reading to her. She always reads it back to us but she makes it like whatever she remembers she'll say it, if not she'll make it up. We do it every night. We started it with her older brother because during the day I have no time because I pick him up from school and come home and then it's dinner, homework, and then taking a bath, and it's like by that time we're done, I need to get him to bed. So reading to him at night worked. And I did this before

he went to kindergarten and he learned all his ABCs and shapes and numbers before he even went to preschool ... since it worked him I wanted it to try it with Lesley and it also works.

Image 22



Laura (Isa): This is Isa with a book. My aunt is a writer and writes children's books. I was reading one to her ... I try to read stories in Spanish to her because I want them to keep their Spanish ... she puts attention when I read to her and she asks questions ... she likes me to read the same story over and over again [laughing]. The daycare also recommended that I read to her. I can't read to her every day, but I try.

Socio-Emotional (Getting along with others)

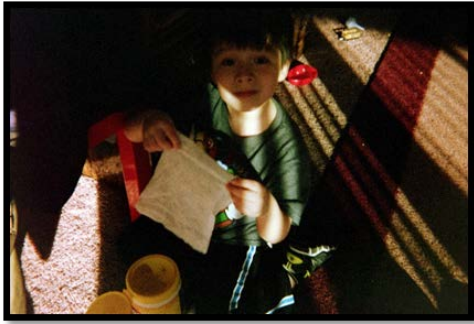
Image 23



Marisol (Jacob): This is Jordan and his little brother in the church. When the priest is talking they take the kids downstairs to a little school. Downstairs they teach him things, but he also have problems there, he fights with the other kids. I felt that taking him to places with more kids he would have to learn to get along with other children because at school he also has problems with other kids.

Approaches to Learning (Following routine, persistence, child can sit down)

Image 24



Fabiola (Javier): Here Javier was cleaning ... there (kindergarten) they will put them to clean. If they make a mess, they have to clean. I think that he tries.

Image 25



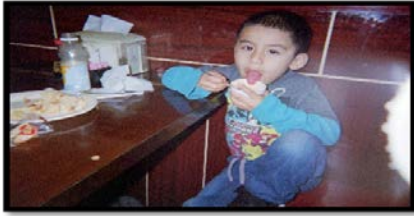
Fabiola (Javier): We are getting ready to go to bed. Some time I put them to sleep around 8:00-9:00 PM. But right now I am working during the evenings, it's more difficult. Sometimes I come home to bathe them, to give them dinner. My husband helps, but sometimes they don't want to go to bed.

Image 26



Fabiola (Javier): He likes to buy a lot of these things figures that you build, Legos. He has different figures and he entertains himself building the things. He chooses the easiest thing and the starts. But after some time he ask his daddy to help him finish. But he is there learning what his daddy is doing. He has to work a lot with his hands ... He build different things, even if the pieces are not in the right order, he shapes them and starts building ... the pieces are very small [laughs]. He works on them until he finishes them. He is not patient. I can tell him 'Leave this for tomorrow, or for another day' But he says 'No.' He wants to open all of them, to finish all of them. I like that he learning how he is going to do it, because there are moments when he doesn't know where to put each piece. I think it's healthier than to spend the whole day with the tablet. He's entertained and has to think how to do it, and with the tablet he is just looking at the screen.

Image 27



Marisol (Jacob): Jordan is eating at a restaurant. Once we take him there and he was running and jumping, we tell him that he have to take his seat because in school he won't be able to run and jump either. He has to learn that there are places where you have to be seated and be serious, but sometimes he doesn't understand that and we have tried ... the teacher even told me to buy him a clock so he can take his time: "Okay, right now you will sit and when the clock goes off you will come."

Motor Skills (Fine Motor Skills)

Image 28



Adriana (Lesley): We also do puzzles. We do a lot of puzzles, this is one her favorites, it's a floor puzzle. She's really good. ... I feel like it's helping her just memorize the pieces, like just practice, memorizing. 'Cause like she's really good with it when before it used to take her a long time. Now she's really fast. I think like it just helps her memorize the pieces or how it looks.

Independence

Image 29



Alicia (Manny): This is him after he picked what he wanted to wear for school. Sometimes he pick up his [own clothes.] When we are getting ready to go he takes off his pajama and get dressed. I think it will help him because he needs to be more independent. He need to dress and undress himself, he needs to change his tennis shoes for the gym class, and he needs to eat by himself, too.

Language Development (Learning English)

Image 30



Ingrid (Nayeli): As I told you before, we speak Spanish, but we put them cartoons in English so they can pick the language. My husband and I cannot understand it. I understand a little bit more than my husband ...

Spending Time with Children

Image 31



Ingrid (Nayeli): This is Nayeli. We took them to a place where there are a lot of inflatables, where they can jump.

The Use of Tablets

Image 32



Paulina (Hugo): There he is with his tablet. I bought that tablet and I like it because it has things for kids more than anything. You just have to download it from Amazon. You buy games and other things. It has very good parental control. You can turn off the Internet, then when they are not on the Internet, they can't download anything. You can secure the apps very well. The apps that I buy him are about colors, he has the ones of Thomas the Train. There are so many options, but as I said before, he can log in and watch his videos on YouTube, the ones of Diego. Everything about learning, he watches it. He has an app in which you use your finger to choose the colors. It's like you are painting, but using your fingers. He is learning his colors, his numbers, and right now most of the kids are very advanced in technology, I can see how fast he is.

Image 33



Marisol (Jacob): This is Jacob playing with his tablet. I think that will help him because sometimes he plays with colors, he is able to tell me all of them. He also knows how to write his name there, and he recognizes the letters ... sometimes I download him educational games. He recognizes the letters of his name and colors, or sometimes shapes, and then he comes and tells me "Look mommy, a circle!"

Support from Siblings

Physical Development (Fine Motor Skills)

Image 34



Adriana (Lesley): That's her older brother and he was helping her with the blocks. They were both building together. ... Sometimes they're really good and he looks out for her and he'll help her and, but there's times where I need to separate them because they fight [laughs].

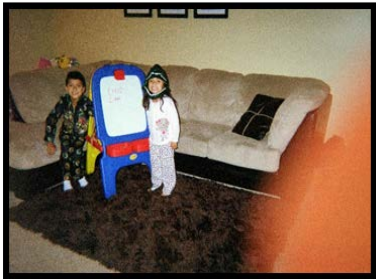
Reading, Shapes, Colors, Drawing, Getting along with others

Image 35



Adriana (Lesley): Her brother will read to her. Everything he knows already like the shapes, colors, adding, he tries to teach her. If I'm busy doing laundry or doing dishes then I'll have him read to her or, I'll tell him to practice shapes with her, to draw them ... he helps her a lot. And then she likes it because it's her big brother. ... This is her brother reading to her right before bed. Sometimes she picks books that are kind of hard for him so if he can read it, then he'll read it to her.

Image 36



Adriana (Lesley): Here her brother was teaching her how to add ... He wanted to teach her how to add. I told him she might not understand it might be too hard for her yet. ... But she understands him! I was surprised because I didn't think she would.

Image 37



Adriana (Lesley): We're doing shapes. ... I did those and then she was trying to copy them. She had a little trouble with the triangle so we just need more practice with that ... I ended up doing the triangle like dots so she could just follow them because she was getting really upset that she couldn't do it [laughs]. Her brother was also motivating and helping her.

Image 38



Laura (Isa): Here Isa is sitting with her brother while he reads something. I think it's important that she read with him because she doesn't know her letters very much and I think he can be good examples for her ... if he sees him reading then she will also like to read.

Image 39



Flor (Lucia): There they are counting because the books are different. That's a book where you start counting and can circle the numbers you are saying, and she was teaching her. She will know when she will have to circle the numbers, and pick the shapes ... her older sister helps when she's stuck.

Image 40



Flor (Lucia): Lucia was watching her sister coloring ... she was learning to stop coloring where the line is. To color within the borders of the drawing, that's very good. It teaches her where she has to color and the colors too.

Image 41



Marisol (Jacob): It's Jacob with his brother in the bicycle. Right now he has been having a lot of problems at school with the other kids, even with his brother. Sometimes I tell him that he has to play with his brother because they can't fight the whole time. Sometimes I let them play together, but sometimes they can't stay. The teacher just told me that last week he hit all the kids.

Summary

The research on parental involvement often focuses on what the parent, oftentimes the mother, is doing to help children get ready for kindergarten. However, limited research exists on

how extended kin is involved in children's transition. Findings from this section revealed that mothers sought help from various *available* family members, where diverse school readiness skills were enhanced. By working together with family members, mothers expanded children's skills and abilities, thereby creating an enriched context that allowed children to be exposed (multiple times) to various skills. Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, and Nero (2010) gathered data from Latino/a (N=44) and non-Latino/a (17 White and three ethnic minority) parents of children in elementary school and found that parental involvement in Latino families draws upon rich networks of extended family members and fictive kin. For example, Ryan et al. (2010) reported that Latino/a parents were more likely to draw upon assistance from significant others, including fathers/partners and siblings to address the academic needs of their children. Although family members assisted in children's learning, mothers were still the most influential to children's development. Study findings are comparable to findings from Billings (2009), who found that Latina mothers reported that they and other family members were involved in literacy practices. When mothers were asked who most often reads with the child, mothers reported that person as the mother (84%), followed by the father (42%), siblings (5%), a grandparent (11%), or other relatives (5%).

Fathers provided the most assistance (12 out of 17 fathers). The most prominent school skill that fathers assisted with was emergent reading, particularly reading to child. Unlike prior research that finds that Latino fathers engage in less book reading than White fathers (Duursma, Pan, & Raikes, 2008), our findings show that 8 out of the 12 fathers engaged in book reading and other emergent reading activities with their children. Likewise, Leavell, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera (2012) suggested that traditional roles around *familismo* might draw Latino fathers into greater household participation and childcare compared to Whites. For example, they found that Mexican immigrant fathers displayed greater participation with their toddlers compared to African-American and Dominican fathers (Tamis-LeMonda, Kahana-Kalman, & Yoshikawa, 2009). Toth and Xu (1999) also found that Latino fathers tended to interact more with their children than African-American and White fathers. These findings challenge the views of Latino fathers as detached from their children's lives (Cabrera & Coll, 2004).

Some research suggests that multiple children in a family deplete maternal resources for individual children (Yarosz & Bennett, 2001). However, we found that older siblings played a vital role in children's school readiness preparation as they helped children with various school readiness skills. Similar to Durand's (2011) findings that family members, most notably siblings, were considered integral to children's learning, education, and development along with grandparents and aunts, this study revealed that older siblings helped preschoolers with reading

and homework. Although mothers in this study did not report that older siblings taught their younger siblings how to protect themselves, they did report older siblings helping transitioning preschoolers learn about kindergarten expectations. Mothers also reported that because they had older children, the registration process was easier this time around.

There is research that suggests that Latinos place a great deal of value on living in proximity to family, including kin. Research has also shown that Mexican immigrants are more likely to have kin in town and to be related to people in more households than Whites (see Caucé & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002). Multiple researchers have also reported higher levels of family cohesion among Latino families than White families (Rumbaut, 2001). These findings align with the cultural belief of *familismo*, which refers to the importance that Latino families place on family closeness. However, findings from this study suggest that while mothers did have support from extended kin, some mothers were cut off due to 1) immigrating to the U.S. and 2) living in a suburban neighborhood. For example, some mothers like Flor reported that they were the only ones in their family to be living in the U.S. Flor told me that her entire family is in Mexico, including her mother and three other children, who she sends remittance to each month. She shared that she came to the U.S. with a close friend but that her friend moved back to Mexico after a few years, leaving her alone.

Other mothers did have family in Illinois, but only saw them during special occasions (Birthdays, Christenings, Christmas) because they did not live in Florence. While Florence was about a 1.5-hour drive from the state's major city, many mothers reported that they could not afford to drive every weekend. Plus, many worked irregular shifts, limiting their weekend travel. Additionally, mothers said that their family could not always come visit them because many did not have a car (they mainly used public transportation) or their cars were not safe enough to drive on the highway. This study did not specifically ask about their immigration history or why they decided to move to Florence, but I hypothesize that mothers not living in close proximity to extended kin and not living in an ethnic enclave limited their access to kin resources. As a result of having limited access to extended kin, institutional resources such as a Head Start play a particularly important role in families' lives and have the ability to fill in some of the responsibilities of extended kin.

Understanding the role of extended kin in children's school readiness is important for Latino/a children for two reasons. First, close to 60% of Latino/a children live in two-parent households where fathers share in the day-to-day care of their children (Lopez & Velasco, 2010). Also, one in four Latino children share a bedroom with three or more family members (Murphey et al., 2014). While crowded living conditions can impose burdens and is often a byproduct of

poverty, for Latinos, it may reflect cultural conditions that actually offer children benefits. These benefits may include access to a greater number of adults to help care for and raise them, and opportunities to interact with multiple generations (Murphey et al., 2014). Finally, while research on the importance of *familismo* to Latino families is abundant, literature on *what* other family members are doing is scarce. These findings add to existing literature that showcases what other family members are doing to help children (and mothers) get ready for the kindergarten transition.

Mothers Using Head Start as Additional Support

Another strategy that mothers used to promote their child's transition to kindergarten was the use of Head Start. Mothers were asked how Hazelwood helped prepare their child for kindergarten. Mothers reported that Hazelwood helped children with 1) language/early literacy skills; 2) nominal skills; 3) socio-emotional skills; 4) approaches to learning; and 5) motor development and physical well-being. In addition to helping children prepare for school, mothers also reported that Hazelwood also provided assistance to parents and families (See Table 73).

Table 73. *Head Start Activities for Kindergarten Transition (n = 17)*

Parent (Target Child)	Language/Early Literacy	Socio-Emotional Skills	ATL	Nominal Skills	MD/PW	HS Supporting families	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X		X				2
Alexa (David)						X	1
Alicia (Manny)	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Amanda (Jax)	X	X					2
Delia (Josue)	X						1
Fabiola (Javier)	X			X		X	3
Flor (Lucia)	X					X	2
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X		X			3
Irene (Kayla)		X					1
Jocelyn (Alma)		X	X				2
Kristina (Kevin)	X						1
Laura (Isa)	X	X				X	3
Marcela (Daniel)		X				X	2
Maribel (Diana)						X	1
Marisol (Jacob)	X					X	2
Natalia (Nina)		X	X	X			3
Paulina (Hugo)		X	X	X		X	4
Total	10	9	6	5	1	9	39

Note: ATL= Approaches to Learning; MD/PW= Motor development/Physical well-being; HS= Head Star

Language/Early Literacy

Under this school readiness domain, 10 mothers said that Hazelwood helped their child learn how to speak English. Five mothers reported Hazelwood helping their children with emergent literacy skills including alphabet mastery, learning how to draw, and helping children write their name (See Table 74).

Table 74. *Head Start and Language/Early Literacy (n = 10)*

Parent (Target Child)	Learning to Speak English	Emergent Reading	Emergent Writing		Total
		<i>Alphabet Mastery</i>	<i>Draw</i>	<i>Write Name</i>	
Adriana (Lesley)	X			X	2
Alicia (Manny)	X	X	X		3
Amanda (Jax)	X				1
Delia (Josue)	X				1
Fabiola (Javier)	X	X			2
Flor (Lucia)	X	X			2
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X	X			2
Kristina (Kevin)	X				1
Laura (Isa)	X				1
Marisol (Jacob)	X				1
Total	10	4	1	1	16

Learning to speak English. Flor, Lucia’s mother, said: “In Head Start, they taught her in English, so she learned it.” Marisol agreed: “Jacob learned English there.” Delia told us that Hazelwood is “helping Josue learn English”. Before Jacob entered Hazelwood, “he didn’t know how to say any words in English,” but now comes home and tells Delia what he learned. She shared: “He comes home and tells me the words and says ‘the teachers taught me this in English.’ That’s important to me because he didn’t know English. He’s learning a new language there!” Alicia echoed Delia. She claimed that Manny is “now bilingual” because Hazelwood helped him learn English: “More than anything, he learned English there. He didn’t speak a single word in English before going. Not a single one.” Amanda reflected on how “fast” Jax learned English: “Jax learned to speak English very fast when he arrived here [Hazelwood], he learned it super-fast!” Isa, Laura’s daughter, also didn’t know any English before starting Hazelwood but learned it quite quickly: “When Isa got into daycare, she learned English in three months! She is more confident now because she speaks two languages. At home, we only speak Spanish ... that’s the thing I liked the most, that she learned English.” Laura told us that it was important for Isa to learn English so she wouldn’t feel “rejected” by her peers.

Not all children came to Hazelwood without any prior knowledge of the English language. Kristina, Kevin’s mother, said that she sent Kevin on a three-month vacation to Ecuador and how during those three months, Kevin forgot how to speak English. When Kevin

came back to Hazelwood, “he didn’t understand what teachers were saying.” However, after a few months “he was speaking English again.”

Two parents were worried that their child would forget Spanish. For example, Fabiola shared with us that while she knows learning English is a “benefit for Javier’s future,” she was concerned that he would forget his native language. She said: “I feel that ... how can I say it? It’s a benefit for his future and it’s very important but because I don’t speak English, I think ‘If he forgets Spanish, how will he talk to me?’” Ingrid’s husband was concerned that Nayeli would lose her Spanish. She told us:

My husband doesn’t want our daughter to lose Spanish. He wasn’t too happy that she started learning English there because he wants that before learning English, she learn Spanish. He wants her to be able to answer in Spanish ... so first Spanish, then English.

Emergent reading. Four mothers told us that their children learned “their letters” (alphabet mastery) because they attended Hazelwood. Fabiola said: “They taught Javier his letters.” Likewise, Ingrid said: “I will tell you that the daycare is helping Nayeli because she didn’t know the alphabet and now she knows them.” Flor said that “Lucia would know nothing” if not for Hazelwood: “At home she doesn’t learn anything, and here she’s learning a lot, a lot of things that she has to learn, like her alphabet.” While Alicia “follows up” with Manny, she reported that Hazelwood had helped him more than she had in learning his academics: “He knows his letters ... the things he knows are because of them, not me. More from them, than from me. I follow up, but they’ve helped him a lot.”

Emergent writing. Alicia and Adriana reported that Hazelwood taught helped their transitioning preschooler writing skills.

Alicia: Julian has learned a lot. Academically, like Manny knows how to draw because of them [Hazelwood].

Adriana: Lesley learned to write her name at Hazelwood. They’ll be practicing their name there.

Socio-Emotional Skills

Eight mothers reported that Hazelwood taught their child socio-emotional skills, such as knowing how to get along with others (making friends), being independent, regulating emotions, and learning to share and take turns (See Table 75).

Table 75. *Head Start and Socio-Emotional Skills (n = 9)*

Parent (Target Child)	GALWO	Promoting child independence	Regulates emotions	Shares & takes turns	Total
Alicia (Manny)			X	X	2
Amanda (Jax)	X				1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X				1
Irene (Kayla)	X	X			2
Jocelyn (Alma)	X	X			2
Laura (Isa)	X				1
Marcela (Daniel)	X				1
Natalia (Nina)		X			1
Paulina (Hugo)			X		1
Total	6	3	2	1	12

Note: GALWO= Gets along with others

Getting along with others. Six parents shared with us that Hazelwood helped their child get along with others and be more social. Laura said “the daycare helped Isa befriend other kids”: “They helped her to interact with other kids. I feel like they helped with that ... they’ve helped a lot with the social aspect of things.” On a similar note, Jocelyn told us that the center helped Alma “how to be careful with her classmates”: “They taught her not to fight.” Ingrid believed that it’s important for Nayeli to make friends, which Hazelwood helped with. She shared: “They are helping her make friends.” Irene told us that they are “helping Kayla prepare for kindergarten” by making her switch classrooms so she could be with more children: “They wanted her to exchange classroom ... I think that has been a good thing because she’s had time to interact with a lot of kids.” Since Daniel is an only child, Marcela noticed that Hazelwood helped him “with the socializing”:

I’ve read that socializing is a little bit hard for kids that don’t have siblings, but since he’s been at the program, I have noticed that he has more friends ... he’s more social. Whenever he walks in the class, everyone is like “Oh, Daniel is here!” and that really helps him because that makes him want to go to school more.

Amanda too noticed that since Jax began attending Hazelwood, he’s “much happier, and committed”:

Before he spent lots of months without going to school and he was kinda depressed, he was sad most of the time. He wasn’t very happy. But now I see that he’s happy! He’s happy with his classmates. He’s always thinking about them. It was a big, big change. It helped him a lot to be social.

Promoting child independence. Three mothers of preschool-aged children mentioned that their attendance at Hazelwood helped children to be more independent. Natalia, Nina’s mother, said: “They are helping her a lot ... like to be more independent.” Jocelyn also said: “I think they teach them to be independent.” Irene shared with us that “the daycare has been a lot of help,” particularly helping Isa become more independent:

I noticed that they teach them how to be independent ... Isa is very independent. I know of other girls who are very close to their mother that they can't do anything by themselves. Isa is not like that because of them [Hazelwood].

Regulates emotions. Two mothers of preschool-aged boys mentioned how Hazelwood helped their boys to behave and relax when frustrated. For example, Paulina told us: “Hugo learned to better behave in daycare. They have rules that we apply at home and he follows.” Alicia, who was concerned with Manny’s behavior, said that the center helped with “Manny’s attitude”:

To be honest, I like the things they have done with Manny. They worked on his attitude. They helped him when he gets frustrated ... if he gets angry; he has a little sofa that they send him there to relax. He relaxes there [laughs].

Turn-taking and sharing. Alicia said that Hazelwood “helped Manny to understand that he has to share and take turns.”

Approaches to Learning

Six mothers felt that Hazelwood taught their children skills related to approaches to learning. These skills included following routines, following the rules, and being able to separate from parents (See Table 77).

Table 76. *Head Start and Approaches to Learning (n = 6)*

Parent (Target Child)	Follows Routines	Follows Rules	Separates from Parents	Total
Adriana (Lesley)	X			1
Alicia (Manny)	X			1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X			1
Marcela (Jacob)	X			1
Natalia (Nina)	X	X		2
Paulina (Hugo)		X	X	2
Total	5	2	1	8

Following routines. Five mothers shared that Hazelwood helped children learn and get used to having and following routines. For example, Natalia said: “They are helping Nina know how to have a routine.” Jocelyn liked that they “teach them about routines”: “When they finish their nap, they make them put their cots away, to fold their blanket and to store their pillow. They teach them a lot about routines.” Alicia also shared:

Don’t let me start on all the activities they do, the schedule they have! They have a routine. I like the things they do from the beginning of the school day until I pick him up ... his schedule, his activities, everything.

Marcela echoed Alicia’s comment and told us “she likes the fact they have structure”:

Daniel already knows what they do. He’ll say, “Mommy, when I get there I have breakfast, then we do group time, we have lunch time, then nap time.” He knows ... there’s an actual structure to his day and I think that’s important. It helps him prepare for the future ‘cause everything’s usually a routine.

Finally, Adriana told us that she “loves their routine”:

I love the activities and routines that they do here. They make it really fun for them to follow, so I feel like everything that Lesley is learning, there is definitely going to benefit her when she goes to kindergarten.

Following rules. Paulina told us that Hazelwood “helped him [Hugo] to know and follow [the] rules.” Further, she said that having rules at school helped her to “apply rules at home for Hugo to follow.” Natalia’s account was similar. Natalia shared that Hazelwood helped Nina learn to follow rules: “They are helping her a lot to know how to follow rules. That’s really important because if she doesn’t follow the rules she may have problems with the teachers and classmates.”

Separates from parents. Paulina reported that before attending Hazelwood, Hugo “was very close” to her and reflected: “When Hugo entered the program he was very close to me. But now he is a very social kid! They taught him that.”

Nominal Skills

Five mothers reported that their children learned nominal skills, including their colors and numbers, as a result of attending Hazelwood (See Table 76).

Table 77. *Head Start and Nominal Skills (n = 5)*

Parent (Target Child)	Colors and Numbers
Alicia (Manny)	X
Fabiola (Javier)	X
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X
Natalia (Nina)	X
Paulina (Hugo)	X
Total	5

Colors and numbers. Natalia, Nina’s mother, said: “They are helping her with colors and numbers. They are helping a lot!” Ingrid said that she wanted Nayeli to learn her colors and numbers, and that “she now knows them” because she’s been in Hazelwood since the start of the year. Fabiola reported that the center helped Javier “learn his colors.” Similarly, Manny’s mother Alicia reported, “They’ve helped a lot with his numbers.” Finally, Paulina reported that Hazelwood assisted with Hugo’s numbers: “They’ve helped him a lot. He now knows his numbers. Not yet his letters, but I can’t complaints because he didn’t know any of those things when he entered.”

Motor Development

Alicia told us that Hazelwood has helped their child learn how to cut with scissors, a fine motor skill. She said: “Manny learned how to cut with scissors.”

Supporting Parents

Eight mothers shared with us that in addition to Hazelwood helping their child get ready for kindergarten, they also supported parents and families with the transition. Support came in various forms including: assisting with the kindergarten registration process, providing familial support, and having the ability to communicate with teachers (See Table 78).

Table 78. *Head Start Supporting Parents (n = 8)*

Parent (Target Child)	Supporting kindergarten registration	Familial support	Total
Alexa (David)	X	X	2
Alicia (Manny)	X	X	2
Fabiola (Javier)	X		1
Flor (Lucia)	X		1
Laura (Isa)	X		1
Marcela (Daniel)	X	X	2
Marisol (Jacob)	X	X	2
Paulina (Hugo)		X	1
Total	7	5	12

Supporting kindergarten registration. Seven mothers told us how Hazelwood provided them with information focused on the kindergarten registration process. Fabiola shared: “They had meetings and workshops about registration.” Similarly, Flor stated: “They did a lot! They told me what to bring for registration day.” Laura followed suit and said they gave her “information of the school district she was assigned and the name of the person I had to talk to.” Marisol told us that they sent flyers and gave her important dates:

They sent me a letter telling me where he was assigned. They gave me the dates, the forms I had to fill out, and the date of enrollment. They gave me all of that ... in English and Spanish! I put it on my calendar so I wouldn't forget it.

Alicia also told us that they gave her “a lot of information!” She reported: “They sent fliers ... there were also meetings to give information about kindergarten and the other school options. They were very persistent.” Alicia shared with us that she “knew” they were going to give them information and said: “I knew they weren't going to say, ‘Okay, you are ready Manny, bye!’ They gave us information several times and made sure we received it. I liked that a lot.”

Addressing family support. Five mothers reported that Hazelwood helped to answer questions and provided support for themselves and their family. Alicia said: “They help with a lot of things and they give information too.” On a similar note, Paulina told us that they helped her answer questions. She said: “If I have any questions, they would help me. Because when I have needed help, they have always helped.” Marisol reflected on when Hazelwood helped her get a

psychologist for Jacob's anxiety. She said: "They told me he needed one and they also evaluated him." Helping mothers discipline their children was another form of support that Hazelwood provided. Marcela told us that they provided guidance: "They help me 'cause they noticed that I give in a lot and I'm not super strict. So they'll give me little advice here and there, which I strongly appreciate. Especially since I'm kinda' a single parent now. It helps." Alexa, who worked for Crestwood and who said she "might be biased" told us:

I appreciate how tune they are with David, with me, with our family needs. Everything. Every single step, ever since he was eight months till now that he's five. They've gotten him to the point where he is. He's ready for kindergarten.

Summary

The use of Head Start was another resource that mothers used to promote their child's transition to kindergarten. Research suggests that enrollment in Head Start can promote children's transition to kindergarten, particularly low-income students of color (Raikes et al., 2006). For example, Rim-Kaumfan et al. (2000) found that after controlling for demographic, family, and neighborhood risk factors, children enrolled in the center-based preschool programs had higher performance levels in all academic and social areas of kindergarten when compared to peers in other forms of care or no care. Studies by Pianta et al. (2009) and Wong, Cook, Barnett, & Jung (2008) have shown that young children's success in kindergarten provides evidence that children who had attended preschool programs were more successful than their peers who did not. Specifically, enrollment in center-based preschool programs helped children be more prepared for the academic expectations and demands of kindergarten (see Robinson & Diamond, 2014). Studies have also found that center-based care plays a protective role for children at risk for not being ready for the transition to kindergarten (Fantuzzo, Rouse, McDermott, & Sekino, 2005).

Evidence has shown that newcomer families, particularly those whose first language is not English, face considerable barriers to accessing programs and services (Takanishi, 2004). Prior research has also suggested that children in immigrant families are less likely to use center-based care than those in native-born families (Brandon, 2004). Moreover, Mexican-American children are far less likely to use center-based care compared to Asian-American, White, or African-American children. This is also consistent with other researchers whose findings show that children from Latino families do not participate in preschool programs (Brandon, 2004). For example, one study found that 20% of Latino/a children younger than five were enrolled in early education programs, compared with 44% of Black and 42% of White children. In terms of Head Start, it is generally agreed that the participation of immigrant children in Head Start is lower (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002).

Researchers from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network suggests that the reason why Latino families are not using center-based arrangements is due to historical and contextual factors, as well family socialization patterns where Latino families use extended family and friendship networks for child care as opposed to formal childcare centers (Johnson et al., 2003). Head Start data from 2013-2014 revealed that about one in three children enrolled in Head Start programs were Latino (38% in Head Start, which includes Migrant Head Start, and 35% in Early Head Start) compared to 61% who were non-Hispanic (Childs Trends, 2015). Although this study did not directly ask why mothers registered their child at Head Start or how they came to be aware of this program, findings suggest that mothers are aware of the skills and resources that children gain, as well as what families gain. Prior research has suggested that historically, a great majority of Head Start parents have been highly satisfied with Head Start. Using the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), a national longitudinal study of the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of Head Start children, Garcia and Levin (2001) found that Latino/a parents were more satisfied with how well Head Start prepared their children for kindergarten than were non-Latino/a parents (Garcia & Levin, 2001).

Specifically, Head Start helped children learn to speak English. The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework incorporated English Language Development among their 10 areas of child development that are essential for school and long-term success. English Language Development only applies to children who speak a language other than English at home, also referred to as dual language learners (DLL). All children in my sample are considered dual language learners. Dual language learners represent a significant proportion of the children served in Head Start; as such, Head Start promotes the acquisition of English for children who are DLLs. For example, Hammer, Lawrence, and Miccio (2008) found that DLLs who attended English Immersion Head Starts for two years demonstrated higher English receptive vocabulary and auditory comprehension than children who did not attend Head Start.

Mothers also reported that Head Start indirectly helped children get ready for kindergarten by providing information about kindergarten registration to mothers. These findings are consistent with Malsch et al., (2011) where they found that mothers wanted information about the logistics of the transition process. They also found that Head Start played a major role in providing logistical information through paper documents sent home or through meetings/home visits. Mothers in this study received kindergarten information via mailings to their homes, information placed in children's cubbies, and parent meetings. Overall, research has shown that community support, in this case Head Start, not only helped children get ready for kindergarten

but also played an important role in the resiliency of families. Support networks have been linked to improved outcomes in mental health (Ayón, 2011) and helping families confront experiences of discrimination and social inequalities (Parra-Cardona, Bullock, Imig, Villarruel, & Gold, 2006).

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Although all mothers believed that being involved in their child's education was important, barriers to involvement did exist. Barriers to school- and home-based involvement were mentioned. Barriers to school-based involvement included: (a) school/work schedules; (b) life circumstances; (c) familial responsibilities; and (d) not liking school personnel. Only one barrier for home-based involvement was mentioned: language barrier (See Table 79).

Barriers to School-based Involvement

School and work. A total of 13 mothers mentioned that attending school and working was a barrier that hampered their ability to be involved at school. Mothers in this study all worked in service sector jobs. Service sector jobs are often characterized by nonstandard work schedules and lower wages (Presser, 2003). Workers in service sector jobs are not only likely to have lower earnings, but are also less likely to receive benefits such as health insurance, paid vacation, or holidays (Douglas-Hall, & Chau, 2007; Strazdins, Korda, Lim, Broom, & D'Souza, 2004). National surveys show that single mothers with low levels of education are disproportionately overrepresented in these less-skilled and service sector jobs that are likely to require nonstandard schedules or variable shifts (Presser, 2003).

Kristina and Alexa, both of who graduated from high school in the U.S. and were attending a nearby community college, told us that going to school was hindering their involvement. Kristina, who was a full-time student studying to become a radiology technician, said: "Before I was always here, at all the meetings but for me going to school now, it stops me from coming because I am studying and I am trying to get good grades." Alexa, David's mother, said that going to school *and* work got too hard. She decided to pause school and only work before returning back. She shared:

It was getting too hard for me. I wasn't seeing David because I was working, and I'm not seeing David because I'm going to school. I would come home, and David would be sleeping ... I hated it! So I stopped going to school for three years, and just went back this summer.

It's important to note that Alexa did not mention that work was a barrier. It was mostly school: "Although I was working a lot, I got to pick up him and drop him off. Any volunteering opportunities that I had with him I just took. ... I went and did stuff with him in school." A possible reason that work was not a barrier for Alexa was because she worked for Crestwood as a Training Assistant. Given that she worked for the same organization that provided care for David, it would make sense that her superior would be flexible with Alexa's schedule whenever Hazelwood had events for parents.

Table 79. *Barriers to Involvement (n = 16)*

Parent (Target Child)	School-based Involvement				Home-based Involvement	Total
	School/Work	Life circumstances	Familial responsibilities	Not liking school personnel	Language barriers	
Adriana (Lesley)	X					1
Alexa (David)	X (school)					1
Alicia (Manny)	X					1
Delia (Josue)					X	1
Fabiola (Javier)	X					1
Flor (Lucia)	X					1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X					1
Irene (Kayla)	X					1
Jocelyn (Alma)	X					1
Kristina (Kevin)	X (school)		X	X		3
Laura (Isa)	X					1
Marcela (Daniel)	X					1
Maribel (Diana)					X	1
Marisol (Jacob)	X					1
Natalia (Nina)		X			X	2
Paulina (Hugo)	X	X				2
Total	13	2	1	1	3	20

Consistent work schedule. Lucia's mother Flor, who was a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) cook, told us that in order for her to pay rent, she had to work and thus could not miss work to attend school events. She said:

I have to work and don't have time to come to activities at Hazelwood. Sometimes the activities are in the morning and I get out at 3:00 PM. I only work five hours a day. If I miss, we will not have enough money to pay rent.

Flor shared with us that she does not work Thursdays and if there were any events on Thursdays, she would go. During my time at Hazelwood, Flor did not come to any meetings as they were scheduled for Wednesdays at 3:00 PM, the time she finished her shift. Isa's mother Laura also had a consistent but busy schedule as a Telemarketing Agent that kept her from spending time with Isa. She said: "We [my husband and I] have a busy schedule ... 60-70% of the time we are working." Laura admitted that she "works too much": "I only spend two days two or three hours a day at home. There are days that I don't see my children. I work full days on Fridays, or I come home very late."

Inconsistent work schedule. Unlike Flor and Laura, who had a steady schedule, the following mothers said that they were unable to be as involved as they would want to be because their work schedule was so inconsistent. For example, Daniel's mother Marcela had to start working reception at a hotel after her father passed away to help her mom out financially. She said: "I haven't been able to come and read or to volunteer for field trips ... I wish I could, but it doesn't work with my schedule as it's always changing." Marcela made it clear that it wasn't because she didn't want to be involved. She said: "Unfortunately I haven't been able to, but it's not because I don't want to—it's because of my work schedule." Alicia, Manny's mother, also told us that her shifts as a waitress are always changing. She shared: "I'm a waitress. Sometimes I work, other days no. My job varies a lot. I don't have a regular schedule, and that's why Manny and I don't have a routine to do work or for me to go to the school." Alicia told us that it's not because "she doesn't love Manny" but she can't do anything since "that's the way my job is." I never saw Alicia at the center. Manny's father was the one who dropped him off and picked him up. He showed interest in the study and was the one father I interviewed. After telling him that I would also like to meet with Manny's mother, he said he would put in a good word for me. After talking to Alicia, Manny provided me with her number and thus I began communication with Alicia.

Paulina, Hugo's mother who is also a waitress, shared the same sentiment. She said: "I haven't been able to participate at the daycare because I'm working ... my shifts are always new." Working and getting to and from work was a barrier for Kayla's mother Irene, who worked cleaning houses in the surrounding Florence suburbs and Chicagoland area. She shared: "I clean houses. The schedules are always changing ... there's never time. Transportation can take a lot of time." Irene further shared that she and others alike get picked up and dropped off a central location, and thus had little control over when they would be returning since they were not the ones driving. Finally, Lesley's mother, who

worked as a customer service agent at a car dealership said: “Sometimes my hours they change and I have to work until 9 o’clock at night, so by the time I get home, it’s late and there’s basically no time.”

Although many of these jobs hindered mothers’ abilities to be involved, the following mothers had job flexibility that allowed them to choose their own schedule. They differed from the previous mothers who had no control over their schedule.

Job flexibility. Jocelyn, Alma’s mother who had worked at a Subway for the past three years, told us: “I try to attend all the meetings related to Alma and my other son ... I have that possibility. I just request days with anticipation.” Although she has the opportunity to request days off, she still has to make them up or else she would not be able to pay her bills: “The problem is that when I do that, I lose hours and when the paycheck comes, it doesn’t cover all of our needs.” When Jocelyn does request a day off to attend a meeting, she “works one more day to earn my whole salary.” Further, Jocelyn purposely decided to work 40 hours a week Monday through Friday so she wouldn’t work on the weekends. She said: “I also have the weekends free to spend time with them.” It was during the weekends that she would make up any missed day. This also worked for her since Alma and her brother were with their father every other week.

Some mothers with partners used a tag-team parenting strategy that integrated their work schedules so that at least one parent was available (Presser, 2003; Täht, & Mills, 2012). Nayeli’s mother Ingrid, who worked as a Taco Bell cook, told us that “it’s because of work” that she can’t be as involved. Still, she and her husband, who worked in construction, arranged their schedules so that one of them was always with their kids. She said: “Right now I am working during the mornings and my husband in the afternoons. We are never together, but one of us is always there. I think that when parents leave their kids with someone else, it’s not the same.” Marisol and her partner also arranged their work schedules so that one of them was always with their children. Marisol, who worked at a factory that makes masks for hospitals, said: “Sometimes they [Hazelwood] do field trips and I want to go, but I can’t be absent from my job. I work from 6:00 AM to 2:30 PM.” She also shared that her husband, who worked from 2:00 PM to 11:00 PM or midnight, could attend the field trips, but doesn’t because “he doesn’t speak English and is very shy.” Although both parents were not able to attend events at Hazelwood, they wanted to be close to the daycare in case something was to happen. She said: “My job is 15 minutes away and his is seven minutes away. We tried to get places close to home and the daycare so we can get home quickly if there’s an emergency with the kids.”

Overall, mothers who had non-flexible or inconsistent schedules were less likely to be involved at school than mothers with more flexible schedules. Those with flexible schedules were able to tag-team with their partners.

Life circumstances. Two mothers mentioned that life circumstances impeded their ability to be involved in their child's education. For example, Nina's mother Natalia told us: "Right now, my situation ... the real thing is that there are always good reasons not to be involved." At the time of the interview, Natalia has just lost her job as a banquet server because her manager found out that she did not have proper documentation. She was let go right away. In addition to losing her job, the apartment that she was moving into (because her previous one got too expensive) was not ready. She shared that she was currently staying at her sister's house in Chicago until her apartment was ready, although she didn't know when that would be. Natalia was driving from the South Side of Chicago to Florence, which is about an hour and a half drive each way (with no traffic) so her children would not miss school. She was determined to find work again, as she did not want to leave Florence "because of the good school district." On a similar note, Hugo's mother Paulina was driving to court in Chicago at least once a week for a child support battle that she opened with Hugo's father. When asked what kept Paulina from being involved, she said: "Court. I told you that I was going to court a lot ... I have to attend to those responsibilities." However, she made it very clear that she always tries to be involved in her son's life: "It's not that I don't want to, no. He's my only son, and I want him to have a good education, to be a good person." Throughout my time in Hazelwood, I would often see Paulina, and she would catch me up on her trial. The last conversation I had with her she told me that the court ruled in her favor, but that the dad was now late on his payments and also now wanted full custody of Hugo.

Familial obligations. Kevin's mother Kristina, who at the time of the interview was a working and finishing her Bachelor's degree, told us that trying to balance "everything" made it hard for her to attend meetings that Hazelwood hosted. She said: "I'm trying to be a good mom, I am trying to clean my house, and I am trying to be a good partner, like everything. So I think that right now I can't go to any school meetings."

Not liking school personnel. Kristina also shared another reason why she was not able to attend school meetings and events: she did not like a teacher at Hazelwood. She told us: "I know that lately there's a lady that I don't like at the school and that keeps me away." After probing, she went into more detail and said:

I feel that I can read people real quick and I know this person is being a hypocrite towards my child. When she says, "Oh, Hi Kevin, how are you? You are sooo cute!" I can sense when that person loves my kid or doesn't, and she doesn't. I feel like this person feels that it's her job to like them because they are just here for a paycheck.

Barriers to Home-based Involvement

Language barriers. Three mothers included not knowing how to speak English as a barrier for being involved at home. Maribel, who has five older children, told us that it is difficult for her to help them with homework. She said: "For me, it's difficult with my older kids because I can't help them with

their homework, but I try to be there for them by asking them if they already did their homework.” She also went on to say that in the U.S. they tend to concentrate on reading and mathematics, which is “difficult” for Maribel to help with. It’s possible that this increase in reading and math is due to the No Child Left Behind Act that focuses on students’ academic performance, particularly in reading and math, which is measured by standardized testing (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Natalia, Nina’s mother, also shared with us that “not knowing the language can limit parents’ involvement” and how she knows she needs to learn to speak English to “better prepare and help them.” She further gave an example of how knowing English really helps children learn. She said: “My sister Lorena, she doesn’t work and decided to take English lessons and she is in the sixth level now. Her daughter is doing great in school! Lorena helps her a lot because she understands English well.” This is an example of how having working jobs that are not flexible limited parents’ ability to take English courses. Natalia also shared that without her ability to speak English, she could not communicate with Nina’s teachers to see “what was going on”:

Here teachers speak English. Sometimes I come to see the teacher and if there’s no one able to interpret you don’t know what’s going on. If I need something I have to go with the secretary that speaks Spanish, to be able to communicate with the teacher.

Finally, Josue’s mother Delia told us that because she does not speak English, she couldn’t help Josue or talk with the teachers. She told us:

Josue always asks me, “Delia, how do you say this...?” I would often say, “Sweetie, I don’t know how to say that.” But there are some words that I know how to pronounce and others that I don’t ... that’s why I’m telling you that I wish I knew how to speak English, to be able to help him. Sometimes I think, what if something happens to him? Like the time they bit him.

Delia remembered that Josue came home from school one day and told his mom that someone bit him. Because he didn’t know how to tell his teacher, he just cried. Delia thought it was important for his teacher to know, so she used the translator on her phone to find out how to say ‘mordida’²⁴ in English. However, Delia found out that translators are not always correct: “Well I looked for it on my phone, but sometimes the apps don’t give you the right words.” In addition to helping Josue learn English, Delia’s lack of English proficiency also prohibited her from speaking to Josue’s teachers, who only spoke English. She said: “There are some words that I can pronounce and sometimes not, but even with that if I want to talk with the teachers, I can’t.”

Summary

Research has shown that Latino families have barriers to participation due to economic, linguistic, cultural, or life circumstances (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Mothers in this study reported on school-based and home-based involvement. The most prevalent barrier to school-based involvement was their work schedule, followed by life circumstances, additional familial

²⁴ Translation: To bite

responsibility, and not liking personnel. Language barrier was the only home-based involvement barrier reported by mothers.

Balancing the competing needs of work and family life is a challenge for most households, but it may be greatest for these working mothers as they struggle to find sufficient time to fulfill work responsibilities and provide the care that young children require for healthy development (Coba-Rodriguez, S., 2012; Waldfogel & McLanahan, 2011). Findings from this study align with previous research on low-income Latino families where they have found that poor Latino/a parents are less active in their children's school due to demanding work schedules (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004; Ceballo et al., 2010; Garcia Coll et al., 2002). Consistent with findings from LaRocque and colleagues (2011), non-standard hours and/or inflexible work schedules and related family responsibilities have been found to inhibit parental involvement. La Paro et al. (2003) also found that 74% of their families reported that their work schedules interfered with their participation with their children. Unlike their study, where 20% of their parents reported needing transportation to be able to attend school-related functions, none of our parents reported transportation as an issue. I hypothesize that because mothers lived in Florence, where public transportation was scarce compared to major cities where public transportation is the norm, having a reliable vehicle was essential for survival. Observations revealed that during my time at the site, I did not hear any mother or staff complain or mention car problems.

These findings also align with research that suggests that previous negative experiences with schools can pose barriers (Tinkler, 2002) to school-based involvement among minority parents (Kim, 2009). Mothers in this study reported not being able to speak English as a barrier for home-based involvement but not school-based involvement. LaRocque and colleagues (2011) and Hill and Torres (2010) found that Latino families often feel intimidated by not being able to properly speak English, causing parents to withdraw from the school. This was not the case for the mothers in this sample. I hypothesize that mothers did not include language barriers for school-based involvement because Hazelwood's secretary and two other family coordinators spoke Spanish. While teachers did not speak Spanish, mothers knew that someone at Hazelwood would constantly be there if they needed any assistance.

Unlike other research (LaRocque et al., 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Villanueva, 1996), mothers in this study did not report a lack of knowledge with the U.S. educational system. However, observations and field notes suggest that first-time mothers who were experiencing the transition to kindergarten for the first time *indirectly* said they were unsure of the scripts that U.S. schools had. In particular, comments about "being my first time" or "I

don't know" when asked what teachers would expect highlight that some parents are unaware of U.S. schools. I hypothesize that if mothers were asked directly what they knew about the U.S. schools, this barrier would have been more apparent in this study. Similarly, mothers in this study did include not knowing as a barrier. Research has shown that negative feelings about parents' ability to help can hinder parents from connecting with their children's school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Research has also shown that parents' confidence in their own intellectual abilities is an important predictor of their school involvement (Hindman et al., 2010; Machida et al., 2002).

In both generations, we were able to identify barriers to parental involvement. Working and not speaking English were the two barriers that both sets of mothers experienced. Despite histories of parental disengagement and/or present adversity, all mothers in this study were actively engaged in their children's education. I hypothesize that mothers in this sample were much more engaged than their own parents because 1) Head Start promotes and encourages parental involvement; 2) mothers are learning the U.S. cultural expectations of parental involvement via Head Start; 3) unlike South and Central American schools, teachers expect parents to be involved in their children's schooling.

Research has also suggested that parents' own memories of school experiences may influence the way in which they think about their children's schooling and the learning related behaviors they engage in with their children (Barnett & Taylor, 2009; Taylor, Clayton, & Rowley, 2004). However, limited research with Latinos is available. For example, in Taylor and colleagues' (2004) study, where they adopted an intergenerational approach to explore parental activities to facilitate children's transition to kindergarten, no Latino parents were sampled. Out of the 74 structured interviews they conducted, 45 were with African-Americans and 29 with White parents. In another study, Brook, Whiteman, and Zheng (2002) studied intergenerational transmission of risks for problem behaviors across three generations among White (88% of sample), African-American (9%), and Mixed (3%) families.

Finally, in their study of intergenerational transmission of constructive parenting, Chen and Kaplan's (2001) sample described their sample as diverse. Thus, this section also serves as an introduction to a largely unexplored area of research among Latino families. Studying the relationship between Latino/a parents' childhood experiences and their own parenting practices and behaviors is important given that research has found that mothers who recalled the school involvement of their parents more positively reported engaging in more academic transition activities with their children than mothers who recalled the school involvement of their parents negatively (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). Future research needs to consider Latina mothers' early life

experiences, as prior research suggests that mothers' early life experiences do have an influence over their practices and beliefs.

Preschool Teachers' Views on Mothers

Section three, the last section of this chapter, focuses on what mothers are doing from the perspective of preschool teachers. We asked teachers a series of questions geared towards understanding how preschool teachers at Hazelwood viewed Latina mothers. In particular, we asked: 1) What challenges have you observed Latino families face as they prepare their child for school? 2) What would you say Latino/a parents in this Head Start are doing to prepare children for school?

Concerns about Readiness

Parents having too high expectations for their children, not being able to let go, and not applying teacher recommendations were some of the concerns that teachers had. For example, Elizabeth told us that some Latina mothers are "fearful" that their child may not be ready because they are focusing on "more advanced" skills such as knowing how to read. She said: "Many of them are wanting their child to be a good reader by the end of preschool ... that's too high of expectations." Mothers having separation issues was another challenge that preschool teachers observed. Georgina shared with us that many parents were afraid to leave their child in the care of a school that they don't really know. She said: "Being able to let go. Knowing there's going to be someone else that takes care of their child. Someone else that is going to be responsible." Another challenge that teachers saw was parents not taking teachers' recommendations seriously. Jackie said: "Parents not taking our suggestions seriously. It's clear when a child is regressing, making our work counterproductive."

Challenges for Preparing Children for Kindergarten

Teachers shared with us some of the challenges that Latino families at Hazelwood experienced as they prepared their child for the transition. Some teachers talked about parents not being clear on kindergarten expectations, parents' financial situation, and family mobility. Different kindergarten schedules in Florence and language/communication barriers were additional barriers mentioned by preschool teachers.

First-time mothers and parents' lack of education. Teachers talked about mothers not being clear on kindergarten expectations. Some parents were unclear because it was the first time their child (and themselves) were going through the transition, while other parents lacked clarity of kindergarten expectations because of their limited education. Georgina in particular believed that parents who were first-timers were not fully aware of kindergarten expectations. She said: "If

it's their first child, they might not know what's expected of children [in kindergarten]." Sheri on the other hand believed that parents' lack of education limited their understanding. She stated:

Well, it is their own education so they don't know what to expect. If they don't know the alphabet themselves or know how to read, how are they gonna help their kids? If they don't know the importance of education, they can't encourage their kids.

Parents' financial situation. Some teachers noticed that getting children prepared with their school supplies was a major burden for Latino families at Hazelwood. Stacey reported that because they were low-income, they might not have the necessary funds to purchase school supplies needed for children to "write and practice". She said:

Their money situation plays a factor, if they're low income. If they don't have all the supplies to help them, or if the child doesn't have like crayons or pencils to help them write and practice. Or paper. That might be a challenge, too.

Sheri shared the same sentiment as Stacey, who said that purchasing school supplies was a "huge burden" for families:

I keep going back to the financial aspects. They want their kids to be like everybody else. You see some kids coming in with backpacks now 'cuz they're getting ready for school. And I wanna' bet you know that kinda' thing is burden for parents and you just feel for the parent. You know, school supplies, that kinda' stuff is a huge burden for them.

Family mobility/transient families. Stacey and Georgina believed that parents were struggling to help prepare their child because they were constantly moving around. For example, Stacey told us that that because families kept moving, many did not know where their child would be attending kindergarten. She said: "Their living situation ... some families might have been moving, so they weren't sure what district they were going to be in yet and where the child would be going to school." Georgina also believed that "moving around a lot" caused parents to not know where their child would go to kindergarten. She also believed mothers were tentative to find out information since they were so unsure. She stated:

If they are transient and they move around a lot, they might not know what school their child needs to go to for kindergarten. They might be more hesitant to go to the school, talk to any of the administrators there, or look online.

Kindergarten schedules and language/communication barriers. Georgina shared with us that districts around Florence have different kindergarten schedules that make it difficult for parents. She said: "I know some districts do half-day kindergarten, some do full-day. So I think that's sometimes difficult for parents." Sheri believed that parents were not communicating with teachers because parents did not speak English. She told us: "I think that language is a big thing. Communication is a big problem [with parents and teachers]."

Being Involved at School and at Home

Although many teachers talked about the challenges that mothers experienced, many also acknowledged the ways that Latino families were involved. For example, Elizabeth told us that parents were attending school meetings. At the school meetings, Elizabeth told us that parents “were learning about what they should be working on with their kids at home.” Parents were also asking questions about things that children were doing at school and what they could do at home to help support their child’s learning. Elizabeth said: “Parents ask me what kind of things we are going over in school, and what they can do at home to help them ... so replicating what they’re doing at school at home.” Another way that parents were involved included asking children questions. Elizabeth said that parents would check in with their children. She said: “They touch base with their children about what they’ve learned. I know a lot of them do ask, ‘What did you do in school today?’” Overall, Elizabeth felt that her “parents are doing pretty well.” Helping children at home and encouraging school readiness skills like self-help skills was reported by Georgina. She told us: “I’m seeing that kids do have self-help skills, so I’m hopeful that the parents are encouraging those self-help skills at home.” Not only were parents involved in encouraging self-help skills, but Jackie also reported that parents receive summer packets that children work on over the summer. She said: “We provide packets in the summer for children to work on.”

Summary

Preschool teachers reported on the concerns and challenges that Latino families in Hazelwood faced as they prepared their child for school. Teachers were also aware that mothers were involved in their child’s education both at home and at school. Concerns that teachers had included mothers having unrealistic expectations about what their child should know how to do by the start of kindergarten, coming to terms that other personnel (staff, teachers) would now be responsible for their children’s care, and not taking teachers’ suggestions seriously. Consistent with research by McIntyre et al. (2010), some mothers in this sample were worried about their child moving away from the comfort and familiarity of their early childhood education programs into the bigger and unknown territory of the elementary school.

It’s possible that the challenges faced by mothers played a role in the concerns that teacher had. For example, teachers realized that the reason that mothers were unaware of kindergarten expectations was because they were first-time mothers and had never gone through the transition before. Previous research has suggested that kindergarten can be an exciting time for families and children, but can also add stress and discomfort when placed in an unfamiliar setting (See Bell-Booth, Staton, & Thorpe, 2014). I hypothesize that the stress and discomfort is

greater among first-time mothers who have never gone through the transition before. I would argue that the stress and discomfort is even greater among low-income immigrant mothers. Teachers were also attuned to the financial struggle that Latino families faced, such as buying supplies, which became a burden for some families. These findings are consistent with Powell, Diamond, Bojczyk, and Gerde (2008), who found that teachers cited poverty as one of the variables contributing to children's limited readiness. Preschool teachers also acknowledged that language barriers impeded mothers and teachers from communicating. These findings suggest that preschool teachers intimately knew the families they were working with. While teachers were aware of the challenges faced by mothers, they were also aware that mothers were involved in their child's education both at home and at school. Teachers told us how mothers would attend parent meetings, ask their children what they learned in school, and asked teachers what they could do at home to help replicate what children were learning in class.

Chapter 8: Recommendations from Mothers and Preschool Teachers

This chapter explored mothers and preschool teachers' recommendations for helping to improve children's school readiness transition and is divided into two sections. The second section concludes the chapter with a discussion of the similarities and differences between mothers and preschool teachers' recommendations.

Mothers' Recommendations

This first section explored the recommendations that mothers offered to preschools like Hazelwood and to elementary schools. Mothers also provided recommendations for what Hazelwood should continue doing. Section one ends with recommendations that mothers gave to the U.S. President. The following questions guided this section.

- a. We asked mothers about their recommendations to schools:
- b. What advice would you give to preschools like Hazelwood that prepare children for kindergarten?

We asked them for recommendations on what Hazelwood should continue to do:

- a. What have been some of the positive ways that Hazelwood has prepared your child for kindergarten?

Finally, we asked mothers to make recommendations to the President of the United States:

- a. If the president of the United States, Barack Obama, knocked on your door and asked you for advice regarding what could be done to help Latino children get ready for kindergarten, what would you say to him? What would you like him to do?

Recommendations to Preschools

We asked mothers what suggestions they would give to Hazelwood and other preschools alike. Many emphasized wanting Hazelwood to increase its rigor in academics, do more arts and crafts, and have less teacher turnover.

Greater focus on academics and increasing rigor. Four mothers believed that Hazelwood could put more effort and time into academics. For example, Marcela, Daniel's mother, told us: "I would want them to focus more on academics." Marisol shared a similar sentiment as Marcela and said: "I would prefer for them to be more focused in educational activities than playing. To teach them the colors, the alphabet, vowels ... like singing songs about the days of the week." Amanda felt that Hazelwood helped Jax be more social, but "not so much on the academic part." She said:

They don't give homework ... he never talks about the things they taught him. I always ask him what they taught him that day, and he always says, "we played, watched a movie, we read a story ... we made a little ball." That's all. Not much. And it's always the same ... he never says anything different.

Laura agreed with Amanda, who also believed that Hazelwood “helped Isa more with the social part than the academic part”:

They have to strengthen the learning side ... more about numbers, letters, those kinds of things. I don't know how long they dedicate to reading. I don't know if it's every day, but they should do it every day. Even if they do it for 10 minutes a day, or maybe twice a day. I want them to dedicate more time to school subjects.

Amanda also felt that the “educational level is a bit low”: “They should have more things for kids that are getting ready for kindergarten.” Laura went on to suggest that preschools should “talk to the kids about the transition.” She told us: “Teachers can talk about the coming changes. Teachers can help us and tell the students about the importance of staying in school, of having a career, and going to college.”

Less teacher turnover/better qualified teachers. Four parents suggested that Hazelwood have less teacher turnover and more qualified teachers at the site. Mothers described how in their years with the program, they've seen a lot of teachers be let go or switched to other classes. For example, Kevin's mother Kristina said: “They are doing OK. They were doing better before ... with the staff they had before. But I know they let a lot of staff go.” Unlike Kristina, who “didn't know why they let teachers go,” David's mother Alexa worked for Hazelwood and knew the back-story. She told us:

There have been many times where I'm not happy with how things are handled, like teacher drama. I guess I know the stories because I work there, but that has been the sucky part for David. He's had the same constant teacher, but then that poor teacher has had like six other assistants. They either don't last or because there's drama.

In addition to Alexa wanting “constant teachers,” she would also want dedicated teachers that “are there because they want to be there and not because they want a paycheck.” She said:

If you have a teacher that's unmotivated, children are not going to learn. I've seen it in David's classroom, the teacher will say, “Nope, dramatic play is closed. No blocks today” because they make a mess. It's ridiculous! If the classroom is a mess, have children help you. It's not a big deal!

When asked why she believed some teachers didn't want to open the center she said: “Because they are too lazy to do their job.”

Maribel also wanted “more qualified teachers” and told us: “Sometimes I think that there are teachers that are more prepared than others.” Paulina agreed with Maribel. She shared that Hazelwood is a good program and that she would “highly recommend it,” but has lately seen that they've switched teachers, which affected the program. She also noticed that the teachers are now younger and “not as trained” as before:

I have seen that it affects the quality of the program ... I noticed that when I enrolled Hugo, there were teachers with a long history there ... their technique was different than the ones of the new teachers. I also saw that they were older and now they are younger ... they more have more energy, but I don't think they are as trained as the older ones.

Teacher turnover also affected her son, Hugo:

This is his second year, and he's had three teachers. There was a time that his teacher went to another classroom. He went to that side, found her, and cried to her. Also, last year Hugo was able to write his name, but now he started to write it backward ... I can't say they are not doing their job because they spend the whole day with them, but they should at least put more attention to the kids. If my kid was advanced, why is he failing now?

Mothers' reports aligned with the field notes and observations during my first year at the site. Due to high teacher turnover, there were times the center did not have enough substitute teachers. When this occurred, the secretary and other family coordinators stepped into the classrooms to either give teachers a bathroom break or when the student-teacher ratio surpassed Head Start guidelines.

More arts and crafts. Two parents would like to see more arts and crafts being done. Compared to Jax's former center, Amanda told us how at Hazelwood "he doesn't bring a lot of arts and crafts home. It's not as much as the other one." Marisol also wanted Jacob and other kids to do more crafts and told us how her infant does more activities than Jacob:

I want them to teach them more ... most of the time they are sleeping or playing. For instance, in the classroom that my baby attends, they have them do arts and crafts for Thanksgiving, on Valentine's Day they paint their feet ... but in Jacob's class they never do that.

Marisol also felt that doing "more projects with his hands" would help with Jacob's motor-skill development as well as in kindergarten, which was "around the corner."

Additional suggestions. Marcela and Alexa provided additional suggestions for what preschools could do to improve the school transition. These suggestions included having a more diverse food menu, providing children the opportunity to talk out their problems the moment they occurred, and encouraging more parental involvement, particularly father involvement.

Marcela illustrated the importance of serving children more diverse foods. She stated: "I would recommend them to try different foods ... to expand their taste buds because their food now is really repetitive." Although Marcela would like to see more diverse foods, she also acknowledged "it depends on the funds they receive." Another recommendation that Marcela would like to see is for teachers to give children the opportunity to discuss problems at school. She said:

I would advise them that when a problem happens, to urge kids to speak about it at that moment so they can resolve it, versus keeping it to themselves and then forgetting about it, or having their parents know and then not doing anything about it.

Lastly, Alexa advised preschools to encourage more parent involvement, and emphasized increasing father involvement. For instance, according to Alexa, one possible approach to get more parents involved is to “do activities that parents enjoy doing with their children.” She said: “We’re parents and are working all the time. They should do more of the fun activities where parents are *really* gonna’ come. I loved that mom and son dance.” To help increase father involvement, Alexa suggested a “field day”: “If you guys are trying to improve male involvement, do a son and dad field day. Go out and play some football, soccer, or baseball. Something! I mean, how expensive could a field day be [laughs]?”

Recommendations to Schools

Some parents provided advice to schools. The advice focused on schools offering parents kindergarten transition information, providing children a positive learning experience, and teachers communicating with parents as well as with other teachers.

Offering more information on the kindergarten transition. Seven parents shared with us how they would like to receive more information regarding the transition to kindergarten from the schools. How parents would like to receive that information varied. Some parents wanted manuals with clearly laid out information, others wanted a program that specifically focused on helping parents prepare for the transition, and others did not want anything in paper but suggested creating an app or video to view on their phone. A final suggestion included having the schools reach out to parents individually.

Alicia suggested that parents should receive “manuals” about the school. She told us: “I’d want manuals. The ones that contain all the school information and supply list, and where it tells you when they have school and when they don’t.” Similarly, Kristina wanted to receive “newsletters”: “I would think that maybe schools should be sending a newsletter.” She also suggested that schools should have a “conference about school.” Marcela believed that receiving a “pre-kindergarten packet” would be remarkable. She told us: “If they had like a packet with everything parents needed to know ... that would be amazing! I think it would answer a lot of questions.” In addition to helping answer questions, Marcela also believed it would save parents a lot of time: “The packet would give us information versus going back and forth, making phone calls, going to different facilities to gather information.”

On the other hand, Marisol did not want to receive “a package of letters.” She felt that parents wouldn’t read it and it would more likely end up in a drawer or in the garbage. Instead, she suggested that schools create an app or a video: “I feel if they create a phone app to give

information, or if they sent a video with the information ... parents would pay more attention since everybody has a cellphone.” Laura also did not mention wanting to receive any packets, but did suggest a program solely focused on helping parents with the transition. She told us: “I don’t know of places where they help parents with information about kindergarten ... I mean, the school sent some information and that’s it.” Alexa felt that “schools should a better job” at helping first-time parents register their children. She reflected on her first time going through the registration process and said: “Schools just expect parents to come to them and register. I’m lucky that I have Jairo, but before Jairo, I had no idea where in the world to go!” Because of this experience, Alexa would like to see “schools reach out to parents”:

Have the schools reach out. I mean it’s not that hard ... how many kids per school? Like 50 transitioning to kindergarten at each school? Reach out throughout the year and ask parents if they need any help. I have no idea why they don’t do that!

Paulina did not want information that focused on what she should be doing *before* Hugo entered kindergarten, but *while* Hugo was already in kindergarten. She said:

I want more resources that will give us, parents, ideas to help when we are home with them, or tell us what they are doing so we can repeat it at home. We have to have the same thing here and there. Balance.

Offering children a positive learning experience. Three mothers felt it was important for teachers to provide children in their classroom with positive experiences that would challenge their thinking, as the kindergarten experience would affect them for years to come. Paulina illustrated that before teachers were able to provide any kind of experience, they had to “know their kids more.” She said: “Teachers need to know the history of the kids, academic and family.” Along the same lines, Alexa also believed that if teachers knew what was happening in the children’s home, they should strive to “make sure the kids have a good time at school.” She shared:

Not all children will behave ... maybe because they didn’t have a meal the day before but knowing that everything they teach them that year is going to affect them for the rest of their lives. So make it a good experience. If a kid is having a hard time to go out of their way to make sure that kid has a good time at school.

Marcela not only wanted teachers to provide a “good experience” for their children, but to challenge students as well. She suggested: “I want to urge teachers to challenge students, but not push them in a way that is overwhelming that they get frustrated and give up. To strongly encourage them to figure out solutions.”

Communicating with parents and teachers. Two parents felt it was important that teachers have open communication with parents and other teachers. Marisol illustrated how teachers should communicate with parents if children were acting up: “To have more

communication with parents. If the kids are misbehaving or if something happened to them, to call the parents.” Paulina agreed with Marisol, but also added how teachers should also be in communication with other teachers as well. She said: “More than anything, they need to communicate with the other teachers. That’s what I mentioned before with Hugo’s teachers. To communicate with parents *and* teachers.”

Recommendations for Continued School Practices

While there were suggestions for improvements, mothers also told us what they appreciated about Hazelwood. Positive aspects of Hazelwood included hours of operation, end-of-year-goals given by parents, children’s daily structure, and donations given to children and families.

Hours of operation. Two mothers told us that they appreciated Hazelwood’s hours. Both mothers qualified for Head Start hours only (9AM-3PM) and not extended hours, which were between 7AM-9AM and 3PM-6PM. Marcela only qualified for Head Start hours and would like “Hazelwood to keep him a little longer,” although she was happy with how many hours he spent there. On the other hand, Flor told us that she liked that Hazelwood had “more hours” and compared it to Lucia’s former center, which was only open for three hours a day. She said: “It was just too little time. Here it’s almost six hours. She’s learned more. At the other place, she attended a small amount of time and only learned to draw. That’s all.”

End-of-year goals. Two mothers reported that they liked that during their initial home visit that happened within the first 45 days of being enrolled at the center, family coordinators asked them what they wanted their child to learn by the end of the year. Adriana, Lesley’s mother, said: “I like that they ask what your goal is for your child ... so they focus on that which I think is really neat because it’s individual.” Alexa also thought it was “very cool” that they asked her about David:

At the home visit, they asked me what my expectations are for David. I think I said that I wanted him to write his name ... and now he writes his name. So I think that’s very cool that they ask my goal for David.

Daily structure. One mother, Marcela, “strongly advised” preschools to continue to have a daily and structured routine. She said: “I think that really helps ‘cause repetition is really important. It goes a long way.”

Kindergarten donations. Alexa was the only parent who mentioned that David received kindergarten supplies provided by a donor.

I don’t know if it was because somebody donated, but they gave him this bag with things to get ready for kindergarten. They gave him a folder, a ruler, erasers, and little stuff like that. David came home, and he was *sooooo* excited that they did that! He put it away in his own drawer that he keeps all his things for kindergarten.

During my two years at Hazelwood, the center always had donations for families at the entrance of the building. Items included: clothing for young children, books, formula, bottles, and diapers. During Christmas, contributions poured in from surrounding restaurants and organizations. Each child at the center received a minimum of one gift for Christmas. Families in greater need received additional gifts. The donation that Alexa reported on (a start-up bag of school materials) was given to all families with a child transitioning to kindergarten. I was not present when donations were distributed, but staff did comment that the bags of supplies were placed in children's cubbies and not given directly to parents. It is possible that mothers were unaware that what their children brought home that day were donations.

Recommendations to the President of the United States of America

At the end of the interview, mothers were asked to give then-President Barack Obama advice on what he could do to help Latino children get ready for kindergarten. A number of responses emerged, including having bilingual teachers and staff at each school, providing English courses for parents, creating a space for families to learn, developing programs that support future educational attainment of children (documented and undocumented), ending school discrimination, and continuing to support Head Start programs. Other suggestions given to the President included offering free school supplies and having better qualified teachers (See Table 80).

Table 80. *Recommendations to the President of the USA (n = 16)*

Parent (Target Child)	Bilingual Support at schools	English courses	Space for families	Supporting future educational attainment	Ending school discrimination	Supporting Head Start	Other	Total
Adriana (Lesley)		X						1
Alexa (David)	X	X						2
Alicia (Manny)	X							1
Amanda (Jax)					X			1
Delia (Josue)		X					X	2
Fabiola (Javier)						X		1
Flor (Lucia)						X		1
Ingrid (Nayeli)	X							1
Irene (Kayla)			X	X	X			3
Jocelyn (Alma)			X					1
Kristina (Kevin)	X		X					2
Laura (Isa)	X			X				2
Maribel (Diana)							X	1
Marisol (Jacob)	X							1
Natalia (Nina)		X						1
Paulina (Hugo)			X					1
Total	6	4	4	2	2	2	2	22

Having Bilingual Teachers and Staff at Schools

If parents had the ability to directly speak to the President, six mothers shared that they would tell him that schools needed to have bilingual teachers and staff. Alexa, who did not speak English, felt it was important to have “translators” and told us: “Having services like translators that help parents in schools understand what’s going on is needed.” Ingrid, who also didn’t speak English, agreed with Alexa and told us: “It’s important to have people that speak your language. Maybe if he puts more Hispanic people in the schools so we can understand.” She reflected on her experience at Hazelwood and how it would be different going to a place where no one spoke Spanish: “I like it here because I understand the teacher, and I know the secretary speaks Spanish, you speak Spanish too. But if everything was in English, I wouldn’t know how to communicate with the teacher, anyone.”

While Alicia was able to fend for herself and communicate with teachers and staff, she acknowledged “sometimes language is a barrier for parents” and suggested “more bilingual staff”: “Have people that speak Spanish at the schools. That will help a lot of parents.” Alicia also recalled her older son’s former school and the lack of Spanish-speaking staff: “At my older son’s school, the nurse, the psychologist, not even the receptionist spoke Spanish, no one [laughing].” For Laura, having more bilingual staff that was “in the school all the time” would help parents be more involved in school activities. She stated: “I’ve noticed that a lot of parents don’t get involved in school activities and maybe they are not getting involved because they don’t know the language. So having someone who speaks Spanish to help parents who don’t speak English.” Further, Laura told us that having bilingual staff at school “would be good for Latinos” since there are parents who have questions or want to learn things, but “feel ashamed” because they cannot communicate with teachers.

Kristina, who was born in the U.S., also recognized that not speaking English was a barrier for parents. She suggested having translators: “If a parent has a language barrier, find someone that can translate for them, because sometimes the teachers can’t and they don’t catch what they are saying.” Kristina also suggested that President Obama place more bilingual teachers at schools because “they don’t have a lot of them.” Marisol, who was also born in the U.S., had a similar account. She encouraged the President to “hire more bilingual teachers” with the goal of supporting parents:

Some parents want to do more things with their kids but they can’t do it because English is very difficult for them. There are people that don’t speak a single word of English. I really thought that those people don’t exist, but they do, and when they have a problem and there’s not an interpreter, it’s very difficult for the mom and the child. It’s impossible.

Offering English Courses for Parents and Children

Four parents understood the importance of learning English to be able to assist their children in school and wanted English courses. One mother, Adriana, suggested English classes for children rather than parents.

Natalia for example knew that “parents like myself need to be better trained in English” and suggested “giving parent English classes.” Delia also reflected on her lack of English proficiency and said: “I need to learn English, so he should help me know English so I can help Josue.” Alexa, who would also like to see “more ESL classes for parents” being offered, gave a different perspective:

I don't wanna sound like that typical Hispanic but people need to realize that you're moving to this country and this is a country that you are adopting as your home and Spanish is not the first language. People need to get that through their heads. Like, you need to learn English. I mean you're not gonna go to China and expect people to speak Spanish to you. You need to learn Chinese! So, why wouldn't it have the same standard here?

While more direct, Alexa shared the same sentiment as Natalia and Delia, who saw the “importance of trying to learn the language.”

Unlike the mothers who wanted English programs for parents, Adriana wanted a program that specifically taught English to children. She told us:

I would say that for children that are new to the U.S. and don't really know English, a program for them to learn English would benefit them. When they're so small they learn so fast! Even if they are little, having a different program aside from kindergarten would benefit it since they would learn faster.

In my two years at the site, English courses for parents were never advertised, although the district offered free adult ESL classes throughout the year. The nearby community college also offered ESL classes for adults and offered flexible schedules and financial aid.

Having a Space for Families to Learn

Four families would like President Obama to create spaces and programs for Latino families. These spaces would entail activities for children and families, and offer access to affordable sports classes and tutoring help. Other suggestions included creating a space with qualified individuals that would help parents navigate and learn “everything educational.”

Kristina did not just want “more activities for the kids,” but also wanted a space for “parent-child activities we could do together.” Irene, who had both her children in sports classes, wanted to have “more access to the sports children like” and also sports classes that “weren't that expensive.” Similarly, Paulina wanted programs with specialists that helped children with homework and helped prepare them for kindergarten. She also wanted the programs to be free so that parents wouldn't have an excuse not to use them. She said:

I would tell him that we need a program where parents can take their kids to someone capable of helping them with homework, to prepare them for kindergarten. I want to have that be free, so parents don't have to say, "I don't have the resources to pay for that."

Jocelyn's account mirrored Paulina's, who wanted a "community center" similar to Hazelwood that helped children and families. She reported:

I'd want him to create an organization like a community center that held meetings, like the ones they do at the daycare that helps Latino kids. For kids, games to be entertained. For parents, there can be special people that help us and guide us with everything educational.

Programs that Support Children's Future Educational Attainment

Two mothers would like the President to focus on developing programs that support children's future educational attainment, regardless of immigration status. For example, Irene would like to see programs that help "children stay in school": "He should create programs to help children when they finish this stage, then high schools, then when they go to college because we don't have money to support them." Laura specifically focused on creating programs for undocumented students. According to Laura, these students may "not have been born here, but the U.S. is the only world they have come to know." She explained:

I would ask Obama that they give scholarships to the undocumented people. The ones that want to go to college, but don't have documents to make their dreams come true. So more resources that helps people without documents to stay in the U.S. so they can advance in life.

She goes on to say that "it's not fair" because many want to go to school but "end up working at McDonald's" because they can't go to school.

Ending Discrimination in Schools

Ending discrimination and racism in schools were additional suggestions that two mothers would like President Obama to assist with. Irene did not hold back and said: "That he do something to end racial issues at schools. So less discrimination and racism for children." Amanda wanted to see President Obama end bullying in schools and suggested that children who bully not get punished, but instead "get training in Latino customs." She told us: "I have seen on TV that kids bully other kids. I would like that the kids that bully get some training, that they don't punish them, but train them in Latino customs and get a peek at other cultures." Just like Latinos need to learn English, she believed that American children "also need to learn about our customs, our beliefs, what we think, what we feel." For Amanda, that was "very important" for President Obama to do.

Supporting Head Start Programs

Two parents would like to see the President continue supporting Head Start programs. Flor believed that Head Start “helps children to learn things” and as such, government support of Head Start should continue. She said: “I think that he has to keep going with Head Start so the kids will be ready for kindergarten, it helps them a lot.” Fabiola shared the same sentiment as Flor and said: “I think that these programs help them a lot. They already had the preschool opportunity for 3 years here ... so keeping these up.”

Other Recommendations

Other suggestions offered by mothers to the President included offering free school supplies and having better qualified teachers at schools. For example, Delia, who wondered why the President would even talk to her, was unsure what she would say to the President. After some probing she said: “Well, if Obama called me I would tell him that I need books. Books where my child can draw. I don’t know [laughs].” In the kindergarten information packet that parents received, a supply list that parents needed to purchase by the first day were provided. The cost of school supplies for kindergarten alone was well over \$50.00 per child. I suggested that families slowly begin buying supplies, as it may get burdensome to purchase them all at once, particularly in families with more than one child.

Unlike Delia, Maribel was succinct in her response of what she would tell President Obama. Her suggestions focused on the difference in teachers “between private and public schools”:

Sometimes I think that there’s teachers that are more prepared than others. There’s difference between private and public schools and I don’t know why that’s happening! There’s really good teachers at public schools but others are not so good, and that doesn’t happen that much in private schools, it shouldn’t be like that.

Summary

Findings from this chapter revealed that mothers were attentive to what was going on in the preschool, and were vocal about improvements they would like to see happen. We were also able to get a glimpse of mothers’ needs once they left Head Start and entered the U.S. school system.

Mothers’ number one suggestion to preschools was to place greater focus on academics. These findings mirror research that shows that ethnic minority families emphasize academic knowledge for children’s school readiness (Barbarin et al., 2008). Of the four mothers who suggested an increase in academic rigor, all were first-time mothers except for Laura, who had an older son in the first grade. Similarly, all four emphasize the importance of nominal knowledge skills and literacy skills. I hypothesize that mothers who reported wanting an increase in

academic rigor did so because their children had not yet acquired such skills. For example, Laura wanted Hazelwood to focus more on reading. In earlier findings she reported that Isa does not know how to read yet, a skill she'd like for her to learn before kindergarten. However, some mothers also wanted Hazelwood teachers to do more arts and crafts with the children. This may suggest parents' recognition of education as facilitating children's creativity and self-expression, and not only its instrumental purposes (Halloway et al., 1995).

Four mothers in this sample also wanted less teacher turnover and more qualified teachers. As stated earlier, several changes in teachers and administration occurred during my time at the site. Although I am not certain why teachers left, informal conversations and observations lead me to hypothesize that the workplace environment was the reason for teacher turnover. Research conducted by Zinsser, Denham, Curby, and Chazan-Cohen (2016) found that preschool teachers' workplace environment is shaped directly and indirectly by the emotional climate of the center as well as by program leaders. When preschool teachers do not work well with others, their job attitudes may decrease, leading to changes in staff (Hall-Kenyon, Bullough, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014). Although preschool teachers' salary is an ongoing issue in the United States (Wells, 2017), research has shown that Head Start teachers are generally content with their salary (Wells, 2015). This may be because Head Start salaries tend to be higher than other preschool teachers' salaries (Currie & Neidell, 2007). To raise its quality standards, in the fall of 2013, 50% of Head State teachers are now required to have a bachelor's degree, while assistant teachers are required to possess an associate degree or a Child Development Associated (CDA) credential (PUBLIC LAW 110-134). Unlike the national sample of 71% (Head Start, 2015), *all* of the Head Start teachers in this sample had bachelor's degrees.

The four mothers who reported wanting less teacher turnover and more qualified teachers shared some similarities. First, all four mothers (Kristina, Alexa, Maribel, and Paulina) spoke English. Specifically, Kristina and Alexa were fluent in English, while Maribel and Paulina had moderate to high English proficiency. Also, three out of the four mothers were first-time mothers (except for Maribel). Alexa also worked for Hazelwood, giving her more access than other mothers to what was going on behind closed doors. Maribel had been with Hazelwood for eight years (all her children had transitioned from Hazelwood to kindergarten), giving her more familiarity with teachers and staff throughout the years. Finally, Paulina had a close relationship with the family coordinator and teachers, possibly gaining more information than other mothers. For mothers who did not report these changes, I hypothesize it was because 1) changes in teachers did not impact their children directly and 2) research has shown that Latina mothers are less likely to question teachers and administrators as they see them as experts.

Mothers wanted to receive more information on the kindergarten transition from schools. These findings are consistent with literature examining family concerns in the kindergarten transition (Eckert et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2007; Wildenger & McIntyre, 2011). For example, McIntyre and colleagues (2007) investigated the family experiences and involvement in kindergarten in 132 families whose children had completed early education programs and were beginning kindergarten (10.1% were Latino and 16.2% of the sample were in Head Start) and found that the majority of families wanted more information about the transition to kindergarten.

Unlike their study, findings from this study did not find (a) that mothers wanted more information about the academic or behavioral expectations in kindergarten or (b) that mothers wanted to have more information about children's future kindergarten teacher/placement. I hypothesize that this was because mothers at Hazelwood were provided with kindergarten information every month through Head Start's required monthly parent meetings, possibly answering most of their questions. Mothers in this sample were also provided with children's neighborhood school. Also, McIntyre's participants were interviewed at the end of their preschool years, whereas participants in this study were interviewed during the beginning of their child's preschool year. It's possible that mothers are not thinking about the transition to kindergarten early in the year, compared to later in the year. Finally, out of the seven mothers who wanted more information on the transition to kindergarten, four were first-time mothers. I hypothesize that mothers who have gone through the kindergarten transition already knew what to expect, compared to mothers for whom it was their first time. Thus, employing effective transitioning practices, especially for children of immigrant parents who may lack knowledge of the U.S. education system, is critical (Schneider, Martinez, & Owens, 2006).

The most commonly cited academic obstacles faced by Latino/a children in are school programs that fail to address linguistic diversity. Mothers in this sample were not oblivious to the challenges they faced by not being proficient in English, which is why their number one recommendation to then-President Obama was to have bilingual support at schools. Prior research has found that for Latino families who do not speak English or have limited proficiency in English, language barriers can pose significant hurdles to parents' communication and ultimately school involvement practices in elementary schools (Durand, 2011). Similarly, Wong and Hughes (2006) found that Latino parents, especially Spanish-speaking parents, reported lower levels of communication with the school compared to English-speaking parents, who reported higher levels of teacher-parent communication. Based on the recommendations that mothers mostly emphasized (bilingual support at schools and wanting English courses), I hypothesize that mothers are acutely aware that once they left Hazelwood, their child's new

school will not always be able to offer bilingual support. Although no teachers spoke Spanish, the secretary and two family coordinators, and I myself spoke Spanish. I hypothesize that mothers were used to having someone constantly present who spoke Spanish available to them, and realized that through experiences and by virtue of living in a predominantly white suburb, that would not be the case once their child entered school. Observation data supports mothers' recommendation for bilingual support at schools. I attended several open houses within the district and accompanied parents to help register their child at schools where no one was bilingual. Although the population of Latinos at Florence has been rising each year, schools have yet to provide resources for parents who do not speak English.

Head Start Teachers' Recommendations

In this second section, we explored the recommendations that preschool teachers offered. Head Start teachers provided advice for what schools can do to help preschool teachers, parents, and children be better prepared for the transition. The following questions guided our discussion:

- a. In your opinion, what are the things that stand in the way of preschools such as Head Start partnering with elementary schools?
- b. What are the things that promote partnerships between preschools such as Head Start and elementary schools?
- c. What are the things that promote partnerships between preschools such as Head Start and families of children about to enter kindergarten?
- d. What are the challenges that you have observed in the elementary schools as they work with preschool children who are preparing for the transition to kindergarten?

Recommendations to Schools

Preschool teachers at Hazelwood were asked what elementary schools should do to assist children in the transition to kindergarten. Overall, Head Start teachers provided advice for what schools can do to help preschool teachers, parents, and children be better prepared for the transition. In general, Head Start teachers wanted more information on what the schools were expecting children to know by the time they started kindergarten. They suggested receiving written "cheat sheets" of the skills and abilities teachers wanted children to possess. Preschool teachers would also like to have opportunities to meet with kindergarten teachers, and even have a day where they shadow them to get a clearer idea of what children would be learning in kindergarten.

Receiving more information on kindergarten expectations. All five preschool teachers would like to know what schools are expecting children to come in knowing. Jackie illustrated the need for clarity and said: "Kindergarten teachers or their schools should provide preschool

teachers with clear expectations of what children need to learn.” Georgina was looking for guidance: “I want them to give us information of what they’re expecting our kids to know on their first day. I’m guessing the more the better or the bare minimum? I don’t know. Getting more direction would be helpful.” Similarly, Sheri did not know “what the school district wants them to learn” and felt teachers at the site “were going off the cuff”: “Talking to the local schools and for them to tell us what they’re expecting kids to know would be great.” Along the same lines, Elizabeth would like clearly laid out information: “I’d like to have a pamphlet from the elementary schools to see what they’re expecting ... like a cheat sheet.”

Two teachers, Stacey and Elizabeth, suggested meeting face-to-face with kindergarten teachers. For both teachers to “be on the same page,” Stacey suggested meeting with kindergarten teachers “a few times during the year”:

We’re all working with children that are old enough to be moving on to kindergarten. If we could meet with them like mid-year, or even a few times during the year, in case there’s changes, that would help us be on the same page.

When probed on what she hoped to gain from these meetings, Stacey said:

We’d know what our kids will learn in kindergarten and what we can do help prepare them. To make sure we are focusing and covering everything. That way we can be sure that kids are as ready as can be ... that we didn’t forget anything or not focus enough on something over something else.

Like Stacey, Elizabeth also wanted to meet with teachers. She told us: “They should have teachers come to the center so we can meet and they tell us what they cover so we kinda’ have more of an idea of what’s really expected.” In addition to finding dates when all teachers could meet and talk, Elizabeth would also like the opportunity to observe their classrooms. She said: “I’d like to go and see how they do things, like a shadow day. That way it’ll make sense and we’ll have an idea of what they are looking for. That might be helpful.”

Recommendations to Help Parents

Head Start teachers also provided suggestions for what schools can do help parents. All five preschool teachers would like for schools to provide parents with more information about kindergarten, including their expectations, rules, and best practices for children that are transitioning. They also suggested having bilingual teachers and staff at schools that serve as translators. They would also like for schools to have an open-door policy.

Receiving more kindergarten information. Jackie told us “schools should teach parents what is expected, like the school rules.” Georgina provided more detail and suggested parents receive “a little packet of information.” When probed on what that packet would contain, Georgina told us:

Maybe what a typical days in kindergarten is going to be? Also, information about the deadlines, of when they need to register, information on bussing. Any fees associated with registration, information about lunch, and what supplies they need.

Later in the interview, Georgina reflected and came back to what schools could do to help parents. She told us that “not all parents are able to read” and sending out flyers or information packets wouldn’t be the best idea. Instead, she suggested: “Maybe having someone that can read it to them, or have like face-to-face interaction so they build connections ... like a facilitator to help them.” She went on to add that schools should also have a “kindergarten open house”:

They can have a kindergarten open house and kindergarten roundups were parents come in with the kids and both meet the teacher and then the teacher shows them the kindergarten classroom. Like a day in kindergarten ... a practice day.

Similarly, Jackie suggested “trainings and workshops” for staff and families. When prodded on what they would focus on, she said: “on how to better prepare children for the transition.”

Elizabeth’s account was similar. Elizabeth suggested that schools hold meetings for parents *before* children transitioned so families are not surprised after. She said: “They can hold a meeting for parents there or come here and explain to them in the beginning who they are and what children are expected to know. That way it’s not a big shock [laughing]!” Stacey also wanted parent meetings, but highlighted that representatives from each school also be present. She shared the following:

At parent meetings they should have a representative that doesn’t just talk about kindergarten but that talks more in-depth about their program. Like the history of the school so that parents don’t have to do all that research on their own. One representative at one meeting, and another representative from another school at another meeting.

Having bilingual teachers and staff at schools. Two Hazelwood teachers included having bilingual teachers and staff in their suggestions for what schools can do to help parents. One teacher, Georgina, advised schools to have an open-door policy as well.

Georgina believed it would be “helpful” for families to have someone at the school “that spoke their language.” She said: “Schools need to have someone to translate, like a translator within the building that would help parents. Someone that would speak parents’ language. For families that would be helpful, of course.” Stacey agreed with Georgina and told us: “For Spanish-speaking families, to make sure they have someone that can translate.” She also highlighted the importance of having someone available at the school: “I think it would be nice if the schools actually had someone *in* the school, that way if they have any questions they can ask then.” In addition to a translator, Georgina would also like for schools to have an “open-door policy”: “Not everyone has email, or a phone, so having the schools have an open-door policy where families can come in and read, or talk to someone and ask questions.”

Recommendations to Help Children

Two preschool teachers, Georgina and Sheri, offered advice on what schools can do to help children transition. The advice focused on offering children supplies and having children go on a field trip to experience kindergarten firsthand.

Georgina would like to see schools give children “a welcome kit” containing “a pencil box, a couple of crayons, pencils...things like that.” Likewise, Sheri would also like for the schools to help parents with school supplies, as she believed that for many parents at Hazelwood, purchasing supplies was a “huge burden”:

Every parent wants their kid to be like everybody else. You see some kids coming in with backpacks now because they’re getting ready for school, and you feel for the parents who you know can’t afford that. School supplies, and that kinda’ stuff is a huge burden for families. So schools helping with school supplies would be nice.

In addition to schools offering school supplies to children, Sheri also suggested for children to take a field trip to see an actual school. She said: “I think schools should let us go on a field trip with the kids so they could see the school. Like a day in kindergarten, and they can see what their class will look like and stuff.” She pointed out that a field trip would be beneficial for students because at many of the meetings that schools have, “parents don’t have to bring the kids.”

Challenges in Helping Families with the Transition

Two teachers also shared barriers that Hazelwood experienced when helping families go through the transition. The barriers they focused included families coming from various school districts, making it too burdensome for Hazelwood staff to gather kindergarten information from each school, as well as Hazelwood not having a presence in the community, which limited their facility in making valuable partnerships.

Georgina felt that a barrier that Hazelwood faced was that children in the center came from different neighborhoods, which made it difficult for staff to know what school they belonged to. She said: “Everybody is coming from a different district and that information could just be different. Like some schools in one district are half-day and in another district, they are full-day.” For Georgina, soliciting information from all those school districts might not only be “cumbersome,” but Hazelwood may also need to hire another staff member. She went on to tell us:

We’d have to make a list and make sure that we hit every single district...we may need another staff member to help coordinate ... like a Kindergarten Readiness Coordinator. I mean, that’s its own job on its own! Or we can add a lot of work to somebody’s schedule if they’re in charge of figuring out where everybody would go to school [laughs].

Another barrier that Sheri brought up was Hazelwood’s lack of visibility and presence in the community. She reported:

We have a beautiful center, but you don't know what we are from the building when you drive by. We should be going to the fairs in the community so they [families and the district] know who we are. So going to these fairs and having a booth, with pictures of the kids, and a flier that talks about our center ... so we get ourselves out in the community because we don't have a presence in the community.

Sheri reflected and told us that in the past they've been invited to different lunches and asked to be a representative at different events, but felt that "we don't do that anymore." She also shared with us that the center is located right across the district's preschool where some of their children who have an IEP get bussed, yet they don't have a relationship with them. She said: "The district has a big huge preschool for at-risk preschoolers right down the street from here. The school is right there [points across the street], you know? We could have partnered with them, or taken a field trip. Something!" When probed on why she believed they haven't done that, she said: "It could be that we haven't had a director for some time ... also, when Diana was here she was just in her office, so she kinda' set the tone."

Summary

Preschool teachers at Hazelwood provided recommendations to schools, parents, and children. All five Head Start teachers wanted to receive more information regarding what schools and kindergarten teachers were expecting their incoming students to know. Along the same lines, Head Start teachers would also like to see schools provide more information about kindergarten and the transition to parents. Schools should also provide free school supplies to children as a way to get them excited for school, but to also help parents with the burden of buying school supplies. Head Start teachers also suggested that children do a field trip to a nearby elementary school so they could see what a kindergarten classroom looks like. In comparison to Wesley & Buysse (2003), our findings provided multiple suggestions from teachers to increase schools' effectiveness in serving increasingly diverse children and families apart from providing interpreters for and translation of written material into languages other than English. These findings also suggest the need for more collaboration between Hazelwood and the district. It is clear to see that Hazelwood teachers want more collaboration and communication with kindergarten teachers as a way to help themselves better prepare children for kindergarten.

Similarities and Differences in Parents' and Teachers' Recommendations

Overall, both parents and preschools understood the importance of kindergarten and thus wanted to receive more information that would help them prepare their child for school. Both parties wanted elementary schools and kindergarten teachers to provide information on kindergarten and their expectations for when children enter their classroom. Although some parents wanted information in pre-packaged packets, teachers preferred meeting face-to-face to

discuss expectations and making sure that they were focusing on the right subjects. Pianta and colleagues (2001) found that kindergarten teachers in their sample found it more difficult to enact transition activities with preschool teachers or meeting with preschool teachers before the child entered kindergarten. They also found that kindergarten teachers viewed group-focused activities that involved visits by preschool children to kindergarten classroom more positively. I would hypothesize that kindergarten teachers in Florence would be open to having preschool teachers visit their classrooms, as well as have group-focused activities.

Informal conversations with the kindergarten coordinator at Florence revealed that the district does want to build a relationship with Hazelwood. It's possible that with the changes in administration, collaboration could be developed. In addition to receiving information from schools, parents and preschool teachers also saw the need for schools to have bilingual teachers and staff at each school present to help parents. Although not mentioned, I hypothesize that preschool teachers were aware of the lack of resources that Florence provided for Latino/a parents who lacked English proficiency. They would have also been aware that schools in Florence would not have bilingual teachers nor staff as readily available as Hazelwood.

Unlike mothers who would prefer teachers to focus on more academic activities, no teachers mentioned the need to change their curriculum. Based on school readiness beliefs and practices from preschool teachers, prior findings revealed that teachers emphasized socio-emotional and approaches to learning skills, than academic skills which parents emphasized the most (Barbarin et al., 2008; Grace & Brandt, 2005; Piotrowski et al., 2001). In general, findings from this chapter reveal that both mothers and preschool teachers were aware of the barriers that were forthcoming once their child left Hazelwood. While theoretical literature suggests that kindergarten transition is an important developmental period, empirical literature on kindergarten transition remains very limited (see Eckert et al., 2008), especially for Latino children and families (Durand, 2011). It is key to give voice to mothers and preschool teachers, as both are critical players to children's successful transition.

Chapter 9: Discussion

The goal of this research was to explore the school readiness beliefs and parental involvement practices of low-income Latina mothers who have a child transitioning to kindergarten, as well as the beliefs of Head Start teachers. Challenging a deficit perspective that too often has characterized low-income families of color, this study focuses on what mothers *are doing* as opposed to what they are *not doing*. Using a resilience perspective, this study considered how mothers utilize their resources and communities (e.g., kin and Head Start), problem solve, and engage with their children to facilitate the kindergarten transition. This study thus highlights mothers' strengths and resiliency.

There is an abundance of research that suggests that being involved in children's education is important and impacts children's academic trajectory (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2003). However, the majority of research has focused on older children (e.g., elementary, high school, college) and has employed a White middle-class model of family practices. The literature on parental involvement and school readiness has relied on quantitative and standardized assessments that obscure culturally based family practices as well as families' heterogeneity and resilience.

Researchers know little about parental beliefs and involvement practices *prior* to school entry. Even more limited qualitative research exists on the practices and beliefs of low-income Latina mothers living in suburbs. Thus, my research addresses several gaps in the literature. First, this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of low-income Latina mothers with preschool-aged children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten. Latinos are currently the largest minority population in the U.S., yet little research exists on how Latina (immigrant) mothers support their young children's education. The transition to kindergarten is a critical time to prepare children for academic success, especially for children of immigrant parents who experience additional stressors in their lives. Second, teachers' beliefs are taken into account, as research has reported that Latina mothers and preschool teachers hold different beliefs about the skills that children should possess prior to school entry. This misalignment can have negative consequences on children's kindergarten adjustment. Third, the majority of research on neighborhood effects and education has been conducted in impoverished urban neighborhoods. To my knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to focus on the beliefs and practices of low-income families residing in suburbs.

To address the paucity of research on the school readiness experiences of Latino families, we used qualitative research informed by an interpretive approach to explore the meaning-making processes and daily lived experiences of low-income Latina mothers and Head Start teachers.

This approach privileges the life knowledge and stories of groups that are marginalized and understudied. It recognizes participants' silenced stories, gives them voice and agency, honors cultural differences, and reveals processes behind demographic profiles. Intensive interviews documented participants' feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs in great detail. They further emphasized mothers' voices and detailed how extended kin and Head Start supported mothers' transition activities and beliefs. The use of photo elicitation is a particularly good way to understand family processes, as photographs can highlight the taken-for-granted, often invisible activities that may not emerge in interviews. Photo interviews revealed transition activities that mothers *and* extended kin participated in that provided positive developmental opportunities and growth for children.

Key Findings

Key findings from this research focused on the meaning of school readiness and parental involvement. Beliefs about school readiness and the kindergarten transition as well as family practices used to support children's readiness, including the use of extended kin and Head Start, are examined. Recommendations provided by mothers and teachers to help improve the readiness of Latino/a children are also highlighted.

The Meanings of School Readiness

Mothers primarily understood school readiness as nominal knowledge skills and academic skills (emergent literacy). Although academic skills were most pronounced in mothers' understanding of school readiness, socio-emotional skills were not far behind. Furthermore, more than half (11 out of 17) of mothers believed that a child being able to read was an important school readiness skill. Preschool teachers gave **equal** importance to literacy skills and socio-emotional skills. Research clearly documents that children perform better in school when there is consistency in beliefs and practices between families and teachers (Barbarin et al., 2008; Diamond et al., 2000). Findings suggest a **small misalignment** between low-income Latina mothers and preschool teachers' beliefs about the meaning of school readiness and pertinent skills. Both mothers and preschool teachers were in unison about the importance of academic skills *and* socio-emotional skills for school success. The greatest differences were in their beliefs about the importance of nominal knowledge and physical well-being. Above all skills, mothers gave the greatest importance to nominal skills, while teachers gave it less importance. Although physical well-being was the least important skill to mothers, they did mention it, whereas teachers did not include this school readiness domain/skill in their conceptualization of school readiness.

Beliefs and Perceptions about School Readiness and the Kindergarten Transition

We found that low-income (immigrant) mothers are aware that the transition to kindergarten is a critical milestone in children's lives, placing a high value on education. Mothers had a sense of how ready their children were for kindergarten and assessed them on the following school readiness domains: (a) nominal knowledge; (b) emergent reading and writing skills; (c) socio-emotional development; and (d) approaches to learning. Gender differences surfaced. Mothers are more concerned with the misbehavior of boys and the inability of girls to separate from parents. Findings from this chapter also revealed that mothers had high educational aspirations for their preschoolers. All mothers aspired for their child to earn a college degree and have a career. The types of careers that mothers desired their child to have differed by gender. Mothers wanted daughters to be doctors and dentists, while preschool-aged boys reported more masculine jobs (e.g., army recruit). Mothers were clear that they wanted their child to have an education because they themselves never had the opportunity. Also, mothers did not want their child to follow in their footsteps.

Findings from this study also revealed that Latina mothers believed that the biggest factor influencing children's readiness was their exposure to and attendance in Head Start. Although they were in preschool, mothers were already thinking about what their child's kindergarten teacher would want him/her to know. Overall findings suggest that mothers' emphasis is on academic knowledge. Consistent with the literature that low-income ethnic minority parents view involvement as home-based, mothers with preschool-aged children expected teachers to want parents to contribute to children's learning via home-based practices rather than school-based practices.

Meaning of Parental Involvement

This study found that Latina mothers understood parental involvement as mainly being **home-based** rather than school-based. New conceptualizations of parental involvement emerged among low-income Latina mothers. These include: (a) spending time with children; (b) supporting children's interests; and (c) knowing children's friends. Preschool teachers also wanted mothers to be involved at home more than in school. Further, preschool teachers wanted mothers to focus their in-home activities around independence and academic skills. Lastly, evidence suggests that preschool teachers at Hazelwood were attuned to the skills that Latina mothers needed to master in order to help their child have a smooth transition.

Both mothers and preschool teachers placed **more** emphasis on home-based activities than school-based activities. The biggest difference between mothers' and preschool teachers' understanding of parental involvement was in their understanding of the **types** of home-based

activities that should be done to help children have a smooth transition to kindergarten. Mothers mainly emphasized life involvement rather than academic involvement. Teachers, however, emphasized academic involvement only.

Mothers' Active Involvement in Children's Education

This study examined what mothers are doing to help prepare their child for kindergarten. It first begins with mothers' own experiences growing up and their parents' involvement in their education. Next, in-home school readiness practices were examined, followed by the messages that mothers gave to their children about kindergarten. Key findings detailing mothers' reliance on extended kin and Head Start are also discussed. Barriers to involvement faced by mothers and their parents are further detailed, stressing the *reasons* why mothers could not be involved. Finally, key recommendations from mothers and preschool teachers on what should be done to ensure that Latino children and families have a smooth transition to kindergarten are provided.

Mothers' Early Educational Experiences

Mothers' early school recollection revealed that their parents mostly participated in home-based involvement that reflected Latino cultural values of parental engagement, particularly *consejos* (advice). *Consejos* refers to the advice parents give to children about school that reinforces values and perseverance (Ramos, 2014). Providing *consejos* was universal among the mothers in this sample. Despite parents' limited formal education (almost all mothers reported that their parents were illiterate), their parents emphasized the importance of education. There was consensus among families that parents believed that education was the key to a better life and all forms of engagement were directed toward the goal that education enhanced life opportunities. We also found that mothers' parents' lack of involvement was due to socioeconomic and structural barriers rather than deficits in family cultures. Many mothers grew up in small farm towns where few resources were available. To make ends meet, fathers worked long hours out on the farm while mothers either cleaned houses in the nearby town or cooked food to sell. This limited their availability to be involved. Finally, 14 families grew up outside the U.S., where expectations about involvement differed from those in the U.S. School and home are considered to be separate entities. This may be a possible reason why parents were not involved at school as much as they were involved at home.

Mothers' School Readiness In-home Practices

Findings from this study suggest that low-income (immigrant) mothers are actively involved in helping prepare their child for kindergarten at home. We found that mothers focused on an array of school readiness activities with their children, the most salient of which were emergent reading activities. Mothers reported no transition activities outside the home.

Mother-Child Communication about the Kindergarten Transition

Mothers in this sample were aware that the kindergarten transition was a critical milestone in the lives of their children and believed it was important to talk to them prior to beginning this new stage. Exchanges allowed mothers to reinforce school readiness competencies, remediate behaviors, and promote a positive, albeit serious view of kindergarten. Gender differences surfaced. Mothers' messages stressing the importance of appropriate kindergarten behavior was only addressed to preschool-aged boys. We found that children of low-income immigrant mothers had a positive school-related attitude about kindergarten. Similarly to the messages that mothers gave, we also found gender differences between children who have positive and negative feeling about kindergarten. Only preschool-aged boys had negative feelings about kindergarten in this study.

Sources of Support for Mothers

Our findings show that fathers and older siblings are a vital source of support for mothers. By working together, families expanded children's repertoire of school readiness skills and activities, thereby creating an enriched environment. Further, findings revealed that fathers engaged the most in literacy activities with their children compared to other school readiness domains. Mothers also reported using Head Start as a source of support. They reported that Head Start helped prepare children for kindergarten by exposing children to English. Head Start also played a major role in providing mothers with logistical information about the transition to kindergarten that they otherwise may not have received.

Barriers to Involvement for Mothers and Grandparental Generation

Our findings revealed that mothers faced barriers when trying to be involved at school but not at home. The most significant barriers that mothers experienced were demanding work schedules. Mothers with rigid schedules *and* mothers with non-standard/inflexible schedules were less likely to be involved at school compared to mothers with more flexible schedules. Language barriers were reported for home-based and not school-based involvement. Similarly, mothers reported that their own parents could not be involved in their education because they worked too much, had limited education, and/or had too many siblings to take care of.

Recommendations from Mothers and Preschool Teachers

Mothers' recommendations. Findings from this study reveal that low-income (immigrant) Latina mothers would like for preschools to be more rigorous and focus more on academics. This finding re-emphasized mothers' belief that academic skills are the most important for school success. Furthermore, mothers would like to receive more kindergarten

transition information from schools. Finally, mothers suggested that schools should have bilingual teachers and staff at school available to help assist parents.

Teachers' recommendations. Like low-income Latina mothers, Head Start teachers would like to receive more information on the kindergarten transition from schools in order for *everyone to be on the same page*. They offered numerous ways of how information could be shared. Head Start teachers would also like for schools to provide families with more information about the kindergarten transition and would like for schools to have bilingual teachers and staff to assist mothers whose English is not their first language. Findings suggest an alignment between low-income Latina mothers and Head Start teachers. Both wanted to receive more information about the kindergarten transition and believed it was important for schools to have bilingual teachers and staff present.

Contributions

This research makes substantive, theoretical, and applied contributions to the discussion of school readiness. In particular, our focus on Latino families enriches our understanding of the beliefs and parenting practices that Latino families use as they help transition their child to kindergarten. We add to the discussion about the important and supportive role that families from purportedly at-risk backgrounds can play in their children's transition to kindergarten (Belfield & Garcia, 2014). Clearly, some low-income Latino families may experience barriers in helping their children navigate the transition to kindergarten. However, our findings identify heterogeneity within this population and the ability of some families to positively support their children's kindergarten transition.

Substantive Contributions

These findings address issues in existing literature. Consistent with the literature on school readiness among racial-ethnic parents, mothers in this study were mostly concerned with academic skills (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2008; Brooks-Gunn et al., (year); Diamond et al., 2000; Lin et al., 2003). While academic skills were most pronounced, socio-emotional skills followed closely behind. Research by Barbarin and colleagues (2008) found similar results. They suggested that Latino parents cited socio-emotional skills as critical for children to possess before entering school. Similarly, Evans et al. (2004) found that ethnic minority parents conceptualized school readiness more often in terms of nominal knowledge and less in terms of socio-emotional skills.

This suggests that low-income Latino mothers believe that both academic skills *and* socio-emotional skills are important for kindergarten success. Challenging prior studies, this study found that more than half of mothers believed that emergent reading skills, specifically

being able to read, was an important skill that children needed to acquire prior to kindergarten entry. Overall, low-income Latina mothers held a global view of school readiness, although they did emphasize academic skills, which is consistent with current literature.

Findings from teacher data also shed light on current discussions. This study found that preschool teachers gave equal importance to literacy skills and socio-emotional skills. These findings challenge Hollingsworth and Water (2013) and Wesley and Buysse (2003), who found that teachers placed greater importance on socio-emotional skills than literacy skills. Teachers in our sample served Head Start children who are low-income and considered to be at risk for school failure. Although researchers have suggested that teachers who serve low-SES children make academics a preschool priority, our findings did not.

Teachers in this sample emphasized the importance of emergent literacy skills, socio-emotional skills, *and* approaches to learning skills. Our findings also differ from Lin et al. (2003), who suggested that preschool teachers believe that problem-solving skills are a key feature of school readiness. However, no teacher in this study reported on the importance of problem solving. It could be that teachers did not report on problem-solving abilities because their children had already mastered it. This study also did not support findings from Grace and Brandt (2005), who found that preschool teachers believed physical health and well-being were essential school readiness skills. No skills related to children's physical health and well-being were reported by teachers.

Consistent with prior research that finds that Latinos do value education and are committed to their children's education success (Durand, 2010), this study found that low-income Latina mothers with children enrolled in Head Start were aware of the importance of kindergarten, placed a high value on education, and had high educational aspirations for their preschoolers even at this early stage in children's academic life. Similar to research by Miller (2015), who found that low-income African-American mothers had a sense of how ready their child was for kindergarten, we found that low-income Latina mothers too had a sense of how ready their child was. However, unlike prior studies, we provided a detailed description of *how* Latina mothers assessed their children's competencies. Consistent with their beliefs about school readiness, mothers assessed children's competencies by their ability (or inability) to master: (a) nominal knowledge; (b) emergent reading and writing skills; (c) socio-emotional skills; and (d) approaches to learning.

Researchers have found that even though life in the U.S. is challenging for most low-income ethnic-minority families, immigrant parents do not see their child's future in a pessimistic light. Rather, they remain optimistic despite the daily struggles families face (Raleigh & Kao,

2010). Consistent with prior research that finds that Hispanic parents have high levels of aspirations for their child (Goldenberg et al., 2001), this study found that mothers of preschool-aged children were optimistic and had college aspirations. For example, Goldenberg and colleagues (2001) found that at the beginning of kindergarten, parents had high aspirations for children's eventual attainment. In this same study, the authors also found that parents were quite certain about their aspirations. Raleigh and Kao (2010) also found that when immigrant parents were compared to native-born parents, immigrant parents were more optimistic and had higher aspirations for their children. Researchers have suggested that there is a strong degree of "immigrant optimism" among foreign-born parents of young children. In other words, this degree of optimism is advantageous for young children of immigrant parents who maintain high aspirations from kindergarten through the elementary years. In addition to adding to the literature that Latino families have high *educational* expectations for their children, this study offered a detailed account on the *career* expectations that mothers had of their children. All mothers had socially prestigious career aspirations for their children. Furthermore, this study also provided the reasoning behind why mothers want children to have an education. Mothers emphasized that they wanted a better life for their children and the only way to achieve that was through education (Ramos, 2014).

In addition to Latina mothers assessing children's readiness and having high educational and career expectations, we also show that mothers had a clear understanding of the reasons why some children were ready and not ready for kindergarten. For mothers in this sample, the biggest factor that influenced children's ability to be ready was their attendance in Head Start. Unlike previous work that suggested that Latino families draw a clear boundary between schools and home (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004), we found that mothers of preschool-aged children constructed their role in various ways. This study also revealed that mothers are thinking about the skills that their child's kindergarten teacher would expect them to come in knowing. Reiterating mothers' beliefs about school readiness, mothers in this sample expected kindergarten teachers to want their children to come in with nominal knowledge and emergent reading skills, specifically. This again suggests that Latina mothers' emphasis is on academic knowledge (e.g., nominal knowledge, emergent reading). This is at odds from what some kindergarten and some preschool teachers expect from children (see Lin et al., 2003).

In line with the literature on low-income Latina mothers, parental involvement was mostly defined as being home-based (Ramos, 2014). Findings from this study are consistent with Epstein's model (1998) of parental involvement, particularly helping children with homework, communicating with teachers, and to a lesser degree, volunteering in school-related events. We

expand on these conceptualizations of involvement to add new parental contributions. These contributions align with Zarate (2007), who found that Latino/a parents mentioned participating in their child's lives more frequently than being involved academically. These include 1) spending time with children; 2) supporting children's interests; and 3) getting to know children's friends. Our findings support research that notes that Latino parents equate involvement in their child's education with involvement in their lives: participation in their children's lives ensures that their formal schooling is complemented by *educación* taught in the home (Zarate, 2007).

Teachers were aware of the importance of home-based parental involvement and encouraged mothers' efforts at home. However, teachers focused on different home-based activities that were more closely related to the school readiness domains put forth by the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes framework. Teachers tended to focus on helping children be more independent and helping them master emergent writing skills (e.g., spelling their name, writing their name). Unlike prior research, our study found that U.S. school staff and Latino families have similar, yet different views of what constitutes involvement. Both believe that home involvement was important for children's success in kindergarten. However, they differed greatly on the *types* of activities that should be done at home. Mothers' perception of parental involvement is both academic and life involvement, with the latter on being more salient. On the other hand, teachers were more concerned with children's academic development and conceptualized involvement in terms of multiple developmental domains.

Recent studies have documented that Latino parents are involved and supportive of their children's education (Auerbach, 2007; Durand, 2010; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Mena, 2011). This study adds to the literature on Latino families by describing the types of activities that mothers engaged in with their children. Across all school readiness domains that mothers reported engaging in with their children, emergent reading was the most salient among this sample. Although the majority of mothers reported that Spanish was their native language and that they primarily spoke Spanish at home, mothers did not let their low English proficiency deter them from reading to their child. Rather, they were resilient and found innovative ways to be involved such as using illustrations to read to their child or using other reading materials (e.g., the Bible) to help their child read. Unlike prior studies that have found that mothers engage in transition activities outside the home (LaParo et al., 2003), this study did not find that. All the transition activities that mothers were engaged in occurred within the home. Living in a relatively unfamiliar suburban community may be a factor limiting mothers' use of community resources.

Another activity that mothers engaged in to help their child prepare for kindergarten was through the messages that mothers shared with their soon-to-be-kindergartners. However, we add

to the limited research and report on *what* mothers are telling their children about the kindergarten transition, further revealing that low-income Latina mothers were aware that the kindergarten transition was a critical milestone in their child's lives. Through the messages that mothers told their children, we were also able to show preschoolers' feelings towards kindergarten. Our findings revealed that the majority (13) of Latino children attending Head Start had positive feelings about kindergarten. Positive feelings in the early years have been related to a better approach in learning, adapting to new classroom routines, and inspired approach rather than avoidance in a new classroom setting (Hyson, 2008; Ladd et al., 2000; Snow, 2007). Gender differences emerged and revealed that similar to findings from Ramey et al. (1988), boys were the ones to express negative feelings. In addition to supporting research that suggests that Head Start children have a positive attitude towards kindergarten, we add to the scarce literature on *why* children have positive attitudes.

While studies have identified family members' involvement in children's kindergarten preparation, researchers know relatively little about the full contributions of various extended kin, fathers, and siblings. This study adds to the limited research on *the types of activities* that family members are doing to contribute to children's kindergarten readiness. Specifically, we show that fathers and older siblings are key players. Our findings challenge those of Cabrera and Coll (2004), who found that Latino fathers are detached from their child's lives, and Duursma et al. (2008), who found that Latino fathers engage in less book. Our findings also contradict findings from Leavell et al. (2012), who found that among White, African-American and Latino fathers, Latino fathers provided the least caregiving to their children. Instead, our findings revealed that Latino fathers are engaged in almost all school readiness domains, but they stand out in their engagement with emergent reading activities. These findings align with findings from Toth and Xu (1999) that describe the active parenting role played by Latino fathers.

Another source of support that mothers utilized to help children be ready for the transition to kindergarten was Head Start. Prior research has suggested that Head Start promotes children's transition to kindergarten, particularly students who are considered to be at risk for school failure (i.e., children of color, immigrant children, children whose parents do not speak English at home) (Raikes et al., 2006). Mothers reported that because their child was enrolled in Head Start, their child was able to acquire the English language. Not only did Head Start assist children in the transition to kindergarten, but it also supported mothers during the transition by providing them with kindergarten information. Mothers received information about the child's neighborhood school, deadlines, important events that the school and/or district were hosting, and the school's supply list.

It has been well established in the literature that Latino families experience barriers to involvement due to economic, linguistic, and/or cultural barriers (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Mothers' greatest barrier to school-based involvement was work. These findings are consistent with prior research that found that poor Latino/a parents were less involved in their child's school due to demanding work schedules (Castro et al., 2004; Ceballos et al., 2010). Mothers with more job flexibility were more likely to be involved at school, compared to mothers who had rigid or non-standard/inflexible work schedules. The only barrier to home-based involvement that mothers reported on was their lack of English language proficiency. Regardless of barriers experienced by mothers, they found ways to be involved in their child's education. These findings add to the literature on resilience among low-income families by highlighting factors that inhibited parents' ability to be involved. Findings revealed that families were unable to be involved due to socioeconomic and structural barriers, and not because of deficit family cultures (see Valencia, 2002).

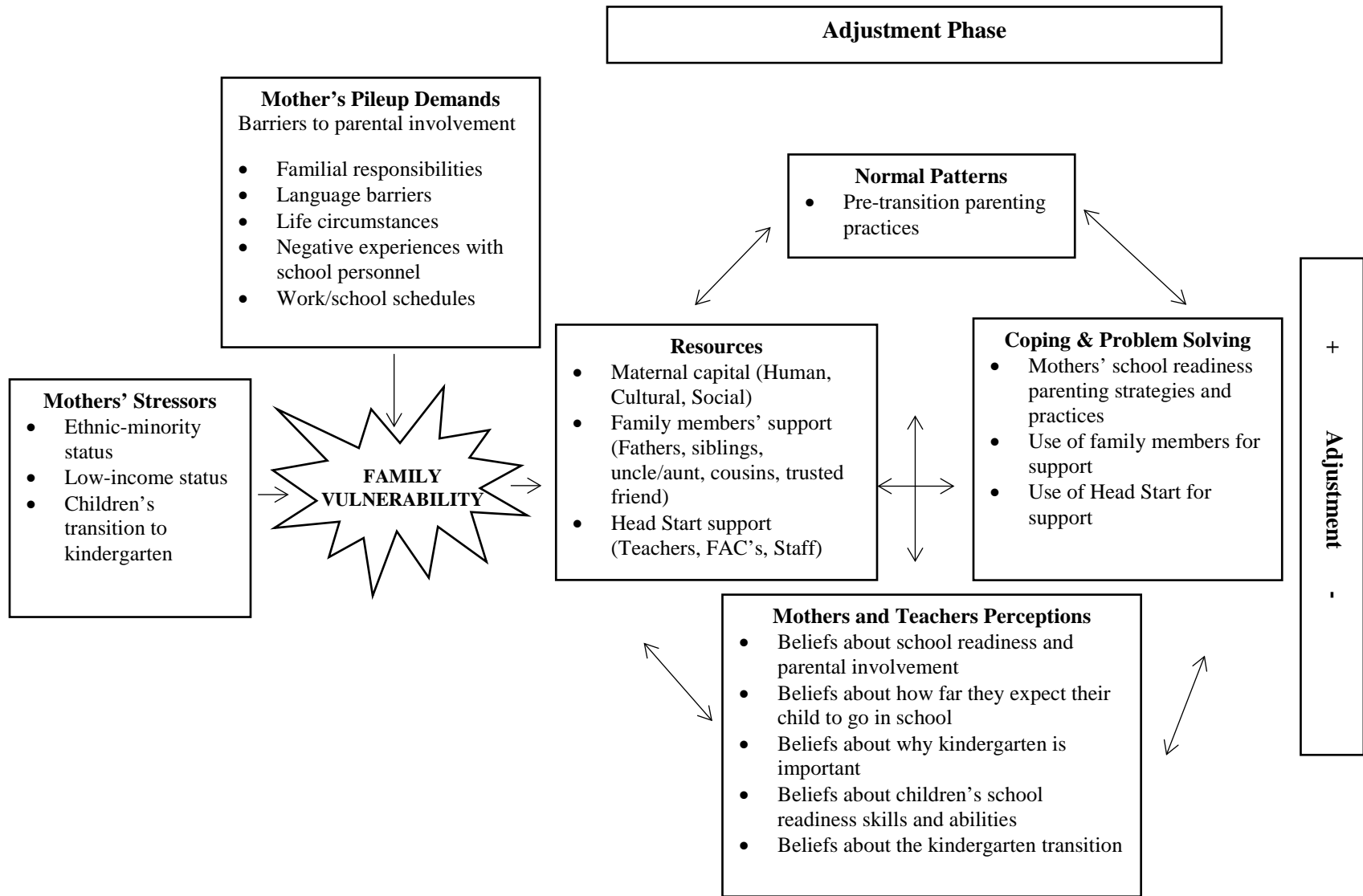
Mothers and preschool teachers provided similar suggestions when asked what could be done to help improve Latino children's transition to kindergarten. Both participants wanted to receive more information on the kindergarten transition from schools. However, mothers wanted to get more logistical information while teachers wanted to receive more content-specific information for what they should be teaching children. Teachers wanted to know what teachers expected children to know by the time they entered kindergarten and offered various suggestions for how that could be accomplished. Mothers and preschool teachers also agreed that school need to have bilingual teachers and staff available at each school. Findings suggest that mothers were aware that while Spanish-speaking staff were constantly available at Hazelwood, this would not be the case in their child's new school. Similarly, teachers were aware of the language barriers that Latina mothers faced, encouraging schools to have someone there to assist mothers who had low English proficiency. Lastly, mothers (but not teachers) suggested that preschools should be more rigorous and place more focus on academic skills. This belief reiterates mothers' understanding of school readiness as being mainly academically related.

Theoretical Contributions

This study adds to the discussion of family resilience. A family resiliency model of family stress, adjustment, and adaptation was used to conceptualize how Latina mothers of preschoolers in their daily lives utilize resources, problem solve, and engage with their children to facilitate academic success in kindergarten. The transition to kindergarten is acknowledged to be a critical developmental milestone for children and families, with potentially significant implications for later academic outcomes (Eckert et al., 2008). While it can be exciting, it can

also be a stressful times for families as they are now expected to manage changes in their physical surroundings (Dockett & Perry, 1999), changes in social interactions and expectations (Hamre & Pianta, 2001), and changes in the type of structure of learning environments (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). However, some researchers have argued that the transition to kindergarten may be even more stressful for low-income (immigrant) parents who face additional structural, economical, and language barriers (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Miller, 2015). This study focused on the components of the adjustment phase of the resiliency model, especially patterns of family life that facilitate mothers' promotion of children's readiness for the transition to kindergarten (See Figure 2). Due to the scope of this study, outcomes were not measured. Using firsthand insights from our interviews, we identified resiliency processes within Latino families.

Figure 2. Study Findings Incorporated into the Family Resiliency Model of Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation Model



For the low-income Latina mothers in the current study, background **stressors** included ethnic minority status, low socio-economic status, and children's transition to kindergarten. Patterson (1988) defined a stressor as a life event that occurs at a discrete point in time and produces or has the potential of producing change in the family system. He stated that stressors could be normative, anticipated changes associated with individual or family development over time. For our families, the transition to kindergarten was a normative and expected, yet challenging stressor. Our families were met with a number of pileup demands that included barriers to home and school involvement. Barriers include: (a) familial responsibilities (e.g., cooking, cleaning, spending time with partner); (b) language barriers (i.e., lack of English proficiency); (c) life circumstances (e.g., attending court, being fired from work); (d) negative experiences with school personnel (e.g., feeling that school personnel were insincere towards family); and (e) inflexible work/school schedules that impeded their ability to be involved in their child's education. All of these components made families and children more vulnerable to an unsuccessful transition to kindergarten.

However, mothers displayed resilience during this critical time through the use of multiple resources that facilitated coping and problem solving. Resources for this study constituted 1) family resources and 2) community resources. Family resources encompassed human, cultural, and social capital. We refer to human capital as the skills that mothers brought forth to help children successfully transition to kindergarten, including being highly motivated to be involved in their child's education and life, as well as being creative and active in the practices they engaged in. Cultural capital entailed forms of educational engagement derived from Latino cultural values and beliefs. These included *sacrificios* (sacrifices), *consejos* (advice), and *apoyo* (moral support) that all derive from *familismo*, a Latino cultural value that emphasizes strong family bonds and the expectation that the family provides instrumental and emotional support (Ramos, 2014). Finally, social capital refers to mothers' resource-seeking power to connect with others such as fathers, siblings, aunts/uncles, cousins, and trusted friends to further support children's kindergarten transition. Community-based resources included Head Start. Mothers proactively sought this resource for their children's educational development by utilizing support from preschool teachers, Family Assistance Coordinators (FACs), and other staff members. Mothers attended workshops and activities that provided information on the kindergarten transition.

Normal patterns are the pre-transitional parenting practices that were not addressed in the study. Family perception is the way that families assess their vulnerabilities. How they adjust to vulnerabilities is guided by how the family defines the severity of their situation. When the

situation is defined more positively, families are more likely to engage in positive problem-solving behaviors and strategies. Mothers acknowledged the various challenges (e.g., employment, language) associated with preparing their preschoolers for the transition to kindergarten. Yet they exhibited affirmative beliefs about their ability to promote children's development and success in kindergarten and beyond. First, mothers demonstrated efficacy in what they should do in relation to preparing their child for the transition to kindergarten. Although low educational attainment may have limited mothers' ability to be involved, mothers were highly involved in encouraging academic success through fostering open communication about the importance of an education. Mothers also recognized the importance of the kindergarten transition and believed that through their home-based efforts children would develop readiness skills that would allow them to be successful in kindergarten. In other words, mothers made involvement decisions based in part on their thinking about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement activities.

Mothers were also optimistic about their child's future. They had high hopes for their children and believed they would go far in school, completing college and attaining professional careers. For mothers in this sample, they saw children's success in formal schooling as important for their children's long-term personal, social, and economic development. Not only was getting a good education associated with occupational success, but it was also associated with more meaningful and satisfying work, greater happiness, and autonomy. Children's future achievements were not constrained by parents' low level of education: All mothers wanted a better life for their children. Through the various *intentional* school readiness skills they promoted and their home-based involvement activities, mothers were cognizant that it was all directed towards their children's educational success. Mothers also believed that Head Start, teachers, and staff could be their allies who could support the school readiness of their children.

While researchers and policymakers may contend that teachers expect less of families from low-income and other marginalized groups, teachers' perceptions of mothers were mostly positive. Teachers were aware of family needs (bilingual support) and barriers (low-income, transient). Teachers emphasized the importance of home-based involvement over school-based involvement, possibly taking into account the barriers they knew mothers would face. They acknowledged parents' attendance at parent meetings and participation with their children at home, while at the same time suggesting other activities to help enhance children's school readiness. Teachers wanted families as well as children to succeed in kindergarten; further, they saw that it was important for parents to understand that the transition to kindergarten impacted the whole family. Following the Framework for Effective Practice: Supporting School Readiness for

All Children, a culturally responsive framework that supports positive learning outcomes for all children, teachers emphasized the strengths of these Head Start families.

Applied Contributions

Our findings suggest the role that **Head Start** can play in supporting the transition of low-income Latino children and their families. Head Start can continue supporting resilient families like those in our study, who utilize Head Start and believe it is the reason why their children are prepared for kindergarten. For resilient families like those in our study, who utilize Head Start and believe that the reason why children are prepared for kindergarten is because they attended Head Start, Head Start can continue supporting families. They can also provide additional knowledge of instructional practices that are culturally appropriate to support children's transition to kindergarten. The study families have effective resource-seeking skills that allow them to identify institutional resources for their children's development like Head Start. We hypothesize that some eligible families who do not utilize Head Start lack strong resource-seeking skills and are unaware of Head Start as a child and family resource.

Mothers' accounts reveal highly motivated and engaged parents who should be considered as valued and respected partners in home-school collaborations. There is a great potential for children's successful transition when families' home activities and knowledge are included in school transition practices. Results from this study could help Head Start teachers and Head Start Family Assistance Coordinators (FACs) capitalize on and further enrich families' in-home activities that help children's transition to kindergarten. Head Start can help families work on school readiness competencies that are consonant with kindergarten teachers' expectations. Head Start can also help mothers whose children are exhibiting problem behaviors or academic challenges before transitioning to kindergarten. Although families and schools may differ on the competencies that children should have prior to kindergarten (Barbarin et al., 2008), families' are highly motivated and involved in their child's lives. Regardless of limited education and other structural and linguistic barriers, they engage in various school readiness activities that teachers can capitalize on by working together and having a dialogue about best practices that are culturally appropriate for families.

Early childhood education (ECE) programs, like Head Start are uniquely suited to fostering the development of various aspects of capital necessary for immigrant parents and young children (Vesely, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2013). Often, ECE is the first child and family institution with which immigrant parents have an ongoing and daily relationship, becoming a trusted entity in families' lives—more than any other child-and-family-related institution or organization (Vesely et al., 2013). Along the same lines, ECE programs care for children during

their youngest and more vulnerable years, providing parents with emotional, physical, and material support (e.g., diapers, baby food, clothing), creating an intimate relationship between families and ECE staff and teachers.

All children are eligible for Head Start if their families' incomes are below the poverty line, or if they are eligible for public assistance. Those in foster care or who experience homelessness are also eligible to apply regardless of income. However, despite high rates of eligibility, previous studies have found that Hispanic children, particularly children of immigrants, are less likely to enroll than their non-Hispanic peers (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2016). Participating in publicly funded early care and education programs can reduce or close the achievement gap between Latino children and their White peers. For example, research suggests that enrollment in a high-quality center-based prekindergarten program can support the short- and long-term development of low-income children (Deming, 2009). Evidence also suggests that positive impacts of attending preschool may be stronger for Hispanics than for children from other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). Thus, early childhood programs like Head Start will need to develop more outreach strategies to increase the number of Latino families who utilize and benefit from the educational resources provided. Below we provide some suggestions for how Head Starts may further increase enrollment at Hazelwood and similar suburban Head Starts.

Observations revealed that FACs placed flyers in restaurants, libraries, social media, Goodwill stores, and through participant referrals. However, additional efforts are needed to identify eligible families who are not using their programs. First, Head Start will need to utilize neighborhood outreach efforts that include collaborations with community organizations that likely serve low-income Latino families with preschoolers, such as free clinics and the Women, Infants, and Children's (WIC) nutrition program. Head Start can also visit the two low-income housing apartment complexes located in Florence and speak to the administrators about hosting events where Head Start staff, teachers, and FACs can come and recruit parents. Solicitation at community events (e.g., the district-sponsored Kindergarten Orientation) can also be another way to locate parents. Further, recruitment efforts should include educating families about the wide array of services for both children and adults and assisting families with the application process.

Findings from this study also support the importance of Head Start's parent involvement component and its success in engaging parents (Mendez, 2010). Additional support should be given to families that face multiple barriers. Parents can advocate for children's education through interactions with schools and teachers (Taylor et al., 2004). Head Start can help transitioning parents learn the U.S. scripts of parental involvement during the elementary school

years (McIntyre et al., 2007). This would be most valuable for mothers who are experiencing the transition for the first time. Opportunities for mothers to familiarize themselves with school expectations and overcome feelings of intimidation when interacting with teachers could include Head Start's mandatory monthly parent meetings. Parent meetings should also be a place where mothers can receive guidance in further developing parenting models and strategies to help their child succeed in school. Given the barriers reported in this study, Head Start staff should be aware that the dates/times that meetings are offered can hinder some parents' ability to attend. Thus, Head Start should be prepared to either offer the meetings at different times that accommodate parents and/or be ready to hold individual meetings with parents who are unable to attend due to work constraints.

Effective home-school collaborations promote children's successful transition to kindergarten, and Head Start can play a critical role in working with Latino families (Malsch et al., 2011). Prior to the transition, Head Start is knowledgeable of children's abilities and familial difficulties, and has more frequent and positive contact with parents than kindergarten schools (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). Because early childhood programs are often family-focused and family-friendly, Head Start can use this to their benefit by capitalizing on parents' existing school readiness and activities and further suggest culturally appropriate activities for families and children. For example, Head Start can suggest custom-made home-based preparation strategies that promote school readiness for each family. If a child is struggling with approaches to learning skills, Head Start can arrange strategies for families to do at home that help children acquire such skills. Head Start can also encourage parents to simulate school activities, such as doing homework as soon as children return from school, organizing children's backpack, visiting the school prior to kindergarten, and learning ways to communicate with teachers and staff.

In addition to capitalizing on parents' funds of knowledge, Head Start can also provide kindergarten transition materials and workshops for parents. Although parents in this study received information related to the kindergarten transition, they still wanted more. Providing this information in Spanish and in various methods (i.e., not just paper-based) will benefit parents with limited literacy abilities. For example, logistical information about kindergarten should be provided to parents. This can include deadlines for registration, paperwork parents need to bring to register their child, a list of supplies parents will need to purchase, important dates such as first day of kindergarten, and other related events. Head Start can also host a day where they help parents fill out registration paperwork. Providing a place to talk about the differences between preschool and kindergarten and what parents and children should expect is also suggested.

This research has implications for **elementary schools** as well. It provides insights on ways to forge home-school connections as children transition to kindergarten. Researchers have argued that schools should not devalue families' efforts, but build upon strengths and honor home cultures (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2012). When parental involvement practices and school readiness beliefs are based only on standardized assessments and comparisons to White middle-class families, schools may negatively label children's abilities and miss the contributions of highly motivated low-income Latino parents (Barbarin et al., 2008). As schools seek to promote family involvement, all families should be considered valued, respected, and contributing partners (Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis, 2012). Schools should use broad definitions of family involvement and engage all family members in school activities (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). Schools can also reach out to low-income Latino fathers who were found in this study to play a major role in children's school readiness (See Leavell et al., 2012).

This research also has implications for the teachers (preschool and elementary) who work with low-income Latino students. Effective teachers promote academic success by building on children's strengths and creating classrooms characterized by a familistic ethos of caring (Delpit, 2006). When teachers bring children's home experiences into the classroom, they develop bicultural children who can successfully move between home and school cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2008). Teachers can further enrich families' involvement and school readiness activities by building upon existing home activities. Schools can encourage families to read more by providing culturally appropriate and bilingual books, as many mothers noted that not finding Spanish books was not an easy task.

Children's successful transition to kindergarten hinges on the beliefs of parents and educators. Collaboration and dialogue between mothers, Head Start, and elementary schools are needed. This study illustrated that preschool teachers want a relationship with elementary schools. Providing a space where both educators meet to discuss expectations and beliefs are highly encouraged. Having the opportunity for preschoolers to visit kindergarten classrooms and experience "a day in kindergarten" is also advised.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations characterized this research. Mothers and preschool teachers were recruited from one community. Thus, the small sample is not representative, and the findings are not generalizable. Sample families were enrolled in Head Start, suggesting that they are the more resilient families in the community. Given the small sample size of mothers and preschool teachers, it's possible that we may have omitted the full range of participants' beliefs about

school readiness and missed some of the practices families use to facilitate children's transition to kindergarten.

Extending the current study, future research should comprise larger sample sizes and recruit from multiple suburban Head Starts. Latino families who do not utilize Head Start should also be recruited in order to determine if they differ in their beliefs and practices from families who do utilize Head Start. Future research endeavors will also include longitudinal interviews with mothers to shed light on how children actually fared in kindergarten and the role of family. For example, following families from preschool to kindergarten and beyond will help researchers understand the impact of pre-kindergarten family contributions, and how and why families' practices evolve in light of children's developmental changes. While there are some studies on the educational aspirations of children and their parents, relatively few focus on Latino parents and fewer focus on the aspirations of parents with very young children. Furthermore, there is little research using longitudinal data, and it is unclear whether immigrant parents remain optimistic or if their aspirations decline over time (with the exception of Goldenberg et al., 2001). Future research should focus on low-income Latino families with preschoolers and determine if parents' aspirations change as children mature and why. For example, Raleigh and Kao (2010) found that immigrant parents who maintain their home country's language have higher odds of holding consistently high college aspirations for their children. It's possible that differences in aspiration are a result of assimilation and acculturation.

Although our focus on mothers was justified, future research should gather more demographic data on other family members who help mothers, including fathers, siblings and extended kin. As our research indicates, fathers played an integral role in children's school readiness (Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). Even though Latinos make up the largest racial-ethnic minority group in the United States, we still know very little about Latino fathers' role in their children's education, particularly during early childhood. Most research on paternal involvement has focused on White fathers (Cabrera & Bradley, 2012; Campos, 2008; Parke et al., 2004). Studies have only begun to explore whether or not Latino fathers differ from White fathers in their paternal involvement (Hofferth, 2003; Toth & Xu, 1999; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001), and if immigrant acculturation shapes the roles they assume in their children's lives (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Taylor & Behnke, 2005). However, we do know that fathers' involvement in children's lives does benefit children. Research has demonstrated that fathers' involvement in children's lives can benefit children's academic and social development (Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, & Bámaca, 2006; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Plunkett,

Behnke, Sands, & Choi, 2009). Future studies should focus on the role that fathers play in young children's lives as they prepare for the transition to kindergarten.

Siblings also made key contributions to preschoolers' school readiness and the nature of their contributions should be considered more fully (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2017). Much of the research on Latino families highlights the key role of extended family in child socialization (Ryan et al., 2010). Our research expands on these discussions by documenting the role of neighborhood context and immigration patterns on families' access to extended kin. Future research can also include a focus on children. Our findings suggest a more critical consideration of the role of gender. More research is needed on differential beliefs about boys, and how this may influence parental practices as preschoolers transition to kindergarten.

Innovative research that includes participant observations of children as well as interviews with children would provide keen insights from their perspectives. Dockett and Perry (2003) gathered interview and questionnaire responses from 300 parents, 300 educators, and 300 children to describe their respective concerns as children transitioned to school in Australia. They found that children and adults experience the transition in different ways and raised different concerns. Likewise, the investigators found that children's positive dispositions about school were often associated with friends. Several children seemed to measure their success and happiness at school by whether or not they had friends. In this same study, children reported that they needed to be able to color properly, or know how to write all the letters of their name. Overall, this study suggests that in order to promote a successful start to school, educators must focus on the perspectives, experiences, and expectations of all involved in the process—and this includes children. More qualitative research on parental educational histories and their impact on current parental involvement practices and beliefs, including intergenerational processes, should also be examined.

Relatedly, detailed, in-depth interviews with Head Start teachers are also posited for future research. Preschool teachers in this study were interviewed for one hour, limiting the questions I was able to ask, as well as the depth of information received. Interviews with Family Assistance Coordinators (FACs) should also be examined in future research. My experience with Hazelwood illustrates that FACs play a significant role in providing support services to preschoolers and their families. FACs' responsibilities include: enhancing parents' role as the primary influence on their child's education and development, working with parents in identifying and achieving goals, and facilitating positive parent, school, and student relationships. They are also the ones who decide on the date/time of parent meetings and the content of these meetings. Thus, it is important to understand FACs' beliefs about the transition to kindergarten as

it has implications for the type of information parents receive. Similarly, it is important to better understand the relationship between FACs and families, as well as the relationship between FACs and teachers. Observations from Hazelwood revealed that teachers did not attend parent meetings. This can have implications if FACs and teachers are not on the same page regarding the information given to parents. For example, teachers can reinforce the information given at parent meetings by FACs while FACs can reinforce skills and practices that teachers deem important at the meetings.

Hayden (2003) posits that people see suburbs as a “site of promises, dreams, and fantasies.” Further research plans entail and examination of 1) how Latina mothers arrived at Florence and similar suburbs; 2) why they have decided to remain in these spaces; and 3) their view of suburbs. Suburbs have been framed as white heteronormative middle-class spaces composed of home-owning families with children who attend “good” schools and a place where crime is relatively non-existent (Carpio, Irazábal, & Pulido, 2011; Frasure-Yokley, 2015). However, little research exists on the experiences of marginalized Latino families who live in these spaces. This is important since 59% of immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos are now settling in suburbs rather than in cities (Lassiter & Niedt, 2013). Furthermore, the majority of research on neighborhood effects has focused on older children. Very young children’s interactions with their neighborhood contexts is mainly controlled by their parents (Leventhal, Dupéré, & Shuey, 2015), whereas in later childhood and adolescence, exposure to neighborhoods increases as youth gain autonomy and spend more time outside the home (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). More in-depth qualitative studies that examine Latino families’ transition beliefs, practices, and experiences from multiple suburban neighborhoods can highlight both the resources and the challenges of these settings.

Research on school readiness can contribute to neighborhood effects theories. Apart from Head Start, mothers did **not** utilize any other resource within the Florence suburb. Decades of research demonstrate a link between neighborhood residence and human development through the life course, from birth to death (Leventhal et al., 2015). In early childhood, neighborhood conditions matter for children in both the short- and long-term (Dupéré, Leventhal, & Crosnoe, & Dion, 2010). Leventhal et al. (2015) conceptualizes neighborhoods as a proximal social context in which children and families engage in a range of daily activities and interactions with individuals and with institutions that control access to opportunities and resources. Neighborhoods are a collection of individual families. However, people are not randomly assigned to neighborhoods. Parents have some degree of agency in selecting into certain neighborhoods with preexisting housing arrangements (Leventhal et al., 2015). However, this is constrained by their social class

position and the supply of institutions that support children's health and development, set by political and economic forces that individual families cannot control (García-Coll & Marks, 2009).

The study of neighborhoods continues to be on the types of neighborhoods identified by William Julius Wilson from his 1987 book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*: (a) geographically isolated, (b) urban neighborhoods that are high in poverty (over 40% of residents living below the poverty threshold), and (c) with high concentrations of minorities. Less work on suburban neighborhoods has been done. To my knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to focus on how low-income Latino families residing in a suburban neighborhood prepare their child for kindergarten in a suburban school. Although Florence is not a high-poverty neighborhood and does not have a high concentration of minorities, I would argue that Florence is geographically isolating for low-income Latino families.

While mothers lived in Florence, a wealthy suburb, mothers lived on the outskirts and were physically separated from middle class families and the larger community. The majority of mothers lived near the highway and in subsidized apartment complexes that were hidden away from the suburbs' main attractions. Once children enter elementary schools, mothers may also be socially isolated. Since Hazelwood children will now be attending school with the general Florence population, which is mainly White and middle-to-upper class, mothers may not have neighborly contacts or have the opportunity to routinely engage with other middle-class families. Similarly, mothers may feel isolated in the schools. At Hazelwood, there was always someone who spoke Spanish and all information was always given in the parents' native language. Unless the school is considered a dual-language school, the majority of schools in Florence do not have staff that is bilingual. Observations revealed that if parents needed assistance, that they would have someone call them when they had someone who spoke Spanish available. Florence teacher demographics data and observations show that once children enter school, the staff and teachers will mainly be White. For example, during the 2016-2017 academic year, 88% of teachers were White (2% were Hispanic). In addition to the possibility of mothers feeling isolated from the larger community and their child's schooling, Florence does not provide many culturally diverse locales. For example, while there are more Latino grocery stores in surrounding communities, Florence has two Latino grocery stores. The main library in Florence does not have anyone who speaks Spanish but does offer Spanish books, although limited, for adults and children.

A pathway through which neighborhoods might influence children's development is the quality of local institutional resources (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Young children spend a large share of their waking hours in neighborhood institutions. Childcare centers and preschools

are examples of such local institutions at the core of children's daily routines (Leventhal et al., 2015). Yet, the quantity, quality, diversity, and affordability of programs and resources at the neighborhood level are aspects of neighborhoods that are likely to be important for child development. Not only are childcare centers and preschools important resources offered (or not) by their neighborhoods, but also libraries and transportation. This study asked mothers and teachers about the types of resources available in their neighborhoods, a common approach used to capture the availability of institutional resources (Jarrett, 1999). Findings revealed that the only resource that mothers utilized in Florence was the Head Start. Few mothers in the sample reported going to the library. Mothers who reported going to the library and those who did not differed greatly: Mothers who utilized the library were born in the U.S., and spoke English fluently. When teachers were asked what resources they know that mothers used, teachers reported that mothers attend the Head Start parents meetings but besides that, they were unable to give another resource besides "maybe the library." Researchers have found that when it comes to achievement outcomes, economic and institutional resources during early childhood at the neighborhood level are thought to be particularly important (see Leventhal et al., 2015).

A further focus on social influences on school adjustment in the early years that uses conceptual frameworks to help develop preventions and interventions is needed. For example, Nettles (1991) reviewed the literature on community-based programs and identified four aspects of the community involvement process: (1) conversion, or the direct effects on student behavior (e.g., through media, role models); (2) allocation, or the removal of impediments to resources; (3) mobilization, or the active participation in community life and organizations of parents and other residents; and (4) instruction, or the community tutoring program, parental instruction, and informal educators. Although limited, researchers have examined school adjustment and neighborhood/social processes in early grades (see Nettles, Caughy, & O'Campo, 2008). However, research on the processes in early childhood education (preschool and kindergarten) in suburban neighborhoods is even more limited.

Sampson (2008) cited that immigrants tend to live in areas where the majority of residents are from the same home country, thus, the emergence of ethnic enclaves. He proposed that ethnic enclaves may be a source of positive interactions and networking among persons from the same cultural or ethnic background. There are signs that living in poor, predominantly Latin American or immigrant neighborhoods (i.e., enclaves or "barrios") serves as a protective factor for Latino children's development (see Leventhal et al., 2015). This proposition is linked to the Latino Paradox. The Latino Paradox refers to the observation that despite high levels of poverty and disadvantage, Latino children in the U.S. tend to have outcomes that are as good as or better

than that of White children, notably in terms of physical health, such as birth outcomes and mortality (Mason et al., 2011), but not necessarily achievement outcomes (e.g., Gonzalez, Germán, & Fabrette, 2012). This relative advantage is especially pronounced among those living in co-ethnic neighborhoods characterized by high Latino-American concentrations and traditional collective values oriented toward the family (Becares et al., 2012; Gonzalez et al., 2011). Various explanations are provided as to why living in a Latino-American enclave may confer benefits for Latino youth, despite the fact that these neighborhoods are typically poor.

1. Although poor, these neighborhoods do not experience many of the challenges experienced by poor African-American neighborhoods. Specifically, many have relatively high levels of employment and married families, along with low levels of crime and violence (Sampson, 2012).
2. These neighborhoods are thought to be socially cohesive around a set of traditional values associated with *familismo* (Estrada-Martinez et al., 2013). For example, Gonzalez et al. (2012) found that among Mexican-American families in a southwestern metropolitan area, Latino enclaves served a buffering role for children's social, emotional, and behavioral functioning (Gonzalez et al., 2011).

The access to information on housing, employment, and educational opportunities is more easily facilitated in ethnic enclaves. For families who do not live in ethnic enclaves, such as the participants in this study, it's possible that the type of information they receive from extended kin or neighbors who share the same race/ethnicity is non-existent. Observations revealed that while there was a large number of Latino families at Hazelwood who had a child transitioning and whose children may be classmates in kindergarten, families did not engage with one another. Many of the Hazelwood families also lived in the same apartment complex, yet did not know one another. It is important to note that while mothers did live in Florence, a wealthy suburb, they mainly resided in the outskirts of town, where the two low-income housing apartment complexes containing 229 subsidized apartments are located. Future research will offer insights on the resources that Latino families have access to in suburban neighborhoods, as well as the challenges they experience as children transition to elementary school.

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Appendix A: Parent Demographic Form

1. Name of Mother/Guardian (first, last): _____
2. Home Address: _____ State: _____
Zip code: _____
3. Name of neighborhood where you currently live: _____
4. How long have you lived in this neighborhood? _____
5. Home Phone Number (home): _____
6. Cell Phone Number (cell): _____
7. Age of Mother/caregiver (years): _____
8. Ethnicity/Race (*Please check all that apply*):
 - African-American
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - White/Caucasian
 - Hispanic/Latino/a
 - Native American/Alaska Native
 - Other (*please specify*): _____
9. Gender (*please check one*):
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other (*please specify*): _____
10. Current marital status (*Please check one*):
 - Married
 - Cohabiting
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
 - Separated
 - Never married

11. Education Level (*please check one*):

- Some high school
- High school graduate/GED
- Some college
- Bachelor's Degree (please specify): _____
- Master's Degree (please specify): _____
- Doctorate or Professional Degree (please specify): _____

12. In what country did you complete your education?

High school: _____ College: _____

13. What is your annual household income (*please check one*):

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000- \$19,000
- \$20,000-\$29,000
- \$30,000-\$39,000
- \$40,000-\$49,000
- More than \$50,000

14. What do you do for a living? _____

15. Do you receive any of the following (*Please check all that apply*):

- WIC
- TANF
- SSI
- LINK
- SNAP
- Medicaid
- Other: _____

Home Demographics

1. What is your native language?

- Spanish
- English
- Other (*please specify*): _____

2. What language is spoken primarily at home? _____

3. How many children do you have? *(Please provide name, age, and sex of each child)*

Child Name #1 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Child Name #2 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Child Name #3 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Child Name #4 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Child Name #5 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Child Name #6 _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

4. How many people are currently living in your household, including yourself?

_____ Total number of people

Mothers/caregiver: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Appendix B: Preschool Teacher Demographic Form

All information will be kept confidential

1. Name (first, last): _____ Age: _____ Date: _____
2. Home Address: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____
3. Home Phone Number (home) : _____
4. Cell Phone Number (cell) :
5. Position at Hazelwood: _____
6. Number of Years at Hazelwood _____ Number of Years in this Position: _____
7. Ethnicity/race of children in your classroom (*please indicate the number for each group*):
 - a. African-American: _____
 - b. Asian/Pacific Islander: _____
 - c. White/Caucasian: _____
 - d. Hispanic/Latino/a : _____
 - e. Native American/Alaska Native: _____
 - f. Other (*please specify*): _____

Your Education

1. Highest Grade Completed: _____
2. College(s) Attended: _____
Years of Attendance: _____ Degree: _____ Major: _____

College(s) Attended: _____
Years of Attendance: _____ Degree: _____ Major: _____

College(s) Attended: _____
Years of Attendance: _____ Degree: _____ Major: _____

3. Number of Children in your Family: _____ Age(s): _____

4. What is your Ethnicity/Race (Please circle all that apply):

- a. African-American
- b. Asian/Pacific Islander
- c. White/Caucasian
- d. Hispanic/Latino/a
- e. Native American/ Alaska Native
- f. Other (*please specify*): _____

5. **What is your annual income (*please check one*):**

- a. \$20,000-\$29,000
- b. \$30,000-\$39,000
- c. \$40,000-\$49,000
- d. \$50,000-\$59,00
- e. \$60,000-\$69,00
- f. \$70,000-\$79,00
- g. \$80,000-\$89,00
- h. \$90,000-\$100,000
- i. Over \$100,000

6. **Marital Status (*Please circle one*):**

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Engaged
- d. Living together (not married)
- e. Separated
- f. Divorced

Appendix C: Parent Interview Protocol

Introduction: Today I would like to talk with you about what it will be like for your child to start kindergarten. People have different ideas about what happens before and after children start school. I would like to hear what your experiences getting your child ready for school have been. Just a reminder, you do not have to do these interviews if you do not wish to. Are you ready to begin? May I turn the tape recorder on? CHECK OFF EACH QUESTION.

I. Introduction

1. For someone who doesn't know you, what kind of parent would you say you are?
2. For someone who doesn't know (child's name), how would you describe him/her?

II. Parent's Role in Getting Children Ready for School

1. What does school readiness mean to you?
2. How would you describe a child who is ready for school?
3. How would you describe a child who is **not** ready for school?
4. In your opinion, what are the reasons that some children are ready for school?
5. In your opinion, what are the reasons some children are **not** ready for school?
6. What would you say are the skills and abilities that are most important for (name of child) to learn before starting kindergarten?
7. What specific things does your child have to learn before starting kindergarten because (child's name) is a girl/boy?
8. On a scale from 1-10, how ready would you say (child's name) is for kindergarten?
Probe: Explain your rating.
Probe: What things does your child do that tells you that he/she is ready for school?
Probe: What things does your child do that tells you that she/he is not ready for school?
9. What are some of the things that you are doing to help (child's name) prepare for kindergarten?
10. Who are some of the other people helping you get (child's name) ready for kindergarten? **Probe: Fathers, grandmothers, siblings, community adults**
11. What is (name of person) doing to help you get (child) ready for kindergarten?

III. Preschool Preparation

1. As a parent, what do you think preschool programs like **Hazelwood** should do to prepare children for kindergarten? **Probe: skills and abilities**
2. On a scale from 1-10, how well would you say **Hazelwood** prepared (name of child) for kindergarten? **Probe: Why did you choose that score?**
3. What have been some of the positive ways that **Hazelwood** prepared (name of child) for kindergarten? **Probe: skills, abilities**
4. What are the things that you would change about how **Hazelwood** prepared (name of child) for kindergarten? **Probe: skills, abilities that children did not learn**
5. What did **Hazelwood** do to help you decide on a kindergarten for _____ (name of child)? **Probe: school information, tours, advice, etc.**
6. What did you expect **Hazelwood** to do to help you find a kindergarten for _____ (name of child)?
7. As a parent, how have you been involved in activities at **Hazelwood**?

IV. The Kindergarten Setting

1. Tell me about the school (child's name) is going to for kindergarten.
Probe: What is the name of the school?
Probe: What is the address of the school?
2. How did you decide to send (child's name) to _____ School?
Probe: What do like about _____ School?
Probe: What would you change about _____ School?
3. What type of contact have you had with the school (child's name) is going to? **Probe: conversations, meetings, visits, summer program for children**
4. How is _____ School helping you to get (name of child) ready for kindergarten?
5. What have you told (name of child) about going to kindergarten?
6. When you have questions about sending (child's name) to kindergarten, who do you talk to?
7. Will you please give me some examples where you asked someone a question about (name of child) starting kindergarten?
8. Where do you go in the neighborhood when you have questions about getting (child's name) ready for school?

9. Will you give me an example of a time you went or will go somewhere in the neighborhood to get help with a question about kindergarten?
10. What are the resources that your neighborhood has to help parents and children get ready for kindergarten? **Probe: activities, programs, libraries**

V. Kindergarten Preparation: School/Teacher's Role in Getting Children Ready for School

1. Now that (name of child) is going to kindergarten, what kinds of things do think the kindergarten teacher will expect him/her to know and do? **Probe: skills, abilities**
2. How well do think (child's name) will meet these expectations?
3. How well do you think (child's name) will do in kindergarten (i.e., grades, behavior?)
4. In your opinion, why is it important for (child's name) to do well in kindergarten?
5. Knowing your child as you do, how far do you think your child will go in school?
6. What does (child's name) need to do in order to get that far?
7. What do you have to do as a parent to help (child's name) get that far?
8. What do schools and teachers have to do to help your child get that far?
9. What are the things that can stand in the way or keep (child's name) from going that far in school?

VI. Early Educational Experiences (Adults)

1. Growing up, what was school like for you?
2. How would you describe your relationship with teachers?
3. How would you describe your relationship with other students?
4. How would you describe yourself as a student?
5. What did you like about school?
6. What did you dislike?

7. Describe how your parents/family members were involved in your education when you were in elementary school.
8. What stories did your parents tell about how it was for them going to school when you were growing up?
9. What kind of differences do you think exist between the education system in your home country to the education system here in the United States? (*Only if their early educational experiences were not in the U.S.*).
10. How are parents involved in their child's education in your home country compared to here in the United States? (*Only if their early educational experiences were not in the US*).
11. Is there anything you would want to change about your early school experience?
12. What advice did your parents give you about school when you were younger?

VII. Kindergarten Recommendations

Before we end, I would like you to imagine yourself in an advisory role that has the power to make changes that will help prepare children to get ready for the transition to kindergarten and to be successful.

1. What advice would you give to **preschools** that prepare children for kindergarten?
2. What advice would you give to the **schools and kindergarten teachers** that children will be going to?
3. What kinds of **community resources** would you say that parents of preschoolers need to get them ready for kindergarten?
4. Is there any other information that you would like to share with me that you think is important in getting children ready for kindergarten?

Closing: Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview with me!

Appendix D: Preschool Teacher Interview Protocol

Name of Teacher/Date: _____

Introduction: *Thank you for seeing me today. I know how busy you are. I would like to talk with you about school readiness. As Head Start teachers, you all have experiences and information on this topic. We will cover several areas, including the meaning of school readiness, your thoughts and ideas about your role in children's development, and the role of families, communities, preschools, and elementary schools in facilitating children's transition to school.*

Opening

1. What is your position here?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. For someone who doesn't know you, how would you describe yourself as a teacher?

Meaning of School Readiness: I want to begin with the role of teachers and schools in children's transition to school.

1. School readiness is a term that is widely used by many people. What does school readiness mean to you?
2. When you think about a child who is ready for school, how would you describe him or her?
3. When you think about a child who is **not** ready for school, how would you describe him or her?
4. In your opinion, what are the factors that lead a child to be ready for school?
5. What are the factors that lead a child not to be ready for school?

Teacher Beliefs and Practices

1. As a teacher, tell me about your thoughts and ideas for working with **Latino** children who are getting ready for kindergarten?
2. What would you say is your philosophy regarding the best way to work with **Latino** children in order to support their development, their growth?
3. In your opinion, what are the skills and abilities that are **most** important for **Latino** children to be successful in kindergarten?
4. What skills would you say are **less** important?
5. How does your school assess if a child is ready for kindergarten?
6. What type of curriculum do you use to promote children's development?

7. What would you say are the strengths of this curriculum?
8. What would you like to change about this curriculum? **Probe:** Managing differences
9. How does the curriculum that you use relate to any national, state, and local standards regarding what children should learn in preschool? **Probe:** Managing differences

School Readiness and Families: Now, I would like to shift our discussion to the role of families and school readiness.

1. As a teacher, what do you think **Latino** families of children transitioning to kindergarten should do to prepare them?
Probe: Home activities, practices
2. How would you say **Latino** parents in this Head Start are doing in preparing children for school?
3. What are the **resources** that you have observed families to have to prepare children for school?
4. What are the **challenges** that you have observed that families face in preparing their children for school?
Probe: Work schedules
Probe: Language barriers
Probe: Cultural differences
5. How would you say your definition of school readiness compares to **Latino** parents' definition of school readiness?
Probe: Skills and abilities
Probe: Managing differences
6. In your Head Start program, how are **Latino** parents involved in children's transition to kindergarten?
Probe: Strategies for involving parents
7. In your Head Start program, what do you think are some of the barriers for **Latino** parents to be involved in their child's education?
Probe: Work schedules
Probe: Language barriers
Probe: Cultural differences

School Readiness and Role of Elementary Schools: We've covered several important topics. The next topic relates to the role of elementary schools and school readiness.

1. As a Head Start teacher, what do you think local elementary schools can do to aid in the process of preparing preschool-aged children for school?
2. How would you say that the elementary schools in this neighborhood are doing in helping to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten?

3. What have been some of the positive contributions of local elementary schools in preparing children for the transition to kindergarten?
4. What are the challenges that you have observed in the elementary schools in the neighborhood as they work with preschool children who are preparing for the transition to kindergarten?
5. What have been your experiences with children in your classroom as they transition into kindergarten?
6. What are the specific things that you would like to see elementary schools do to help you in the process of preparing children to be successful in elementary school?

Community Context and School Readiness: Some people think that it is important to understand the larger community and how it impacts school readiness, and I would like to ask some questions about the community.

1. What would say are the important resources that the **Florence area** has to promote the school readiness of the children who live here?
Probe: Institutions, programs
2. What would you say are the barriers in this neighborhood that keep children from being ready for kindergarten?
3. What do you think should be done to lessen neighborhood barriers to children's ability to be ready for school?
Probe: Who plays a role in lessening the barriers?

Collaborations: Barriers and Facilitators: Now we will be talking about the things that stand in the way of preschools such as Head Start partnering with families and schools, and we will be talking about the things that help preschools to partner with families and schools.

1. In your opinion, what are the things that stand in the way of preschools such as Head Start partnering with elementary schools?
2. What are the things that promote partnerships between preschools such as Head Start and elementary schools?
3. In your opinion, what are the things that stand in the way of preschools such as Head Start partnering with families of children about to enter kindergarten?
4. What are the things that promote partnerships between preschools such as Head Start and families of children about to enter kindergarten?

Recommendations: Before we end, I would like you to imagine yourself in an advisory role that has the power to make changes that will help prepare children in this neighborhood get ready for the transition to school. In particular, we will call upon you to offer recommendations that bring families, preschools, and schools together to help prepare children for kindergarten.

1. On the note card in front of you, please write down the two or three most important things needed to help families, preschools, and schools work together?
2. What other insights would you like to share that you think are important to better understanding school readiness that we have not covered?

Closing/Thank you for your time!

Appendix E: Photo Elicitation Instructions

Pictures are a wonderful and fun way to get a better sense of what you and your family are doing to get _____ (name of child) ready for kindergarten during a typical week. We are interested in this information because it will help us better develop programs to meet the needs of families like yours and for preschoolers who will be transitioning to kindergarten.

I would like you to use this camera to take pictures of a typical week for your preschooler. As best as you can, please take pictures that represent what you are doing to get _____ (name of child) ready for kindergarten. We would like you to take pictures for a full week (7 days). So for example, if you start taking pictures on Wednesday, then you would take pictures until the next Wednesday.

You may take pictures at home and any other place that you spend time as you help your child get ready for kindergarten. The pictures should give a view of what you think is important for your child to succeed in kindergarten. You can also have others who are with you throughout the week take pictures of you and your child.

Important

As a way of showing respect, please ask permission to photograph anyone other than your children. Sometimes, people may have private reasons for not wanting to have their pictures taken.

Instructions for Using Disposable Cameras

1. Remove the camera from the box. It will be sealed in a foil wrapper.
2. Remove the foil wrapper.
3. Turn the film advance wheel to the right to wind the film to the first exposure.
4. Press the flash button on the left side of the camera. You should hear a faint noise indicating the flash is starting up. When the flash is ready, you will see an orange light in the round hole next to the words "Flash Ready Light".
5. When the flash is ready, stand 4 to 15 feet from the object that you are photographing. Use the square window to aim the camera.
6. When you are ready to take the picture, press the gray button on top, right side of the camera.
7. Be sure that the flash is ready when taking ALL pictures (indoors and outdoors).

Appendix F: Photo Elicitation Interview Protocol

INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS:

_____ Complete photo consent form-Give participant a copy of form

_____ Complete demographic form

_____ [Number each photo on the back and indicate the number in the taped interview]

FOR EACH PHOTO ASK:

1. Who are the people in the photo?
 - a. What is their relationship to you?
 - b. Tell me about the people in the photo.
2. Where is the location of this photo (get addresses)?
 - a. How would you describe the setting?
3. Tell me about what is going on in the photo [Describe this activity]?
 - a. How is this helping _____ (name of child) get ready for school?
 - b. What ability/skill is this activity helping _____ (name of child) with as he/she prepares for kindergarten?
 - c. Why is this important for _____ (name of child) to do?
4. What was the time period of this activity (hour):
 - a. Day/date
 - b. Duration (how long engaged in this activity)

NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS:

We want to get a **lot of descriptive detail in participants' own words**. Be sure to have participants talk about the location/setting. For example, if there is a picture of a library or store, find out about the library, the store.