The Dallas Preschool Readiness Project

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At least half of the achievement gap between rich and poor children \textit{starts before kindergarten}. 
Race/ethnic disparities

- 42% of Hispanic kindergarteners are in the lowest quartile of reading skills.
- Race/ethnic disparities persist
  - Particularly for children from the poorest homes
Deficits in self regulation skills have been considered a prime explanation for associations between childhood poverty and disparities in school readiness and early academic achievement (Raver, 2012).
Dallas Preschool Readiness Project
Funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

407 preschoolers enrolled at age 2½ yrs (2009-10)
- 183 African American, 224 Latino
- 82% below federal poverty line
  - 55% of African American families and 14.8% of Latino families reported household incomes < 50% poverty line
- 15% of African American and 43% of Latino caregivers with < high school education
- 73% of Latino caregivers foreign-born
  - 75% Spanish-speaking
Snack Delay

Child told not to touch M&M until bell rings

4 trials (10s, 20s, 30s, 15s)

Latency to touch/eat the snack
Wrapped Gift Task:
Early evidence of disparities in self control

Caughy, Owen, & Hurst, 2016
Kochanska, Murray, & Harlan, 2000
Shape Stroop

testing the children’s ability to repress a more dominant response

“Show me the baby grapes”
At 30 mos., the children were ~8 mos. behind more affluent peers in early self-regulation skills.
More physical aggression at 2½, 3 ½, K & G1 related to more household risk factors (stress) at every age.

Many differences in risk factors within DPReP’s sample of children at risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>% of cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>&lt; high school</td>
<td>29.7%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>&lt; 50% federal poverty</td>
<td>33.4%*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family structure</td>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>17.2%*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>≥ 3 children/adult</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household change</td>
<td>Primary caregiver between T1 &amp; T2</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner changes between T1 &amp; T2</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moves once or more bet. T1 &amp; T2</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood safety</td>
<td>One or more safety concerns</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver depression</td>
<td>Above clinical cutoff at Time 1</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
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</tbody>
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*Significant differences between race/ethnic groups
Different patterns of risk and stress

• Related to race/ethnicity
• Related to nativity of Latina mothers
  – Foreign-born Latina mothers have fewer psychosocial risks than U.S.-born Latina, white, and black mothers (Fragile Families & Child Well-being study sample)
    • Less family instability
    • Few depressive symptoms
  -National Research Center of Hispanic Children & Families, 2017

• And stressors related to changing policies & uncertainties
Prevention & Intervention

• Delayed early self-regulation abilities
  – 8 mos. delayed by age 2½
• 1 SD below mean of normed standardized tests of school readiness at 3½ years
Prevention & Intervention

The quality of parenting matters.

• Good outcomes and growth-promoting parent-child relationships found for some, despite multiple risks
  – More positive child outcomes associated with engaged, child-oriented parenting
Prevention & Intervention

A need for efforts that will support responsive, engaged parenting and help diminish intrusive/demanding parenting


Lessons learned?

• Myriad stressors, changing stressors, and need for supports found among families
• The power of positive, supportive parent-child interactions
• Helping to support developing ingredients of self regulation: attention, self-control, working memory,…
• Deficits in families’ engagement with their children’s school
  – Barriers?
  – How can we nurture engagement?
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THANKS to our participating families!!

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