

Associations of Parent Ratings of Children's Behavior with Child Development in an Ethnically and Linguistically Diverse Sample of Preschool Children¹

Julieta Lugo-Gil,² Yange Xue,² Cheri Vogel,² Elaine Hill,² John M. Love,² Deanna Gomby,³ and Deborah Parrish⁴

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Parents' views of and goals for their children's achievement are important for children's early development and later school success.
- Few studies consider how parents' perceptions of their children's behavior are associated with direct assessments and teacher ratings of development of preschool children from ethnically and linguistically diverse families.
- To address these gaps, we investigate the following:
 - Differences in parent ratings of children's behavior across child characteristics, type of program, and geographic areas.
 - Associations between parent ratings of their children's behavior and child cognitive and social-emotional development.

SAMPLE

- We examined a sample of 1,586 children in 98 preschools in a large metropolitan area.
- 31% speak English only, 13% speak Spanish only, and 56% speak some English and another language.
- 28% attend study centers full-day and 57% are in Areas of Greatest Need (AGN)—Defined by need for preschool slots in 34 zip codes.
- 38% of the families live below the poverty line.
- 66% of mothers and 61% of fathers have a high school diploma.

MEASURES

Direct Assessments (Baseline)

- Language and Literacy: Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test-English Edition and Spanish Bilingual Edition scaled together (referred henceforth as EOWPVT).
- Woodcock-Johnson III Spelling Standard Score (WJ-III)
- Executive Functioning (Pencil Tapping) Score

Teacher Ratings of Child Behavior and Development

- Social-emotional: Social Skills Rating System Problem Behavior Score (SSRS)

ECLS-K Approaches to Learning Scale Score

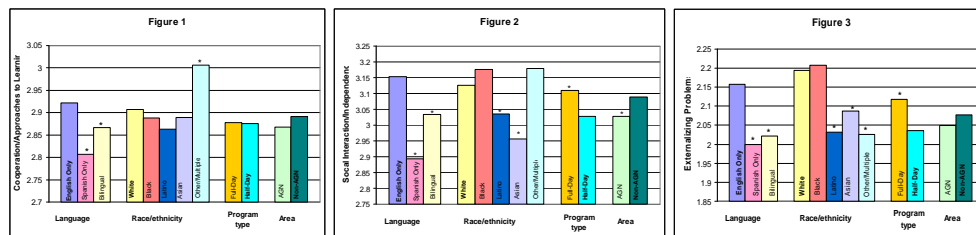
Parent Ratings of Child Behavior and Development

- Adaptation of the Preschool Kindergarten Behavior Scales (Merrell, 2002) using Rasch Analysis to construct four scales of parent ratings (range= 1-4):

- Social Cooperation/Approaches to Learning (alpha = .80)
- Social Interaction/Independence (alpha = .80)
- Externalizing Problem Behaviors (alpha = .80)
- Internalizing Problem Behaviors: (alpha = .58)

FINDINGS

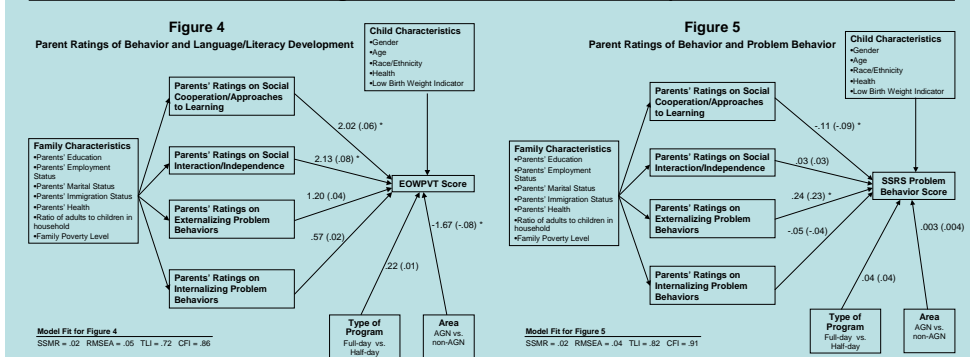
Differences in Means of Parent Ratings of Child Behavior across Subgroups



NOTE: Comparison groups are indicated in bold. These tests of unadjusted means account for clustering of children within preschool programs.

* Statistically different at the .05 level.

Associations between Parent Ratings of Child Behavior and Child Development



NOTE: These models were estimated using Full Information Maximum Likelihood in M-Plus to account for missing data. Figures present unstandardized and standardized (in parentheses) coefficients. Unanalyzed associations between family and child characteristics, program type, and geographic area are not depicted in the figure but were included in the estimation of the models. Those estimates and estimates of associations of family and child characteristics with parent ratings and measures of child development are available from the authors upon request.

* Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Differences in Means of Parent Ratings (unadjusted for child and family characteristics)

- Parent ratings on cooperation/approaches to learning were significantly lower for Spanish only and Bilingual groups than for the English only group, and significantly higher for the Other/Multiple race/ethnicity group than for the White group (Figure 1).
- We also found significant differences in parent ratings on social interaction/independence by language, race/ethnicity (Latino and Asian lower than White), type of program (Full-day higher than half-day), and geographic area (AGN lower than non-AGN) (Figure 2).
- Differences in parent ratings on externalizing behaviors were significant by language, race/ethnicity (Latino, Asian, and Other/Multiple fewer than White), and program type (Figure 3).
- Finally, we also tested differences in means for parent ratings on internalizing behaviors. We found significant differences by language (Spanish only higher than English only) and race/ethnicity (Black lower than White).

Path Analysis: Associations of Parent Ratings with Child Development

- We found significant, positive associations of parent ratings on social cooperation/approaches to learning and social interaction/independence with EOWPVT scores (Figure 4).
- Parent ratings of social cooperation/approaches to learning are associated with fewer teacher-reported problem behaviors (SSRS) and parents' ratings of externalizing behaviors are associated with more teacher-reported problem behaviors (Figure 5).
- We also examined associations of the parent rating scales with other measures of child development, which yielded the following significant findings. Parent ratings on:
 - Social cooperation/approaches to learning are positively associated with WJ-III scores and ECLS-K Approaches to Learning Scores.
 - Externalizing behaviors are negatively associated with Executive Functioning and ECLS-K Approaches to Learning Scores.

- Although statistically significant, the associations between parent ratings of behavior and child development are small.

CONCLUSIONS

- Parents from different ethnic backgrounds use ratings differently.
- Additional support is found for the protective factor of positive social-emotional skills for the development of children's language and cognition.
- After adjusting for parent and child characteristics, there is a small, significant relationship between parent ratings of child behavior at home and teacher-reported behavior in the classroom (as rated by teachers after less than two months of contact).