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

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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—Defined by need for preschool slots in 34 zip codes.
• 38% of the families live below the poverty line.
• 46% of mothers and 61% of fathers have a high school diploma.

DIFFERENCES IN MEANS OF PARENT RATINGS OF CHILD BEHAVIOR ACROSS SUBGROUPS

FIGURE 1

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.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARENT RATINGS OF CHILD BEHAVIOR AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

FIGURE 2

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.

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).

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