

A Strengths-Based Approach to Examining Supports for Self-Regulation Skills of Latino Children Raised in Poverty
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Project Description

This project seeks to examine the parenting practices in toddlerhood and teaching practices in preschool that support the development of low-income Latino children's self-regulation. Despite broad consensus in the literature that self-regulation positively supports early academic achievement, little prior research has uncovered the strategies that support self-regulation development in Latino children growing up in poverty. Grounded in a theoretical framework that recognizes heterogeneity within the Latino experience, the project will examine relations between adult practices and child self-regulation, focusing on whether the strength of these relations varies by demographic and child characteristics.

Research Questions

1. Does parenting sensitivity predict Latino toddlers' self-regulation when accounting for socioeconomic status, child age, and child sex?
2. Does the strength of the relation between parent sensitivity and Latino toddlers' self-regulation vary for English and Spanish-speaking parents?
3. What are the effects of a self-regulation curriculum on the academic performance of Latino children who enter preschool with differing levels of self-regulation?

Sample

The sample for the analyses of questions related to the relation between parenting sensitivity and self-regulation development consists of 124 Latino parent-child dyads recruited through Early Head Start agencies. Mothers in the study had, on average, attained a high school diploma or GED and 39% of them spoke English as their primary language. The sample for the analyses of questions related to the relation between receipt of a self-regulation curriculum and self-regulation development consists of 216 Latino preschoolers recruited from Head Start centers. About a third were English dominant.

Methods

This project will draw on two large, rich datasets and will be completed in two different phases.

Phase I: In the first phase of the project, which is currently underway, we examined whether treatment effects of a self-regulation curriculum on academic achievement and oral language development varied for Latino children who entered preschool with differing levels of baseline self-regulation. We conducted multi-level regressions, nesting children within center, controlling for baseline academic achievement and oral language. We are currently conducting sensitivity analyses to complement those main analyses.

Phase II: In the second phase of the project, which will begin in the summer of 2018, we will examine the relation between parenting practices and Latino children's self-regulation. We will conduct regression analyses controlling for demographic characteristics to estimate the extent to which parenting predicts self-regulation. We will then conduct follow-up analyses examining whether the strength of the relation between parenting practices and children's self-regulation varies for English- versus Spanish-dominant parents.

Progress Update

Data collection for both datasets is complete. Initial findings from analyses examining the effect of the receipt of a self-regulation curriculum suggested that there were positive average effects in academic outcomes measured in English and oral language outcomes measured in Spanish. Our Phase I analyses further revealed that positive treatment effects were larger for children who entered preschool with lower self-regulation skills than their peers. Probing of moderation effects showed that children who started the preschool year with low self-regulation and received the self-regulation curriculum ended the preschool year with academic and oral language skills similar to their better regulated peers, whereas children who started the preschool year with low self-

regulation and were enrolled in control classrooms ended the preschool year with lower academic and oral language skills than their better regulated peers. In other words, the self-regulation curriculum closed the achievement gap between children with high and low self-regulation skills, effectively supporting early academic development for children at-risk for negative educational outcomes.

Implications for policy/practice

Developing a better understanding of the ways in which Latino parenting supports children's self-regulation development will help practitioners working with Latino families identify parenting practices that can be targeted through parent-practitioner interactions to support children's development. Moreover, the study will reveal whether parenting support should be adapted for parents whose primary language is Spanish. Findings from this project will also support programmatic decision making at Head Start centers by revealing whether a self-regulation curriculum positively supports academic and oral language development for Latino preschoolers.

Implications for research

This study advances the field's knowledge of the multiple ways in which practices in the home and in the classroom can support Latino children's self-regulation.

For more information

Daneri, M. P. & Blair, C. (in preparation). Effect of the Tools of the Mind Prekindergarten Program on the school readiness of English language learners in Head Start: Average effects and moderation by baseline self-regulation skills.

https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/ihdsc/neuroscience_lab

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