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Title: Academic and behavioral functioning of Hispanic English Language Learners from Immigrant Families

Text: Youth from Hispanic immigrant backgrounds comprise a substantial and growing portion of the population of schoolchildren in the United States. In addition to greater socioeconomic disadvantage, immigrant English Language Learners (ELL) experience a number of academic and behavioral adjustment difficulties related to problems with communication and keeping up with academic demands. ELL students have also been found to experience lower quality teacher-child relationships. Given research demonstrating an association between teacher-child relationships and student academic achievement, lower quality relationships for ELL students are likely to have negative impact on those students' academic progress in school.

The present study sought to explore the role of Hispanic immigrant ELL status in behavioral functioning, academic functioning, and teacher-child relationships. Data from the present study were drawn from a larger study examining a school-based universal prevention program. Twelve schools in high-risk urban communities

participated in a three-year study; 637 third grade students in the first year of the study were recruited to provide data in the spring of the school year for three years (third through fifth grade). Teachers completed surveys of students' 1) disruptive behavior (aggression, oppositional/defiant behavior, conduct problems, inattention, and impulse control problems), 2) academic functioning, and 3) teacher-student relationships. Data were collected from schools and parents on children's English language proficiency and language status. Seventy-three students were identified as ELL, meaning they had little or no proficiency in English language. Structural Equations Modeling using Amos™ was used to test relationships between ELL status and disruptive behavior problems, academic functioning, and teacher-child relationships. Model fit indices were above .95 for NFI and CFI, and below .06 for RMSEA. There was a significant path between ELL status and disruptive behavior problems, indicating that Hispanic immigrant students were more likely to have significant problems with disruptive behavior and conduct problems. However, the paths between ELL status and academic functioning and teacher-child relationships were not significant, indicating that low English proficiency was not directly associated with lower academic achievement or with greater teacher-child conflict. Furthermore, there was a significant indirect path from ELL status through disruptive behavior problems to academic functioning, suggesting that the influence of ELL status on academic achievement was mediated by disruptive behavior problems. Findings will be discussed with respect to implications for educational practices and prevention programming.

Theme Groups: 1 Key social relationships

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