

COVER LETTER

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PERSONAL RESEARCH AGENDA
Geraldine V. Oades-Sese, Ph.D., NCSP

Overview of Research Areas

A comprehensive examination of the developmental trajectory of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) preschool children is my major research agenda with a focus on resilience and developmental psychopathology. Development is interpreted within multidisciplinary perspectives of child development, second language acquisition, developmental psychopathology, cross-cultural studies, evolutionary psychology, educational and school psychology, and neuropsychology. Emphasis on the complex interactions between various domains will be examined to determine psychological behaviors and outcomes of CLD children.

Previous Efforts in the Area

For my dissertation, I have examined the relationship between child attributes (i.e., temperament, emotion regulation, autonomy, cognitive ability, bilingualism, acculturation) and social competence. The study identified profiles of resilience and vulnerability among economically-disadvantaged Hispanic American preschool children. During my first year at Rutgers University, as an Assistant Professor, I founded and currently direct the Research Center for Resilience and Early Childhood Development which aims to expand my dissertation research into a longitudinal study. During the Spring/Summer of 2008, my research team has collected data from 473 Hispanic American preschool children and their families. Data collected included child, family, and school factors as well as bilingual language skills, early literacy and numeracy skills. External funding is currently being sought to fund the 2nd and 3rd years of this study to examine the growth trajectory of these children. The main objectives of this study is to (a) examine development using cognitive, psychosocial, and cultural-linguistic factors within an

ecological perspective (family and school factors), and (b) develop “real-life” interventions and programs that foster resilience (social-emotional and academic competence).

Specific Research Questions

Major research questions include (not exhaustive list):

1. What is the developmental trajectory of bilingual preschool children?
2. How does the degree of bilingualism affect social competence and academic competence over time?
3. How does the first language (L1) interact with the second language (L2)? Given that the growth between L1 and L2 vary, how does this affect each stage of cognitive, social-emotional, and academic development? What are the simultaneous effects of this growth when taking into account family factors (e.g., stress, discipline practices, parent-child relationship, acculturation) school factors?

Implications for School Psychology Practice

Given that studies have grouped bilingual children together, the identification of within-group differences will yield a better understanding of the development of CLD children and their learning. As result, this will advance the development of culturally-relevant and evidence-based interventions that build social-emotional and academic resilience in CLD children. Designing programs, instructional approaches, and curriculum that takes into account children’s background and prior knowledge is believed to be more effective rather than implementing a one-size-fit all approach. Furthermore, this will lead to the development and construction of test instruments that accurately reflect CLD children’s true behaviors and abilities.

Abstract

There is a need to increase our understanding of the long-term educational needs and outcomes of immigrant children (Takanishi & Bogard, 2007). Project Resilience (IRB#08-180), a 3- year longitudinal study, aims to fulfill this need by investigating the developmental trajectory and resilience of economically-disadvantaged Hispanic American preschool children. This is accomplished by examining the individual and combined contributions of cognitive (i.e., intelligence, executive functions), psychosocial (i.e., temperament, emotion regulation, autonomy), and cultural-linguistic (i.e., level of acculturation and bilingualism) factors. These key factors are examined within the context of family (parent-child relationship, parental acculturation, parental stress), classroom (emotional support, classroom organization, instructional support, and literacy environment), and teacher (emotional intelligence, teacher-child relationships) factors. Adding to our knowledge in these crucial areas will allow for enhanced understanding of the social emotional and academic development of immigrant children; more informed policy decisions for targeting and addressing areas of need; the development of evidence-based (resilience-enhancing) interventions appropriate for diverse populations; and a greater capacity to -provide high-quality early childhood programs for all of America's children. Participants will include approximately 1,500 economically disadvantaged Hispanic American preschool children from 3 different geographical regions of the U.S. Cross-sectional variable-centered and person-centered statistical analyses and multilevel modeling will be conducted.

Collaborative Multisite Research Proposal
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1. What is the relationship between bilingualism and social development (social competence)? What is the growth trajectory of bilingual preschool children (3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds) in terms of social-emotional development?

2. What is the relationship between bilingualism and early academic development? What is the growth trajectory of bilingual Hispanic American preschool children in terms of academic development?
3. Given that there are within group differences in bilingual skills (English-Spanish proficiency) and individual differences in temperament and emotional regulation, do these children have similar (equifinality) or different (multifinality) developmental trajectories?
4. Using the Cattell-Horn-Carroll Theory of Cognitive Abilities as the theoretical framework in this study: What is the underlying structure of cognitive abilities during early childhood and its relationship to bilingual and academic achievement over time? What is the typology of cognitive competence among low socioeconomic status (SES) bilingual children? Which of these typologies are predictive of learning English? Early literacy? Early numeracy skills?
5. When a simultaneous change occurs in proficiency in English and Spanish, is there a change in cognitive abilities? In emotion regulation? Achievement? Are there gender differences?
6. What are predictors of academic success and failure among bilingual preschool children?
7. To explore the goodness-of-fit model: What roles do teachers' emotional competence, ethnicity, and child temperament play in children's social-emotional development? On student-teacher relationships? On academic achievement?
8. Research has examined the relational conflicts between parents and adolescents due to acculturation growth differences. What does relationship between the parent and child

level of acculturation look like during early childhood? How does this relationship grow and change over time?

9. To explore the model of change as a function of environment: What roles do acculturation, parental stress, and parenting practices have on children's well-being?

Project Resilience will contribute to the greater understanding of the developmental trajectory of economically disadvantage Hispanic American children within the context of bilingualism, acculturation, environmental stressors, and adult-child relationships. Adding to our knowledge in these crucial areas will allow for more informed policy decisions for (1) targeting and addressing the mental health and educational needs of immigrant children and their families, (2) the development of evidence-based (resilience-enhancing) interventions, and (3) a greater capacity to provide high-quality early childhood programs for all of America's children.

Participants: *Rutgers University Site (Northeast):* Participants include 473 economically-disadvantaged Hispanic American preschool children (ages 3 to 5 year-olds) and their families from an urban public school district. Parental consent and school district approval have already been granted for 3 years. *West Coast/Florida/Texas/New Mexico Sites:* Participants will include 500 economically-disadvantaged Hispanic American preschool children for each geographic region.

Estimated Budget for 3 Year Study: 3 Site Study: \$825,000.00

Advantages of a collaborative multisite research program include having a good sample size and representation of bilingual preschool children that will enable generalization of findings. A **possible disadvantage** may be difficulty recruiting bilingual graduate-level research assistants to administer tests, as well as possible drifts of classroom observations.