Housing instability and academic trajectories for children living in poverty

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Instability in the home environment is detrimental for young children’s development (Brown, Ackerman, & Moore, 2013; Evans et al., 2005)

Residential mobility is an understudied developmental context for preschool children.
Children from low-income families move nearly twice as often as their more economically advantaged peers (U.S. Census, 2011)

Children living in poverty may be more vulnerable to the effects of moving
MOBILITY AND CHILD OUTCOMES

• Linked to variety of child outcomes:
  – Physical and oral health (Busacker & Kasehagen, 2012)
  – Poor peer and sibling relationships (Haynie, South, & Bose, 2006; Stoneman, Brody, Churchill, & Winn, 1999)
  – Externalizing and internalizing behaviors (Ziol-Guest & McKenna, 2014)
  – Self-regulation (Roy, McCoy, & Raver, 2014; Schmitt, Finders, & McClelland, 2015)
MOBILITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

• Strong relation between mobility and poor academic outcomes for school-aged children and adolescents (Herbers et al., 2012; Voight, Shinn, & Nation, 2012)

• Children and adolescents who move frequently:
  – Perform worse on math and reading assessments (Cutuli et al., 2013; Herbers et al., 2012)
  – Are more likely to be retained (Ingersoll, Scamman, & Eckerling, 1989)
  – Demonstrate lower levels of adaptive functioning in classroom contexts (Masten et al., 1997)
• Little is known about the effects of moving during the preschool year on children’s academic readiness and subsequent outcomes.

• Important period for developing the critical foundations of early academic skills (La Paro & Pianta, 2000).
GOAL OF THE PRESENT STUDY

• Primary goal:
  – Investigate the direct and indirect effects of residential mobility during the prekindergarten year on the development of academic skills from prekindergarten to the end of first grade for low-income children
PARTICIPANTS

• Head Start Impact Study (HSIS)
  – Randomized controlled trial
  – Nationally representative sample ($N = 4442$)
  – 2 cohorts (3-year-old and 4-year-old)

• Analyses limited to children whose parents reported on frequency of moving ($N = 3627$)
  – 50% male
  – Child mean age: 49 months ($SD = 6.80$)
  – Ethnic breakdown: 38% Hispanic; 32% White; 30% Black
PROCEDURE

• Assessments
  – Fall of prekindergarten year
    • Parents reported demographic information
  – Spring of prekindergarten year
    • Parents reported on residential mobility during that year
    • Children were assessed on three academic outcomes: math, letter-word identification, and spelling
  – Spring of kindergarten and first grade
    • Children were assessed on three academic outcomes: math, letter-word identification, and spelling
MEASURES

• Residential mobility
  – Parents responded to: *How many times has your child moved in the last 12 months?*
  – A variable was created to represent four categories: 0 = 0 moves (70%); 1 = 1 move (23%); 2 = 2 moves (5%), 3 = 3 or more moves (2%).
• Academic outcomes:
  – Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement
    • Applied Problems
    • Letter-Word Identification
    • Spelling

• Covariates:
  – Sex, age, home language, special needs status, household income, maternal education, parent-child reading, parenting style, and HSIS condition
Path analysis using Mplus Version 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012)

– “cluster” command

Full information maximum likelihood estimation
RESULTS

Residential Mobility during Prekindergarten

Prekindergarten
- Mathematics
  - .23***

Kindergarten
- Mathematics
  - .52***

First Grade
- Mathematics

Residential Mobility during Prekindergarten
- Letter-Word Identification
  - .23***

Letter-Word Identification
- .24***

Letter-Word Identification
- .53***

Letter-Word Identification

Residential Mobility during Prekindergarten
- Spelling
  - .23***

Spelling
- .23***

Spelling
- .53***

Spelling

Note. Dotted lines are non-significant.
CONCLUSION

• Residential mobility during prekindergarten is an important marker for children at-risk for academic difficulties during the transition to kindergarten, and consequently for poor subsequent achievement

• Implications:
  – Interventions targeting academic readiness
  – Interventions and policies to reduce mobility
  – Efforts to support families at-risk for mobility
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

• Measure of residential mobility was limited
  – Future research should use mixed-methods approaches
• Did not focus on identifying mechanisms linking mobility with academic difficulties
  – Future research should include mechanistic variables
THANK YOU!!!!
QUESTIONS????

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