

# African American Children's Early Childhood Development: The Influences of Parenting and Early Childhood Education

Suzanne M. Randolph, Ph.D.  
Department of Family Science  
University of Maryland College Park  
School of Public Health  
[suzanner@umd.edu](mailto:suzanner@umd.edu)

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# Child Outcomes of Most Interest for Very Young and Young Children

- **Socioemotional development (infant mental health)**
  - Attachment to parent (typically mother, or other primary female caregiver)
  - Self regulation
  - Parent-child interactions peer interactions
  
- **Social competence (Behavioral)**
  - Social Skills
  - Behavior problems
  
- **School readiness (Behavioral, cognitive, academic)**
  - Social competence
  - Literacy
  - Numeracy
  
- **Growth and development (health as well as above)**



# Parental influences:

## Parenting

- Risk factors and processes:
  - harsh abusive parenting,
  - inconsistency,
  - non-nurturing parenting
  - Poor infant-child attachment (attachment insecurity)
  - Poor parental mental health (usually maternal depression)
  - Beliefs detrimental to child well-being
  - Lifestyles adversely affecting children
- Protective factors and processes:
  - Positive parenting-nurturance, warmth, consistency, positive control, and responsivity to child
  - Child promoting beliefs and practices
  - Healthy lifestyles
  - Involvement in early childhood setting or school



# Familial Influences

- Family structure (children in single-mother households fare poorer than partnered or married households, but social mothers and fathers can play significant roles)
- Family income (low income < higher income groups)
- Family conflict (interpartner primarily)
- Family cohesion (closeness)
- Family routines
- Informal support from family (for crises—e.g., financial, medical emergencies; for contact—e.g., through telephone, emails, letters, visits)
- Cultural—racial socialization



# Early childhood education influences

- Short-term: School readiness, social competence (socioemotional dev.)
  - Children ready to learn from birth to pre-K (literacy, numeracy)
  - Get children ready to succeed in K and beyond (cognitively, academically, socially)
  - Develops children's social skills
  - Reduces children's behavior problems
  - (however, family and community influences affect some children and preschool/K teachers report that behavior problems are #1 classroom management issue)
- Important factors
  - Quality of early childhood setting
  - Timing (age of child), consistency, amount of care
  - Parental involvement (affected by welfare reform)



# Influences of early childhood settings--continued

- Longer-term: Effects fade, need booster or alignment of K-3 curriculum with pre-K

- However, some evidence from comprehensive interventions (including parenting components) shows effects through adulthood for some socioemotional outcomes, economic outcomes, and educational attainment

  - Chicago Child-Parent Centers Longitudinal Study--

  - Abecedarian Project

  - Perry Preschool Project

- Ongoing national data collection efforts to study further

  - Head Start

  - Early Head Start,

  - Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten and Birth cohorts

  - National Children's Study

  - NICHD Study of Early Child Care

*continued*



# Summary and Conclusions

- **Critical factors from a developmental perspective are:**
  - Parental factors
  - Quality, timing, and amount of care
  - Consistency of parenting and care
  - Continuum of early childhood education beyond pre-K and K
  
- **Research is needed to:**
  - Inform culturally responsive interventions at individual, family, and community levels; and
  
  - Fill gaps with respect to fathers' involvement and roles
  
- **Policies are needed to ensure that children and parents get what they need to succeed beyond infancy, toddlerhood or preschool years** (e.g., into third grade or fourth grade)

