Predictors of Infant and Toddler Black Boys’ School Readiness Skills: Determining Promotive Contexts and Environments

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Outline of Talk

• Urgency!!
• Theory of Black Child Development
• Black Boys’ Developmental Contexts and Experiences
• Keys to Optimal Development
• Implications for Research, Policy, Practice, & Outreach
Take Home Points

• Black infant and toddler children are likely to reside in more challenging circumstances compared to White boys.

• Family social position and parenting are critical predictors of boys’ optimal development.

• Community environment plays a complex and mixed role in Black boys’ development.

• Black boys need strong foundation and afforded best opportunities in the earliest years to combat their challenging circumstances and increase their chances for school and life success.
U.S. Population in 2010

- White: 57%
- Hispanic: 16%
- Black: 13%
- Asian: 5%
- Other: 9%
U.S. Population 2050

- White: 46%
- Hispanic: 27%
- Black: 14%
- Asian: 8%
- Other: 5%

Increase of 1%, but…
Number of Infant/Toddler Black Boys

- Over 12 million children under three years of age in the United States.
- Fourteen percent are Black (~1.7m), and slightly more than half are boys (~900k)
Blacks make up 13% of the population but over 40% of the prison population!

Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment

- All Men: 1 in 9
- White Men: 1 in 17
- Black Men: 1 in 3
- Latino Men: 1 in 6
- All Women: 1 in 56
- White Women: 1 in 111
- Black Women: 1 in 18
- Latina Women: 1 in 45

Frameworks to Examine the Contexts of Black Boys
Black Child Development

Key Research Aims

• Explore the early environments of infant and toddler Black boys

• Examine whether early environments differ between Black boys and girls, and White boys

• Whether the link between early environments/experiences and children’s preschool outcomes differ by gender and race
Black Children’s Contexts

- Data from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort
- Data from approximately 900 Black boys and their families
  - And 900 Black girls & 2300 White boys
Child Characteristics

**Birth Weight**
- Normal Birth Weight
- Low Birth Weight

- White Males: 72% (28% Low)
- Black Males: 64% (36% Low)
- Black Females: 56% (44% Low)

**Health Status**
- Good to Excellent
- Fair to Poor

- White Males: 97% (3% Poor)
- Black Males: 94% (6% Poor)
- Black Females: 96% (4% Poor)
Child Characteristics

- Black children were also rated by parents as being more irritable than White children
Family Demographics

Living in Poverty (1.85 INR)

- White Males: 33% Below Poverty, 67% At or Above Poverty
- Black Males: 74% Below Poverty, 26% At or Above Poverty
- Black Females: 75% Below Poverty

No. Public Assistance Used (0-4)

- White Males: 1.14
- Black Males: 1.23
- Black Females: 1.22
Family Demographics

- Black children likely to be in single-parent households (30% vs. 79%)
- Black children less likely to have parents with BA degree or higher (mothers: 10% vs. 34%; fathers: 18% vs. 36%)
Social Support Availability

- White males’ families have more social support than Black children
- No differences in availability of financial and community support
Neighborhood

Black males less likely to:
- know more neighbors by name
- live in safer communities
- live in rural communities
Promoting and Inhibiting Environments

Depressive Symptomatology (1-4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Males</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Females</td>
<td>1.53</td>
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</table>

Child Care Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>In Child Care</th>
<th>Not in Child Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Males</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Females</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promoting and Inhibiting Environments

Black males were likely to be in environments with:

• Low parental drinking
• High parental argument
• Fewer parental risky behaviors
Parenting

Positive Parenting
- White Males
- Black Males
- Black Females

Intrusiveness

Literacy Activities
- White males: 3.17
- Black males: 2.92
- Black females: 3.00
Parenting

Black boys more likely to experience:

• Authoritarian parenting
• Negative regard parenting
• Limited play with parents
Early differences translate to later outcome differences!
Differences between Black and White Boys at 9 and 24 months

Odds Stacked Against Black Boys

- Single parent
- Low maternal education
- Living in Poverty
- Unemployed parents
- Incarcerated parents
- Going to prison
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Exposure to other violence
- Abused or neglected
- Asthma hospitalization
- Infant immortality
- Birth to teen moms
- Birth to unmarried women
- VL Birth weight
- HIV/AIDS
- PTSD
- Obesity
- Suspension
- Retention
Overcoming Obstacles in the Midst of Challenges
What matters the most for young black boys’ early development?
## What mattered for all children?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Emergent Language</th>
<th>Emergent Numeracy</th>
<th>Expressive Language</th>
<th>Color Knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Status</strong></td>
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<td>✓ Maternal education (+)</td>
<td>✓ Poverty level (-)</td>
<td>✓ Paternal education (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood</strong></td>
<td>✓ Quality (+)</td>
<td>✓ Quality (+)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>✓ Depressive symptomatology (-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting</strong></td>
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## What mattered most for Black boys?

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<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>✓ Community support (-) -- more positive for BB</td>
<td>✓ Community support (-)</td>
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What is the key for Black boys in the first three years of life?

Strong Social Positioning

Responsive and Language-Rich Parenting
Findings Support What We Know

- Early years are critical (e.g., Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)
- Toxic stress and multiple risks regardless of type diminish optimal child development (Burchinal et al., 2000; Sameroff et al., 1998)
- Black children, especially boys face additional risk (Davis, 2003; Noguera, 2003; McLoyd, 1998)
- Sensitive interaction and attachment between child and primary caregiver is important (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1958, 1988, Iruka, 2009)
- Family social position and parenting largest predictor, and parenting is culturally-bound (Burchinal et al., 2011)
Conclusion

• LOVE of and for Black boys and males
• Begin early, begin well
• Begin to focus on Black boys that are successful and resilient and “mimic”
• Social Position & Parenting
• Holistic view of Black boys – there are many successful black boys and males, we just need to SEE them
There are vast OPPORTUNITIES to change the trajectories of our Black boys!
Buffett Early Childhood Institute

at the University of Nebraska

Start early. Start well.