

Buffett  
Early Childhood  
Institute  
*at the University of Nebraska*

## 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

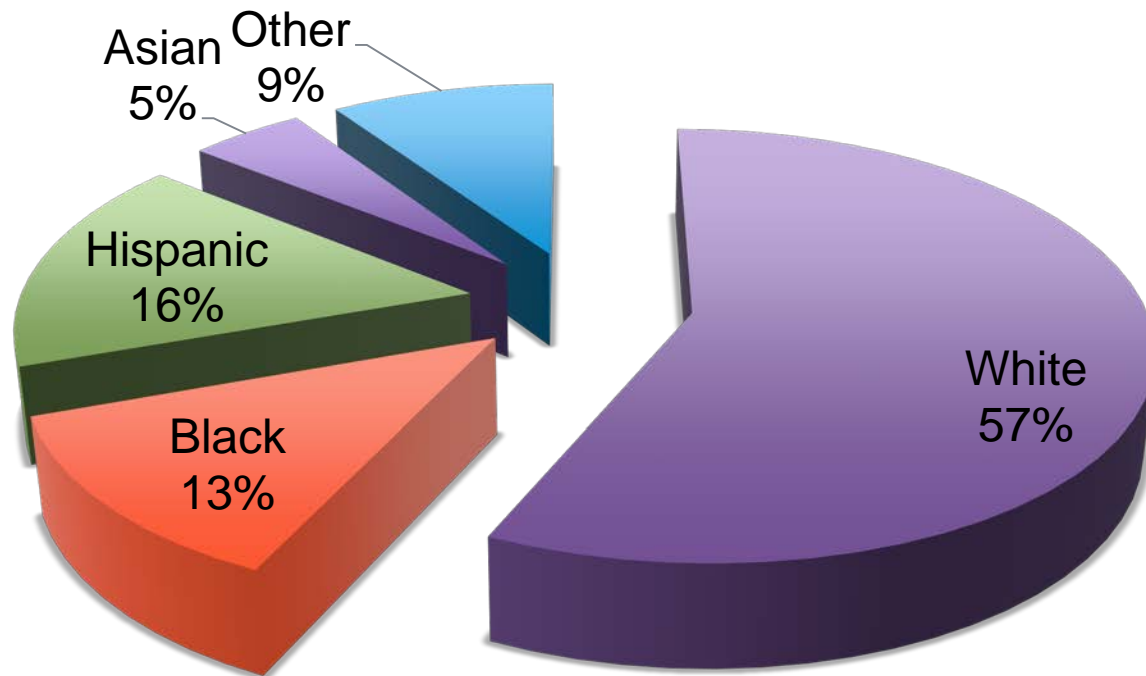
# Take Home Points

- 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.

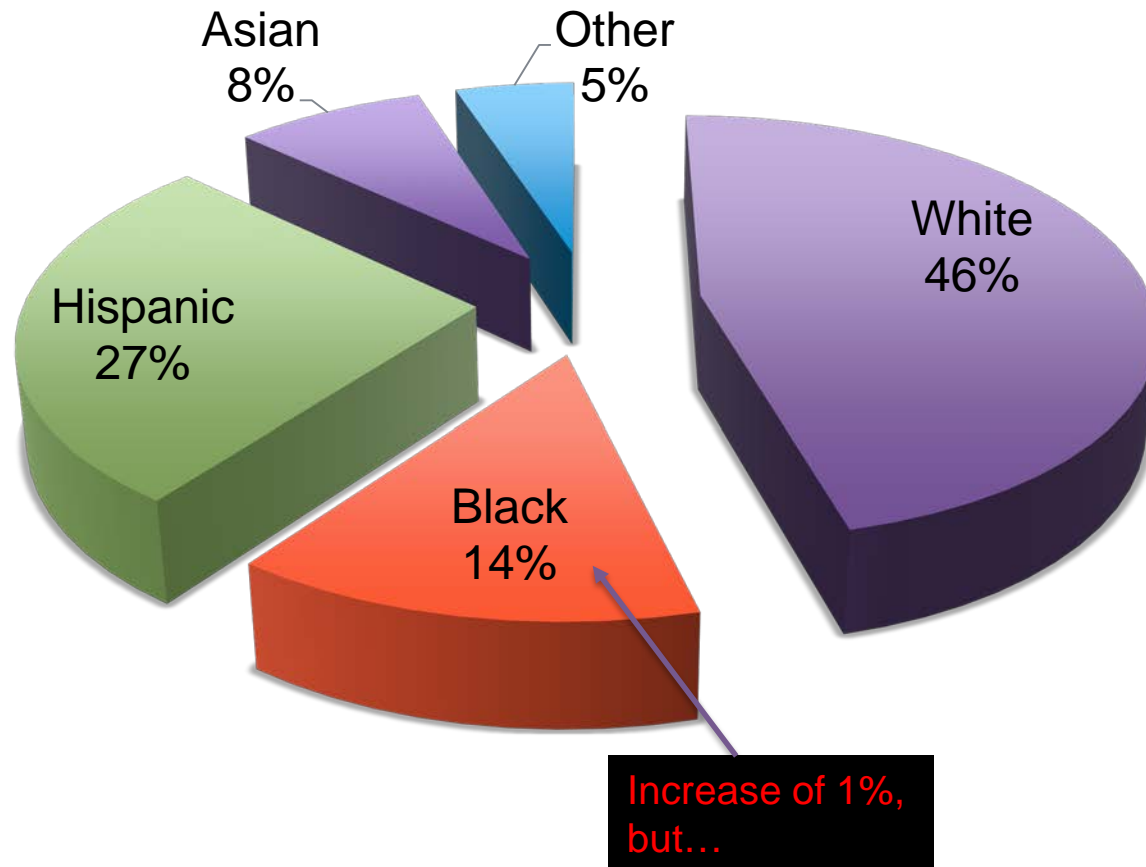
# Some Basic Facts



# U.S. Population in 2010



# U.S. Population 2050

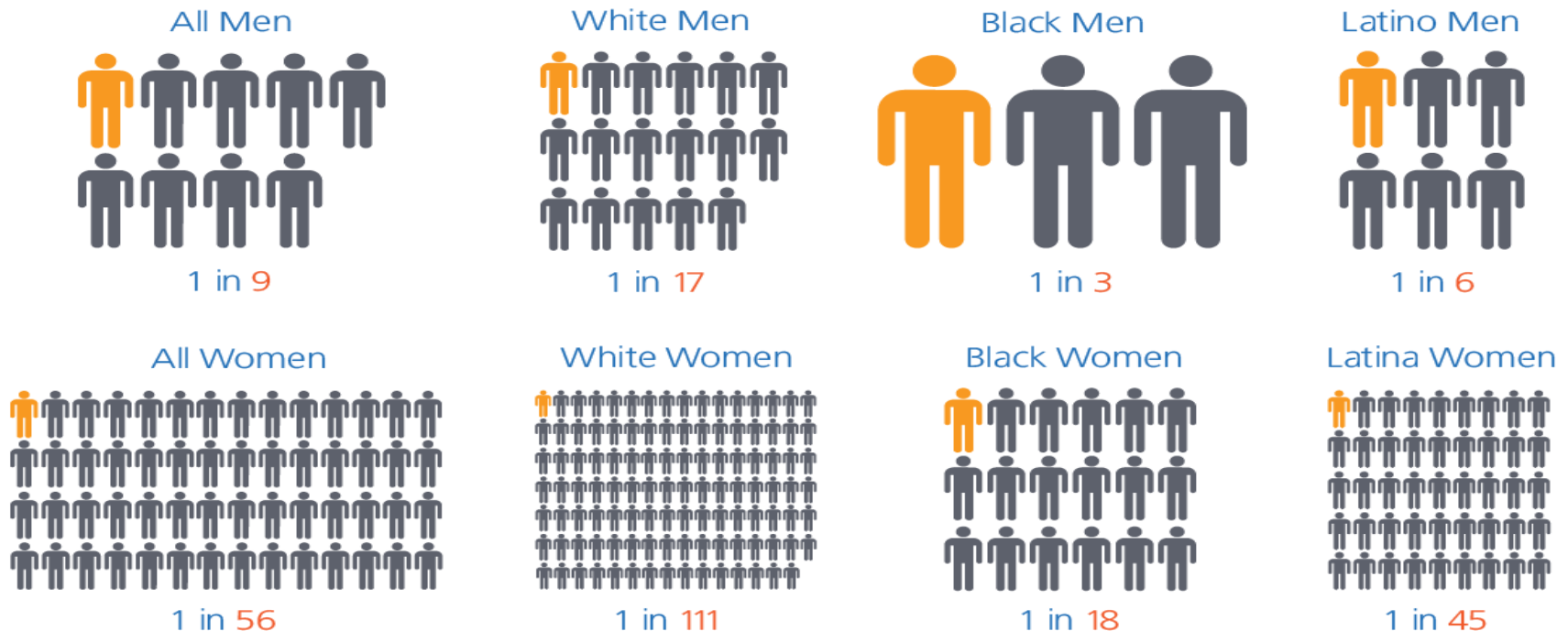


# Number of Infant/Toddler Black Boys

- 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 population but over 40% of prison population!

## Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment



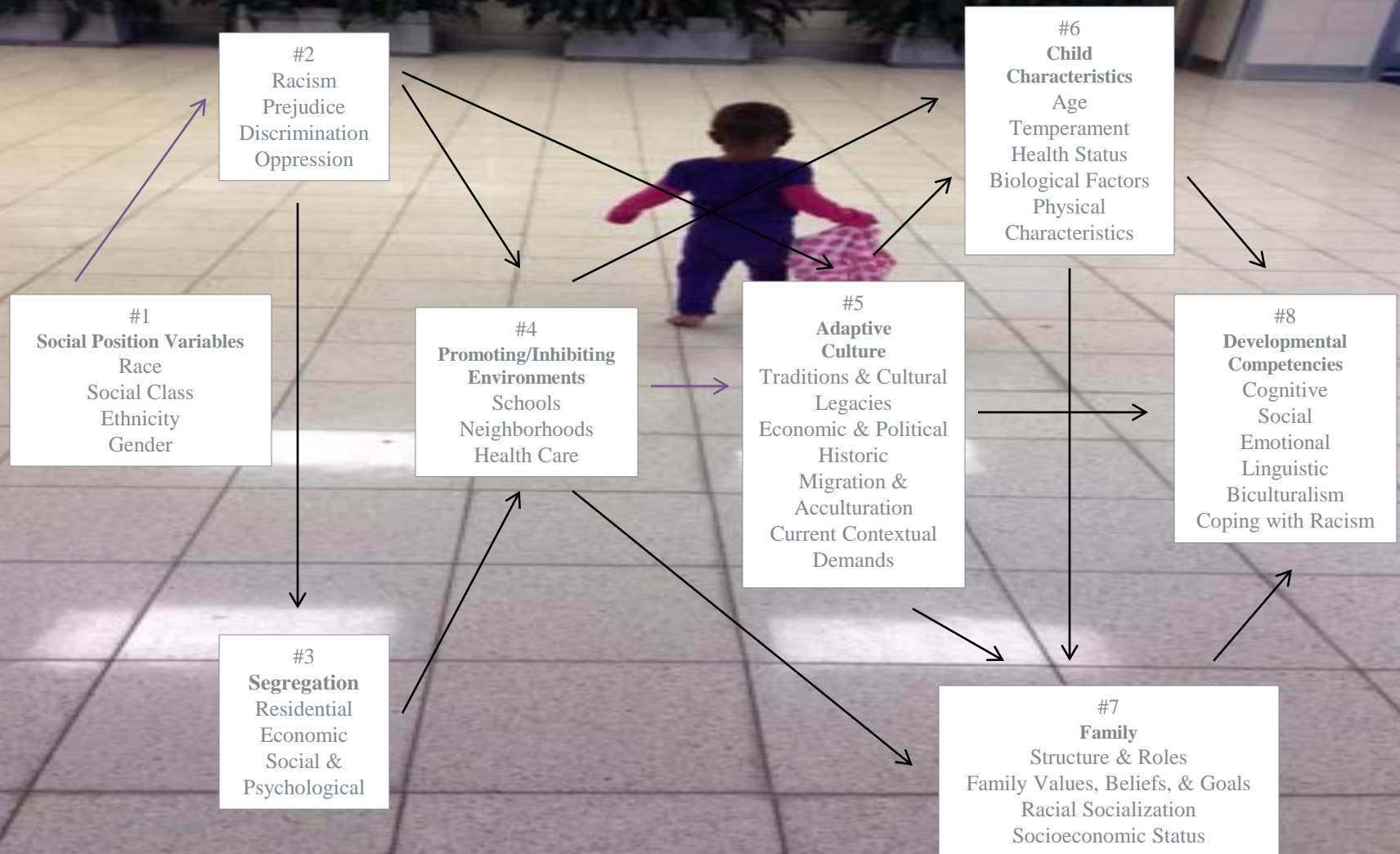
Source: Bonczar, T. (2003). *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.



# Frameworks to Examine the Contexts of Black Boys



# Black Child Development



García Coll, C., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., McAdoo, H. P., Crnic, K., Wasik, B. H., & García, H. V. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development*, 67(5), 1891-1914. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01834.x

# 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

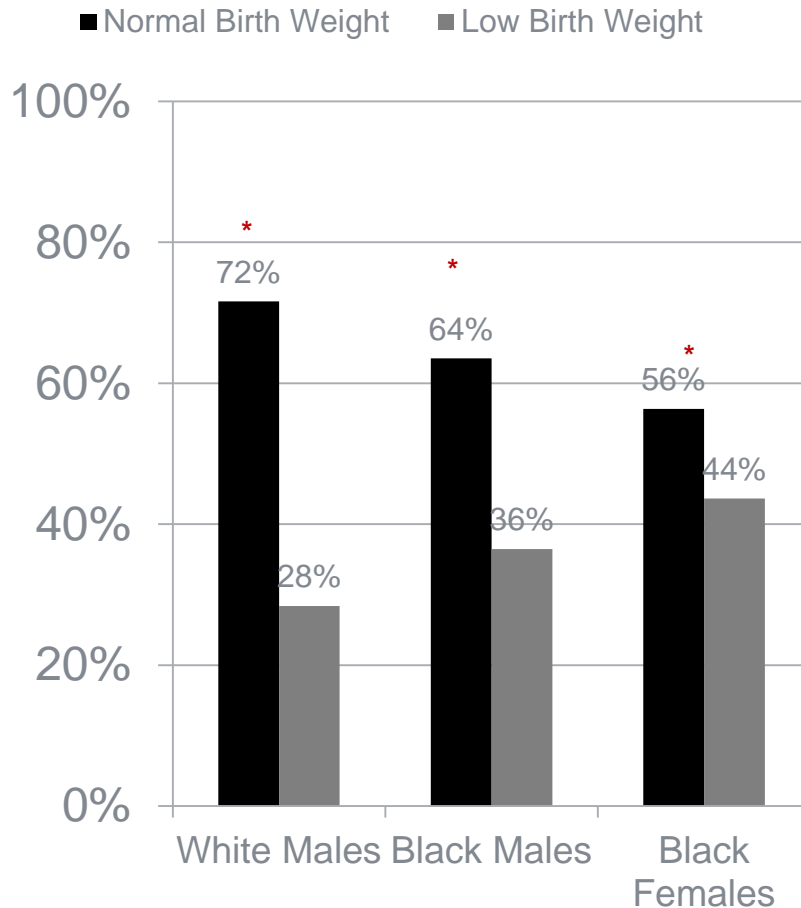


# Black Children's Contexts

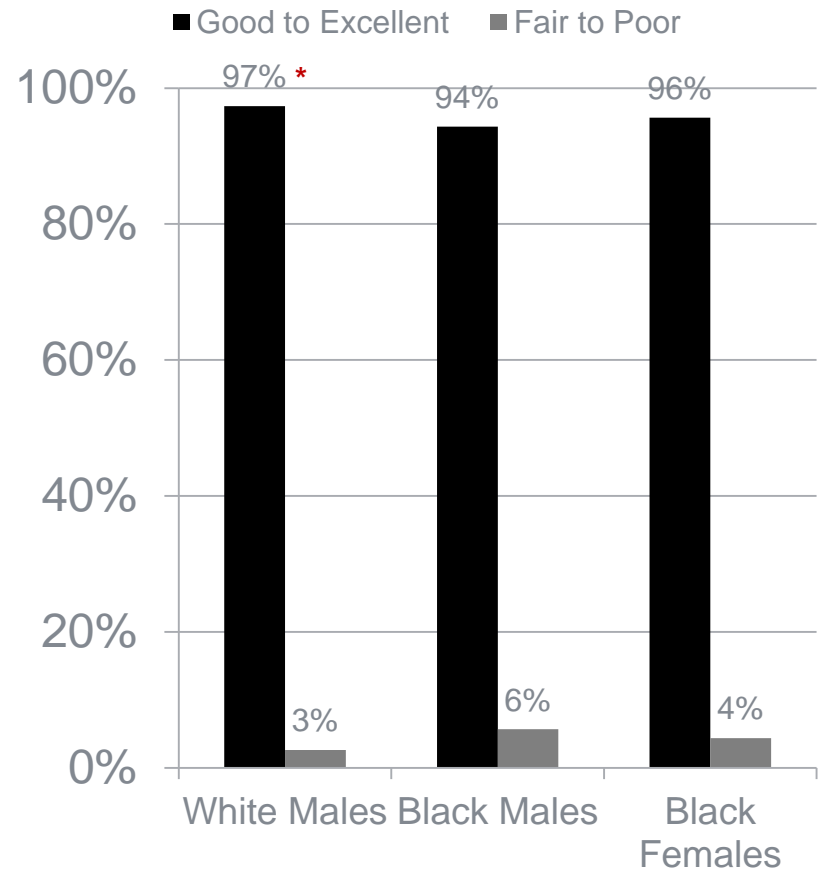
- Data from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort
- Data from approximately 900 Black boys and their families
  - And 900 Black girls & 2300 White boys

# Child Characteristics

## Birth Weight



## Health Status

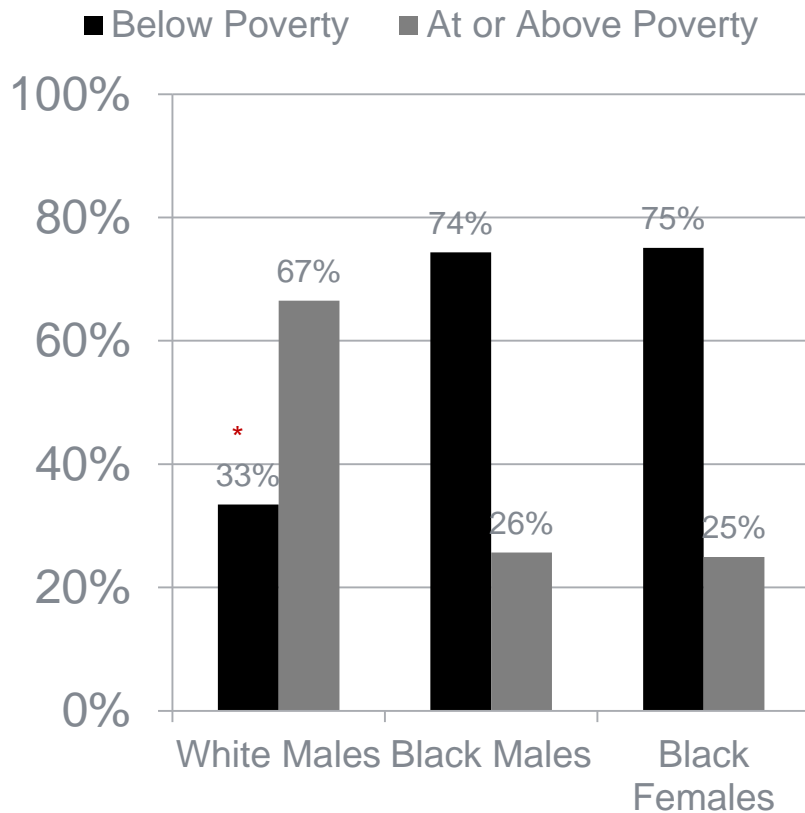


# Child Characteristics

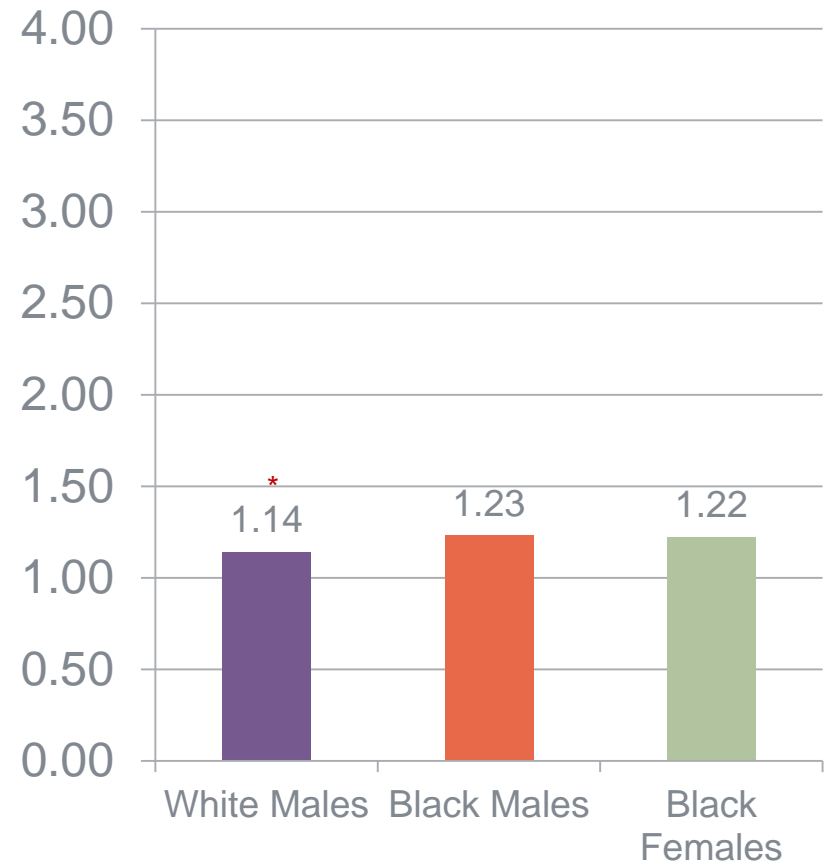
- Black children were also rated by parents as being more irritable than White children

# Family Demographics

## Living in Poverty (1.85 INR)



## No. Public Assistance Used (0-4)



# Family Demographics

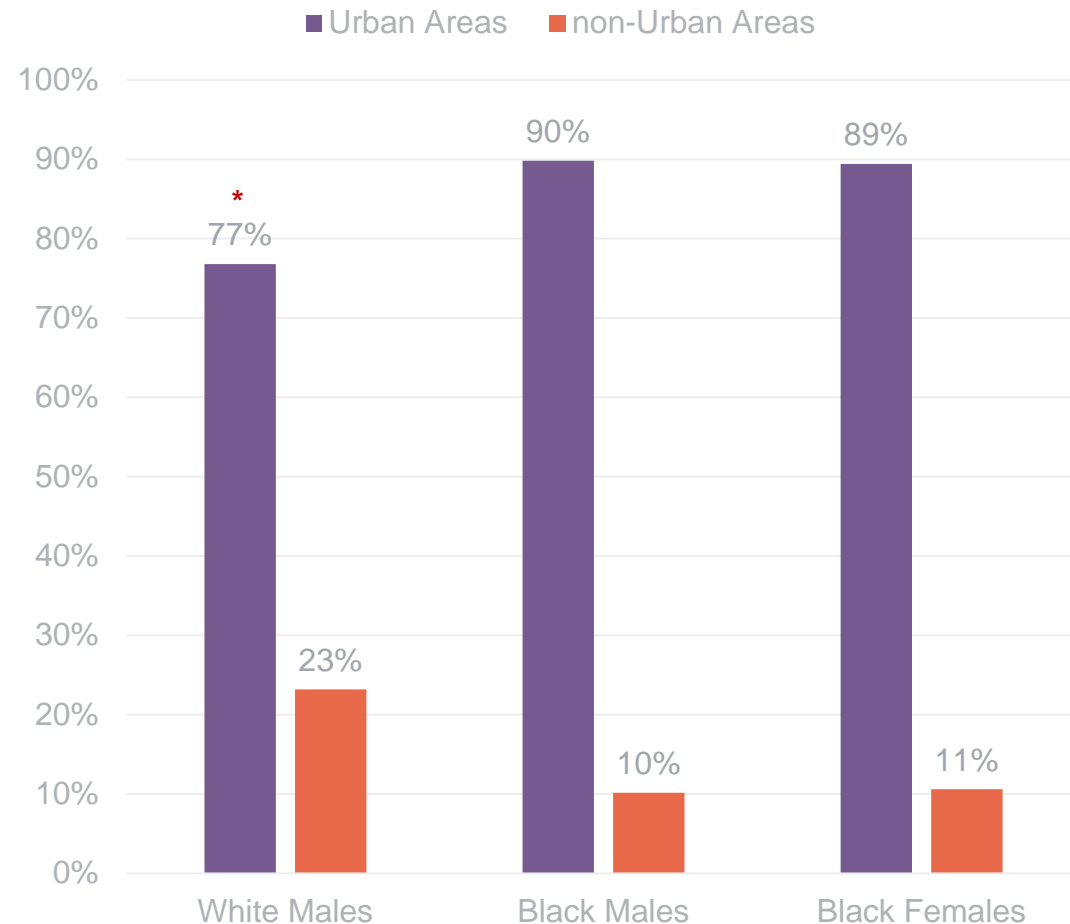
- Black children likely to be in single-parent households (30% vs. 79%)
- Black children less likely to have parents with BA degree or higher (mothers: 10% vs. 34%; fathers: 18% vs. 36%)



## Social Support Availability

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

# Neighborhood

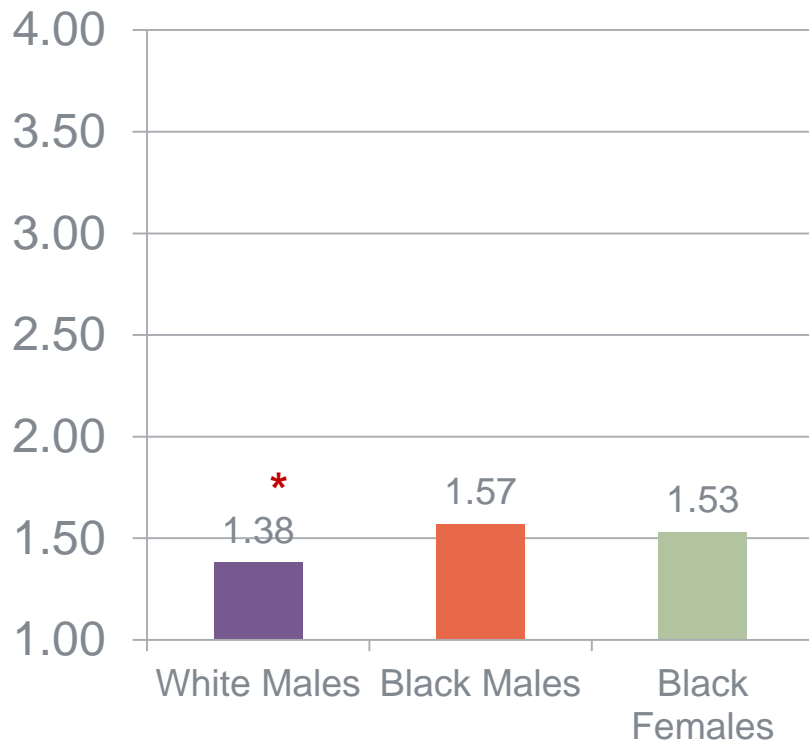


Black males less likely to:

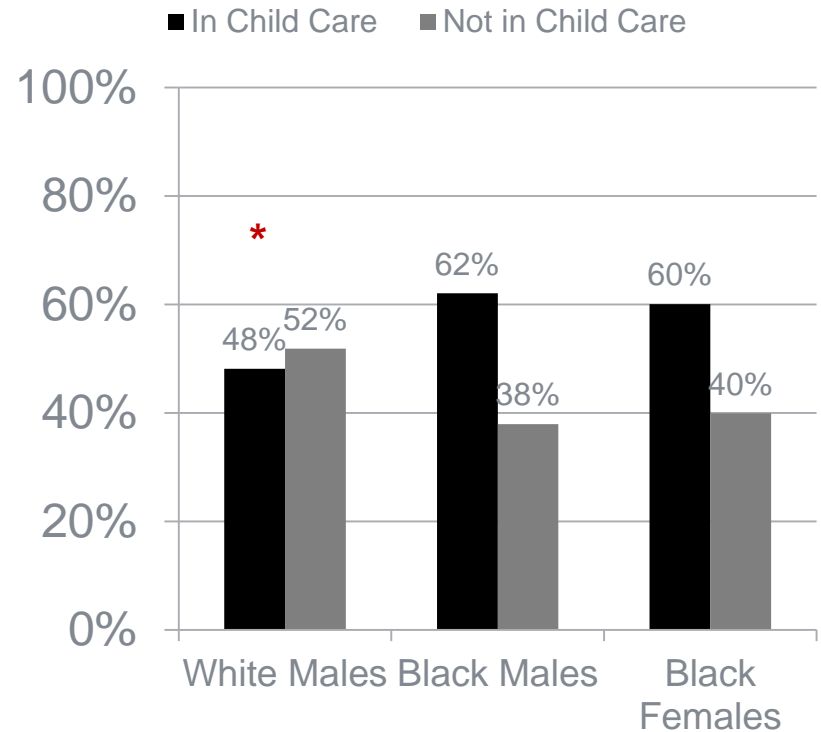
- know more neighbors by name
- live in safer communities
- live in rural communities

# Promoting and Inhibiting Environments

## Depressive Symptomatology (1-4)



## Child Care Attendance



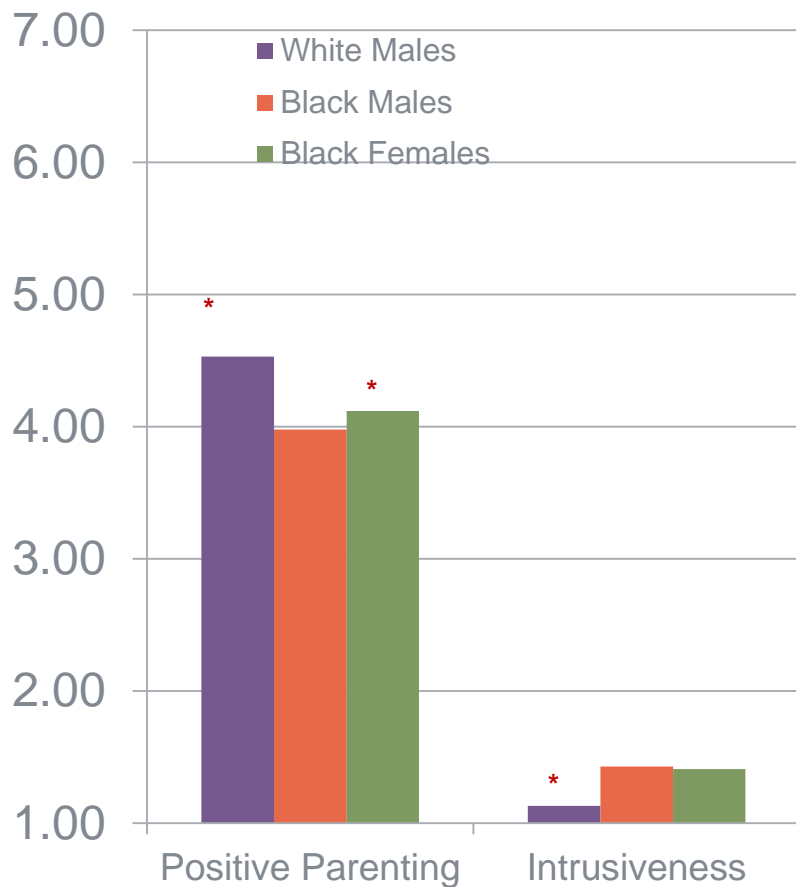
# Promoting and Inhibiting Environments

Black males were likely to be in environments with:

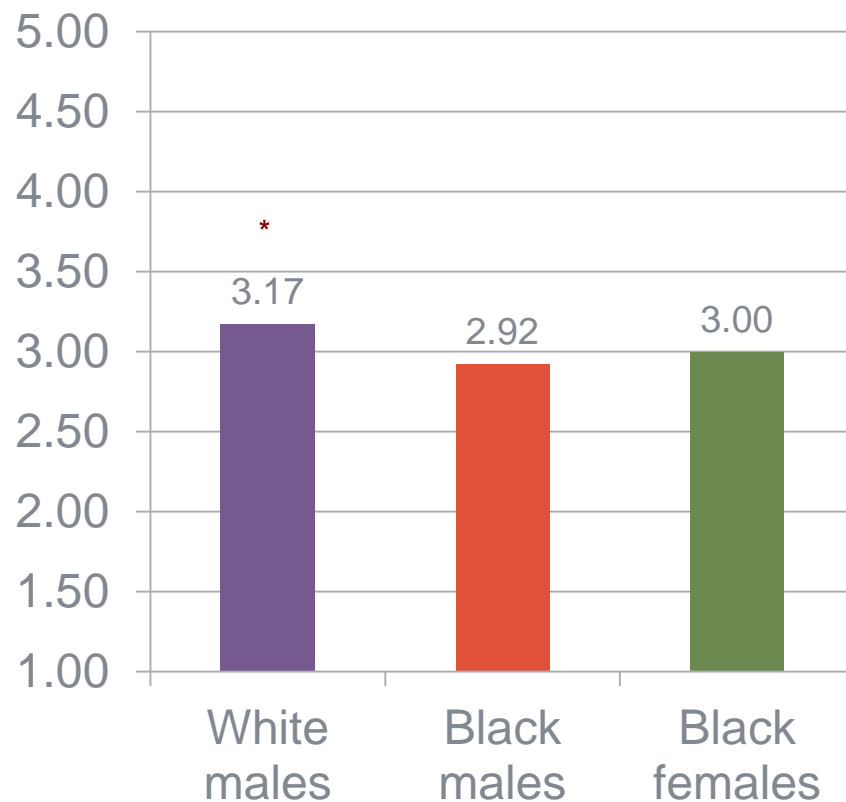
- Low parental drinking
- High parental argument
- Fewer parental risky behaviors



# Parenting



## Literacy Activities



# Parenting

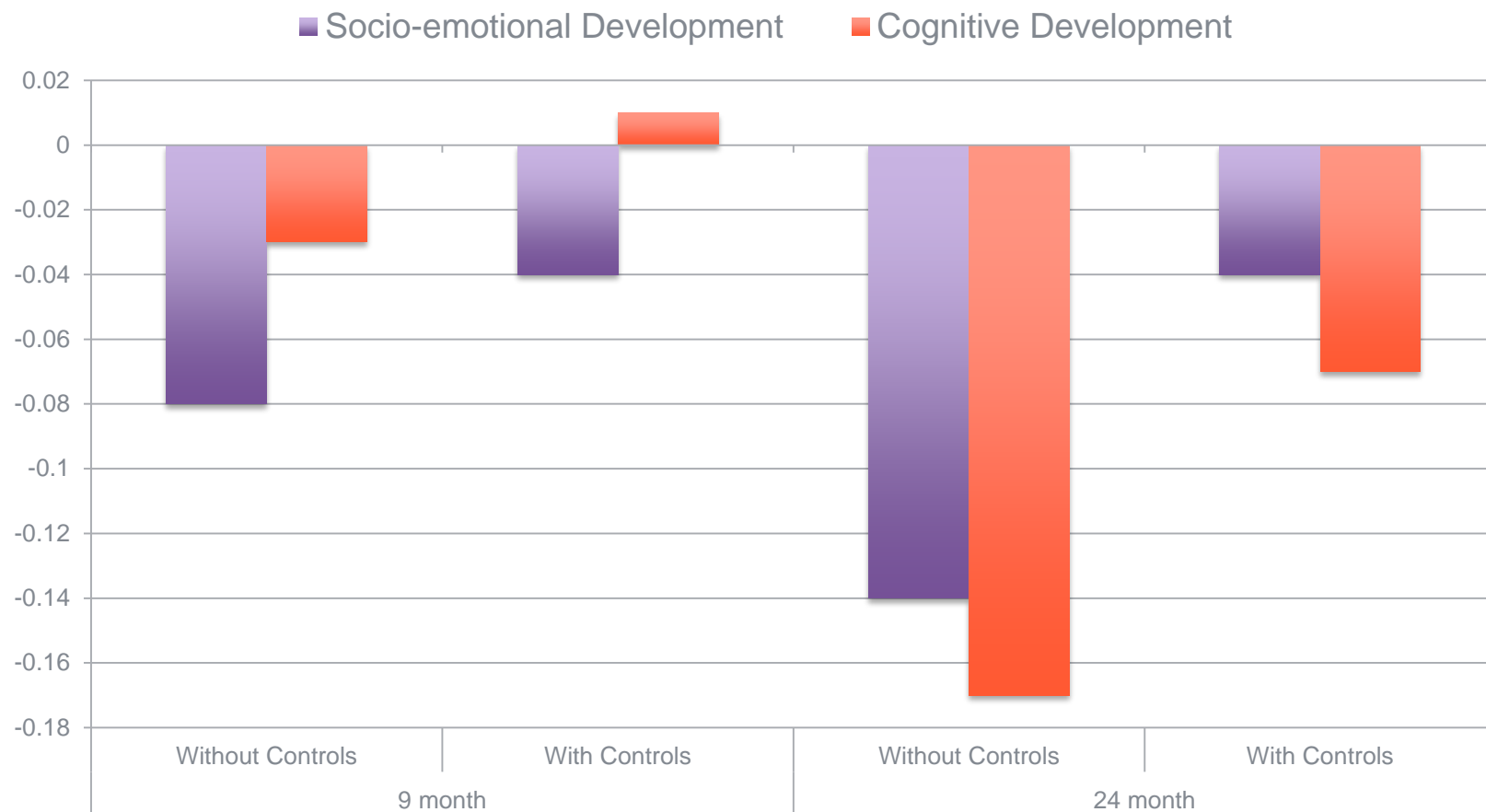
Black boys more likely to experience:

- Authoritarian parenting
- Negative regard parenting
- Limited play with parents

**Early differences  
translate to later  
outcome differences!**

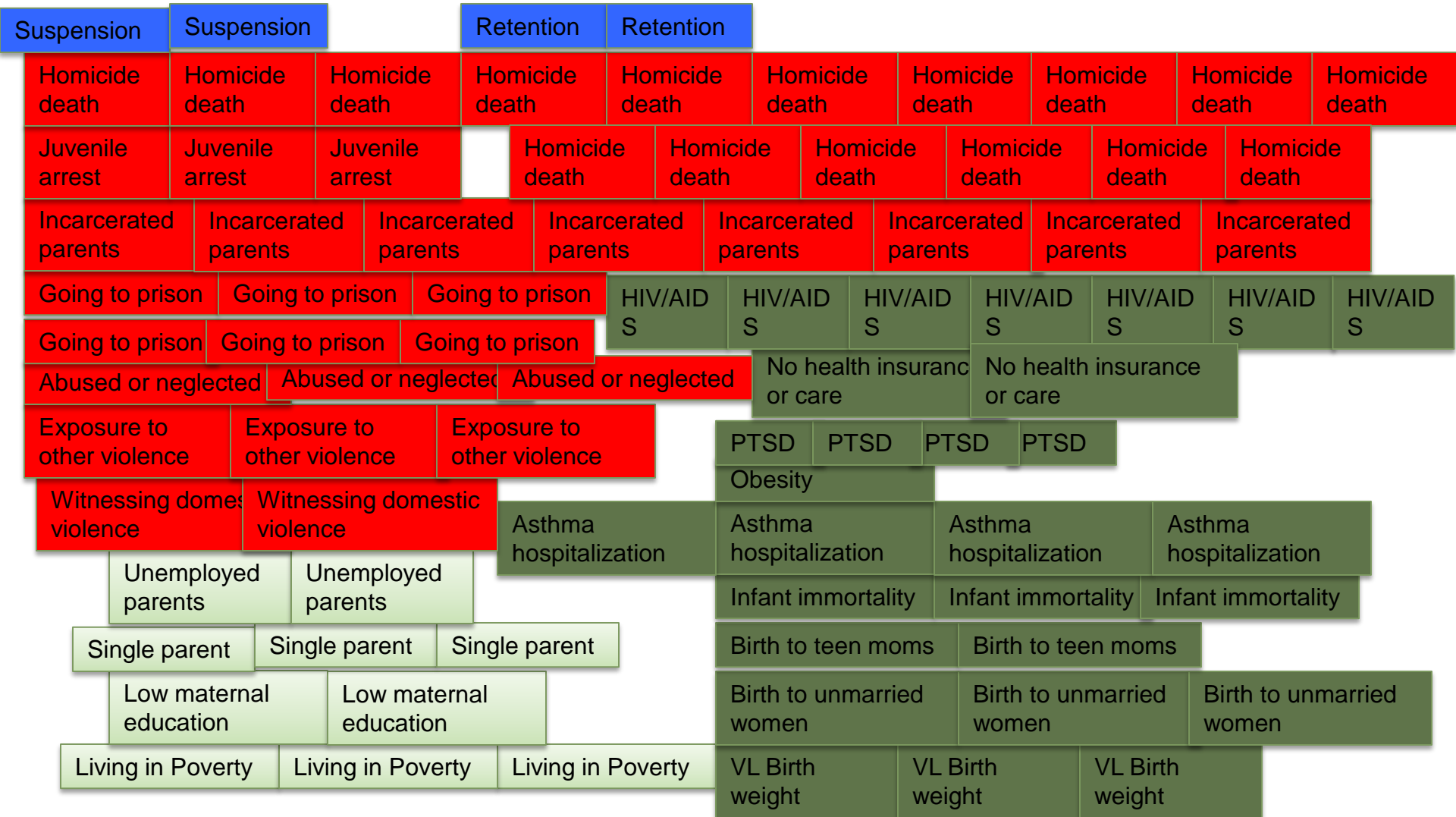


# Differences between Black and White Boys at 9 and 24 months



Source. Aratani, Y., Wight, V. R., & Cooper, J. L. (2011). *Racial gaps in early childhood: Socio-emotional health, developmental and education outcomes among African-American boys*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.

# Odds Stacked Against Black Boys



# Overcoming Obstacles in the Midst of Challenges



# What matters the most for young black boys' early development?



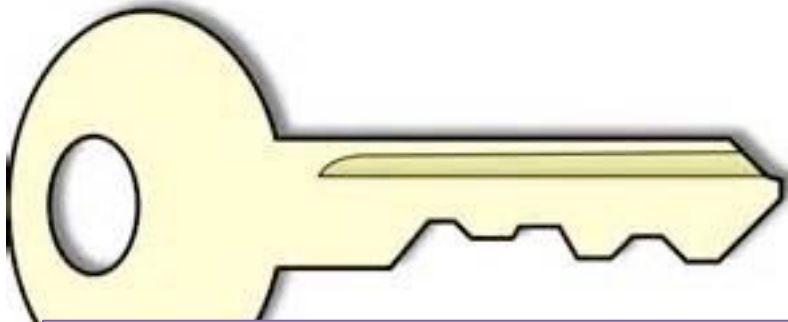
# What mattered for all children?

	Emergent Language	Emergent Numeracy	Expressive Language	Color Knowledge
Health				
Family Status	✓ Maternal education (+) ✓ Poverty level (-)	✓ Maternal education (+) ✓ Paternal education (+)	✓ Poverty level (-)	✓ Paternal education (+)
Social Support	✓ Community support (-)	✓ Community support (-)		
Neighborhood	✓ Quality (+)	✓ Quality (+)		
Environment	✓ Depressive symptomatology (-)			
Parenting	✓ Positive Parenting (+)	✓ Positive Parenting (+)		

# What mattered most for Black boys?

	Emergent Language	Emergent Numeracy	Expressive Language	Color Knowledge
Health	X	X	X	X
Family Status	✓ Maternal education (+) ✓ Poverty level (-)	✓ Maternal education (+) ✓ Paternal education (+)	✓ Poverty level (-)	✓ Paternal education (+)
Social Support	✓ Community support (-) -- more positive for BB	✓ Community support (-)	X	X
Neighborhood	✓ Quality (+)	✓ Quality (+) -- more positive for BG than BB	X	X
Environment	✓ Depressive symptomatology (-)	X	X	-- Depressive Symp. more positive for BB
Parenting	✓ Positive Parenting (+) -- intrusiveness more positive for BB	✓ Positive Parenting (+)	X	X

# 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!





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Start early. Start well.