

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

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HLST 3010: Social Determinants of Health

PURPOSE

To identify the processes that shape social determinants of health, and to analyze early child development as both the product and predictor of other social determinants of health

APPROACH

An analysis of secondary resources in the healthcare and social sciences field is conducted to identify existing views on the importance of early childhood development as a social determinant of health.

IS EARLY CHILDHOOD MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OTHER SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

YES. It is the aspect of *irreversible* change that distinguishes early child development from other social determinants of health. There is no lifespan for these social determinants of health. An individual may experience different levels of income, different types of housing and different types of work environment, but it is impossible for an individual to experience a different childhood.

WHAT ARE PATHWAY HEALTH EFFECTS?

Pathway effects describe how early child experiences systematically lead individuals to different paths in life.

WHAT ARE SOME NEGATIVE PATHWAY HEALTH EFFECTS?

Social deprivation during early years may result in anxiety, trust issues and aggression in children. Aggression is associated with early parenthood, low level of education, poverty, unemployment and violence (Smith-Chant, 2009).

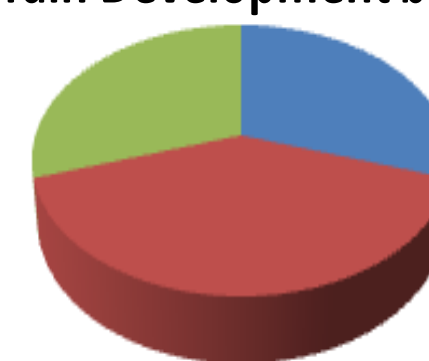
WHAT ARE LATENT HEALTH EFFECTS?

Resulting from biological and developmental childhood experiences, latent effects influence health later in life (Raphael, 2009).

WHAT ARE SOME NEGATIVE LATENT HEALTH EFFECTS?

Malnutrition and drug abuse that occurs when the baby is still a fetus may result in low birth weight, missing limbs or infant mortality. Low birth weight is associated with increased risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease during adulthood. As shown in Figure 1, poor early childhood experiences negatively affect an individual's IQ level (Smith-Chant, 2009).

Brain Development by Percentage



■ Prenatal ■ 0 to 2 Yrs ■ 2+ Years

Figure 1: Up to 40% of brain development occurs from 0 to 2 years of age. Poor early child health prevents optimal brain development and mental capacity.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Programs addressing early child development need to be systematic and intensive in nature, and must target children from a very early age (Smith-Chant, 2009). Effective childcare requires positive one-on-one interaction, which and does not necessarily have to be between the parent and the child. Increased funding for childcare is needed to reduce the early childhood educator to child ratio. Current ratios prevent adequate one-on-one interaction (See Figure 2).

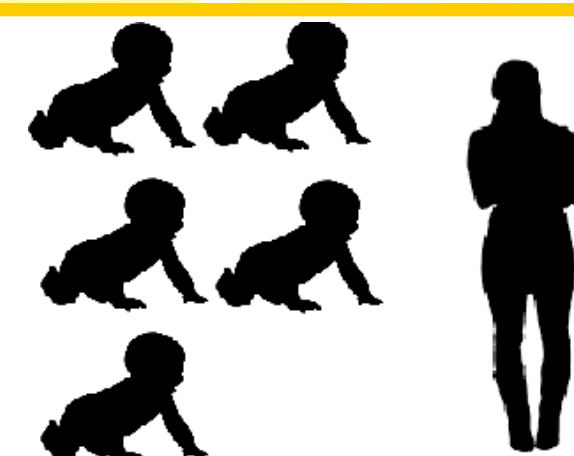


Figure 2: The current early childhood educator to child ratio is 1:5, and is inadequate to facilitate positive one-on-one interactions.