

Family Functioning, Systems, and Adult Development

Family Emotion Expressiveness: Relation to Emotion Knowledge and Emotion Regulation in Young Children

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Although it is clear that emotion knowledge and emotion regulation have beneficial child outcomes (Denham, 1998; Izard, Fine, Schultz, Mostow, Ackerman, & Youngstrom, 2001), it is less clear what contributes to their development. Children's early emotion experiences in the home may serve as one contributor to the development of emotion competence. Specifically, children and mothers who discuss emotions in the home are more likely to also discuss causes and consequences of actions during social conflict (Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall; 1991), which contributes to the development of emotion situation knowledge. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2002) found that parents who minimize feelings or react punitively to their children's negative emotions have children who have poor emotion regulation. Gottman et al. (1997) also found that parents that are more open to expression and the experience of emotion have children that are higher in social competence and emotion regulation. In the current study, we examined one aspect of the family emotion environment, family emotion expressiveness, using Halberstadt's (1986) Family Expressiveness Questionnaire, and how it related to children's level of emotion knowledge and emotion regulation with 101 three to six year old children. Positive family emotion expressiveness was unrelated to emotion situation knowledge and emotion regulation. Negative family emotion expressiveness, however, was related to higher emotion situation knowledge but less emotion regulation. Thus, children who came from homes in which negative emotions were frequently expressed were more likely to understand the causes and consequences of emotion. However, in contrast, children from homes in which negative emotions were frequently expressed were less able to regulate their emotions. Children's ability to understand emotions was positively correlated with their ability to regulate them. However, children's emotion situation knowledge did not predict emotion regulation.

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The Impact of an Early Head Start Program on Family Self-Sufficiency Activities

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Early Head Start (EHS) programs promote children's positive development by supporting good parenting, promoting family self-sufficiency, and providing services directly to children (Raikes & Love, 2002). Given the interplay between poverty and parenting, many programs seek to promote economic self-sufficiency (Olds et al., 1986, 2004). The purpose of this study was to explore whether parents in one EHS program had better problem solving, support seeking and utilization of services that enhanced self-sufficiency than the comparison group.

Data are from a longitudinal study of children eligible for Early Head Start at one site in the Midwest. Data were collected at application, near the child's 14th, 24th, and 36th month, and at 6, 17, and 28 months after enrollment. At enrollment, parents ($N = 189$; 92 Comparison; 97 Program), mostly mothers, were 22 years of age ($SD = 5$); children were 5 months of age ($SD = 3.7$). A majority were Caucasian (75%) and single parents (61.8%) with 44.5 % not completing high school. The median annual household income was \$7,714.

Measures included the F-COPES (McCubbin, Olson, & Larson, 1987), a 30-item scale with 5 subscales: Cognitive Reframing, Seeking Spiritual Support, Seeking Support from Friends and Family, Seeking Support from Neighbors, and Seeking Support from Service Providers (McKelvey, Fitzgerald, Schiffman, & von Eye, 2002). Parents answered questions about whether, at any time in the study, they were: 1) employed, 2) in education, 3) on public assistance, 4) involved in services related to education or job training, 5) involved in employment services, 6) receiving housing assistance, and 7) receiving transportation assistance. Findings indicate a pattern of positive impacts for EHS parents after controlling for covariates (child birth order, maternal demographic risk, and early childhood disability). The Repeated Measures ANOVA for F-COPES indicates that, by the children's third birthday, EHS parents report higher levels of seeking formal support providers and utilizing spiritual support than comparison parents, whose scores declined. A trend in the opposite direction was observed for support from neighbors with EHS families reporting less over time while comparison families reported more. The hierarchical logistic regression demonstrated that EHS parents were more apt to participate in educational and job training activities and less likely than comparison parents to have worked during the study.

There is counter balance between support from service providers and seeking support from neighbors between the two groups. Perhaps EHS families because of their participation were more receptive to other formal supports. Spiritual support was an unexpected finding and may be due to the EHS program's community network and the prevalence of faith-based assistance in the community. Patterns of impact on self-sufficiency from this EHS program reflect those in the national evaluation (Administration for Children and Families, 2002). Although EHS

families were less likely to have worked than comparison families, we find this to be positive. Education and job training are more likely to build the capacity of the families to perhaps find better paying jobs in the future than to continue working in low-wage and often temporary employment.

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A Description of Children's Self-Regulatory Abilities and Demographic and Process Risk Indicators in a Rural Sample

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Children's self-regulation is an important predictor of school success (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Self-regulatory abilities allow children to stay on task, persist at difficult tasks, and establish other adaptive classroom behaviors. For this reason, having clear insight into children's self-regulatory abilities upon the entrance into kindergarten offers understanding of some of the processes underlying academic success. The goal of this study is to examine the characteristics of children's self-regulation upon entrance to kindergarten in a rural sample. Two questions emerge: 1) what is the range of characteristics of children's self-regulation for a rural sample of children upon entrance to kindergarten? 2) How do demographic and process indicators of risk relate to children's self-regulation.

Rural families were recruited to participate in the study at public school kindergarten registration at seven schools. 190 parents completed questionnaires for this study at the time of registration. Examiners administered the self-regulatory batteries at school during the first month of kindergarten. In this sample, 76% of children were identified by their parents as Caucasian, 19% African-American, 2% Hispanic, and 3% other. In the year before entering kindergarten, 42% children attended pre-school or daycare (full-time and part-time included), 39% children stayed home with a parent or relative, and 19% children attended Head Start.

Parents completed five questionnaires. 1) A demographic questionnaire measured family socio-economic indicators and child pre-school experience. 2) Raising Children item measured lax, firm, and harsh parenting styles, (Shumow, Vandell, & Posner, 1998); 3) What I Expect of my Child measured children's self-control and independence, (Greenberg & Goldberg, 1998); 4) The Child Behavior Questionnaire sub-test measured two aspects of child temperament: attentional focusing and inhibitory control (Rothbart, Ahadi, & Hershey, 1994);. 5) Parent Activities with Children measured type and frequency of parental interactions with children, (adapted from FACES, 1998).

Researchers measured children's self-regulatory abilities using four measures validated for this age group (McCabe, Hernandez, Lara, & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). 1) Balance beam measured motor control. 2) Pencil tap measured cognitive control. 3) Toy sort measured impulse control. 4) Gift wrap measured delay of gratification.

The results of this study suggest that family and child characteristics relate to children's early behaviors in the self-regulation battery in predictable and systematic ways. Family social processes, child temperamental attributes, and pre-school experiences combine to predict children's competency in self-regulatory behavior, an ability that underlies school success (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). These findings have implications for family-school collaborations. Recent work conceptualizing the transition to kindergarten describes children's success as intricately related to family, preschool, and community factors (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta,

2000). Almost half the children entering kindergarten experience some adjustment problems (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Children's display of self-regulatory abilities are known to relate to school readiness (Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Several studies have shown the importance of early parent-child interactions in the formation of self-regulation (Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). This suggests that parents and pre-school educators can emphasize self-regulatory behaviors to offset the demands placed on children during the transition to kindergarten and promote future academic success.

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Risk Exposure in Toddlers of Low-Income Families: Links to Child Functioning at Kindergarten Entry

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Low income children are exposed to higher levels of violence than are children in middle and upper income levels, including violence that occurs in the home and in the neighborhood. There are well documented relationships between poverty and maternal depression, paternal antisocial and substance abuse behaviors, familial violence and less optimal parent-child relationships. This study sought to identify the impacts of exposure to these risks for 3-year-old children in low-income families on subsequent child development outcomes at pre-Kindergarten entry.

Participants were 425 families assessed when the child was 3 years old and at entry into kindergarten who were recruited to participate in a study of the efficacy of Early Head Start (EHS). At the child's birth, mothers were 23 (SD=6) and fathers (or father-figures) were 27 (SD=7) years of age. About half of the mothers and fathers in the sample were Caucasian, about a quarter were Hispanic, and 15% were Black. Overall median annual household income at enrollment was \$9,365 (range=\$0 to \$48,000).

Maternal and paternal depressive symptomatology (CES-D SF; Radloff, 1977), maternal reports of neighborhood crime (sum of affirmative responses to 3 questions regarding witnessing, knowing the victim of and/or being the victim of a violent crime in the neighborhood), and paternal antisocial behavior (sum of affirmative responses to 4 questions related to expulsion from school, loss of employment because of behavior, attitude, or work performance, arrest or conviction of a crime, and/or having a drinking or drug problem) were used in a hierarchical regression to predict child outcomes at entry to Kindergarten. Potential differences in demographic, programmatic, and child cognitive development (Bayley Scales of Infant Development – Mental Development Index, Bayley, 1993) were controlled.

Findings suggest that the most salient predictor of child development at pre-kindergarten, apart from the child's cognitive scores when they were 3 years old, was maternal depression. Results suggest that maternal depression reported at 3 years of age and child's aggressive, withdrawn, and hyperactive behaviors were significantly related such that as maternal depression at the child's 3rd year of life increased, aggression, hyperactivity, and withdrawn behaviors (Child Behavior Checklist; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) as reported at Kindergarten entry increased.

No impacts of earlier family risk on children's later cognitive (Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement; Mather & Woodcock, 2001) and language (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Dunn & Dunn, 1997) development were supported. The only family risk related to child cognitive outcomes was in the case of the child's ability to sustain attention (Leiter-R; Roid & Miller, 1997), where earlier paternal antisocial behaviors were positively related to a child's ability to attend to a task. This finding is intriguing given findings from previous work that indicate paternal antisocial behaviors reported at 3 years of child's age were negatively related to concurrently assessed child emotional regulation (Fitzgerald et al., 2006). Overall, findings

suggest that there is a long term effect of maternal depression on child behavioral outcomes and that exposure to earlier family risk does not seem to impact cognitive and language development at kindergarten entry.

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