

# Impacts of Early Head Start on Children and Families: Variation by Subgroups of Families and Programs

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# Research Conducted by Early Head Start Research Consortium

The Consortium consists of representatives from 17 programs participating in the evaluation, 15 local research teams, the evaluation contractors, and ACF/ACYF.

Research institutions in the Consortium (and principal researchers) include ACF (Rachel Chazan Cohen, Judith Jerald, Esther Kresh, Helen Raikes, and Louisa Tarullo); Catholic University of America (Michaela Farber, Lynn Milgram Mayer, Harriet Liebow, Christine Sabatino, Nancy Taylor, Elizabeth Timberlake, and Shavaun Wall); Columbia University (Lisa Berlin, Christy Brady-Smith, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, and Alison Sidle Fuligni); Harvard University (Catherine Ayoub, Barbara Alexander Pan, and Catherine Snow); Iowa State University (Dee Draper, Gayle Luze, Susan McBride, Carla Peterson); Mathematica Policy Research (Kimberly Boller, Ellen Eliason Kisker, John M. Love, Diane Paulsell, Christine Ross, Peter Schochet, Cheri Vogel, and Welmoet van Kammen); Medical University of South Carolina (Richard Faldowski, Gui-Young Hong, and Susan Pickrel); Michigan State University (Hiram Fitzgerald, Tom Reischl, and Rachel Schiffman); New York University (Mark Spellmann and Catherine Tamis-LeMonda); University of Arkansas (Robert Bradley, Mark Swanson, and Leanne Whiteside-Mansell); University of California, Los Angeles (Carollee Howes and Claire Hamilton); University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (Robert Emde, Jon Korfmacher, JoAnn Robinson, Paul Spicer, and Norman Watt); University of Kansas (Jane Atwater, Judith Carta, and Jean Ann Summers); University of Missouri-Columbia (Mark Fine, Jean Ispa, and Kathy Thornburg); University of Pittsburgh (Carol McAllister, Beth Green, and Robert McCall); University of Washington School of Education (Eduardo Armijo and Joseph Stowitschek); University of Washington School of Nursing (Kathryn Barnard and Susan Spieker); and Utah State University (Lisa Boyce and Lori Roggman).

# Features of the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project

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- Began in 1995; conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Princeton, NJ; Columbia University
- Local researchers in 15 universities
- In 17 Wave I and Wave II Early Head Start programs—4 center-based, 7 home-based, and 6 mixed approach by fall 1997
- Followed 3,001 children and families from the time they entered the program until age 3
- Random assignment—program and control group
- Response rates varied by data source

# Characteristics of Families at Baseline

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- Race/Ethnicity
  - African American 34%
  - Hispanic 24%
  - White 37%
  - Other 5%
- Main language not English 20%
- Education < high school 48%
- Receives AFDC/TANF 36%
- Teen parent 39%
- Pregnant with focus child 24%
- One adult in the home 38%

# Many Measures Used

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- Implementation data, including ratings
- Family service use data 7, 16, and 28 months after enrollment (both program and control)
- Child and family data collected when children were 14, 24, and 36 months old and in prek
  - Parent interview and in-home observations; child assessments; videotaped observations of parent-child interaction; interviewer observations; child care quality observations
- Prek tracking interviews following last 0-3 interview

# Positive Impacts on Multiple Dimensions of Children's Development

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## Cognitive:

- Higher mean Bayley MDI
- Smaller percent MDI<85

## Language:

- Higher mean PPVT scores
- Smaller percent PPVT<85

## Social-emotional development:

- Lower mean CBCL aggression scores
- Less negativity toward parent
- Higher sustained attention with objects
- Greater engagement of parent

# Positive Impacts on Parenting

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- Greater warmth and supportiveness
- Less detachment
- Higher mean HOME scores
- More support for language and learning
- More daily reading
- Less spanking by both mothers and fathers

# Positive Impacts on Parent Self-Sufficiency

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- More hours in education and job training
- More employment hours
- No impacts on welfare receipt or income



# Learning What Works: Analysis of Subgroups



# All Program Approaches Had Favorable Impacts, but Patterns Differed

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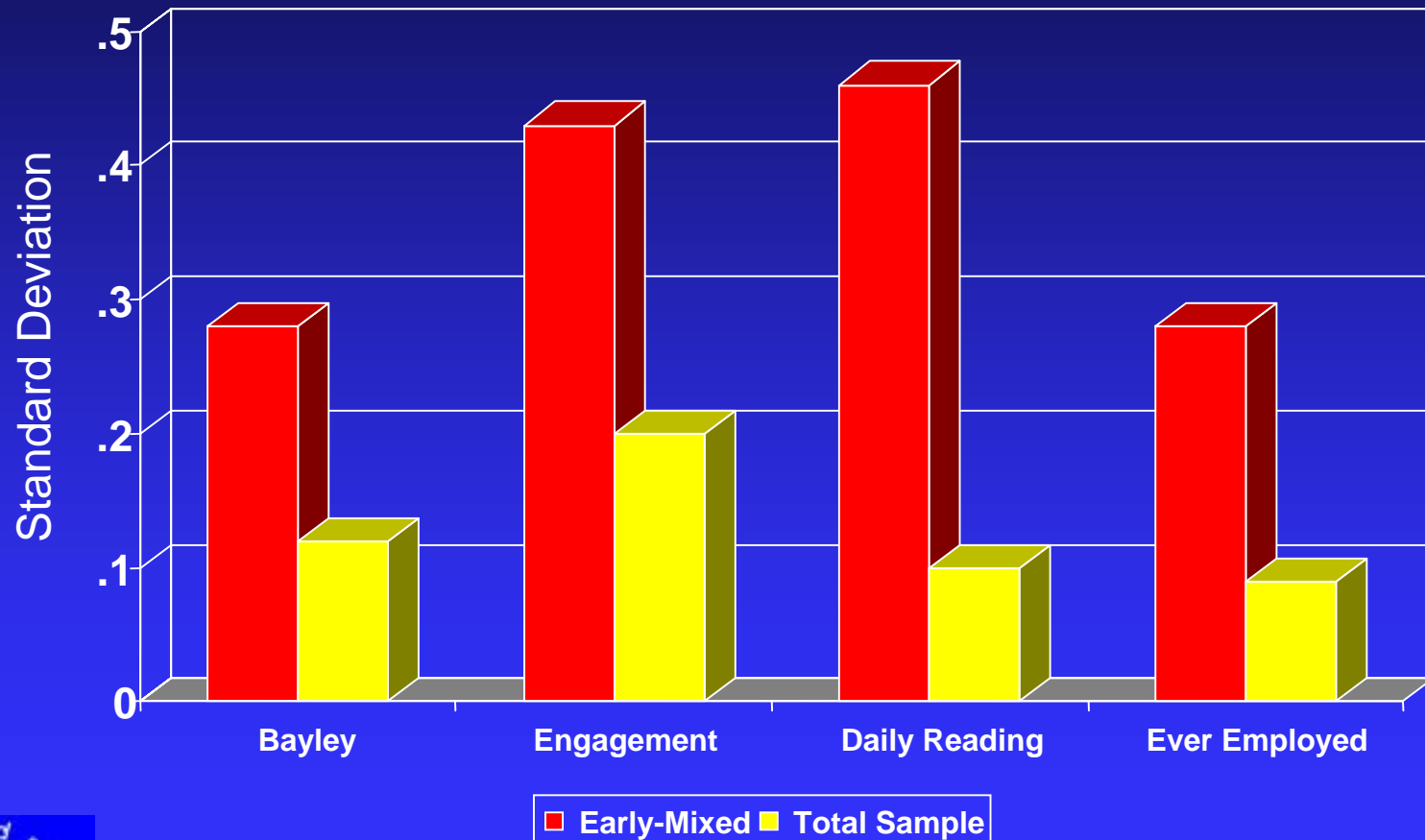
- **Center-based programs**
  - Enhanced child outcomes, esp. cognitive development
  - Improved some parenting outcomes
- **Home-based programs**
  - Enhanced children's social-emotional development
  - Reduced parenting stress
- **Mixed-approach programs**
  - Enhanced children's language development
  - Improved wide range of parenting behaviors

# Implementing Head Start Performance Standards Strengthened Impacts

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- Programs that most fully implemented the standards affected more types of outcomes when children were 3, including:
  - **Child outcomes**
  - **Parent-child interactions**
  - **Parenting**
    - ◆ **Mental health**
  - **Progress toward economic self-sufficiency**

# Impacts In Early-Implemented Mixed Programs Larger Than Overall Impacts



# Most Types of Families Benefited from EHS Participation

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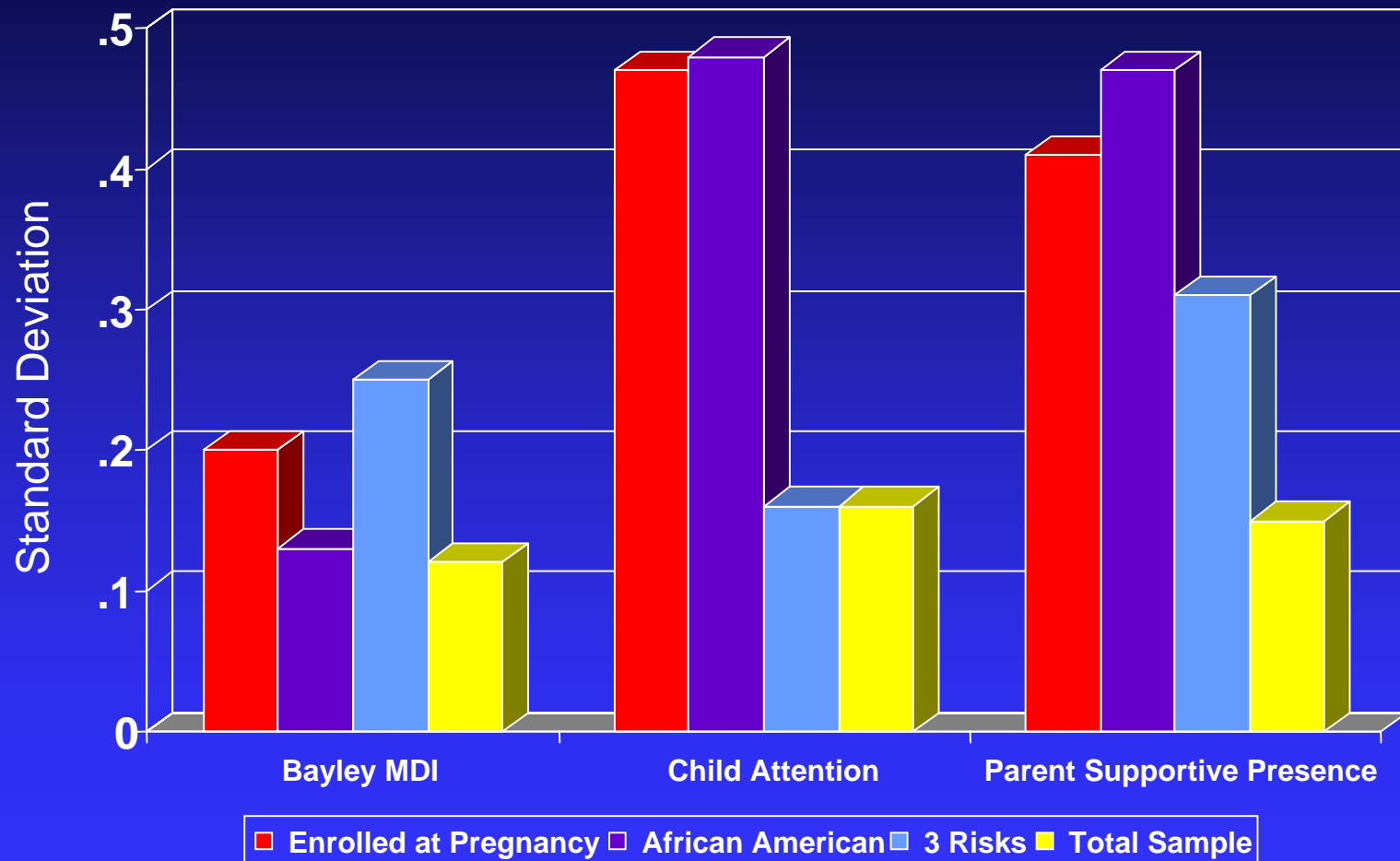
- **Pregnant/child born**
- **Teenage/older mother**
- **First-born/late-born child**
- **African American/Hispanic/White**
- **Number of maternal risk factors (out of 5 possible)**
  - Single parent
  - Teenage mother
  - Receiving public assistance
  - Neither working nor in school
  - No high school diploma or GED

# Most Types of Families Benefited from EHS Participation (cont.)

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- At risk/not at risk of depression (subset of research sites)
- Lack high school diploma or GED/higher education
- Employed/in school or training/neither
- Living with spouse/other adults/alone with children
- Receiving AFDC/TANF or not
- Main language English/other
- Girl/boy

# Impacts Were Larger in 3 Groups



# Conclusions

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- **Early Head Start was broadly effective across a wide array of outcomes and family subgroups.**
- **In several subgroups, impacts were larger as well as broad, demonstrating potential focus areas for programs in the future.**



# For More Information...

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[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs\\_resrch/index.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/ehs/ehs_resrch/index.html)