

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

Attending to the Early Childhood Needs of Infants and Toddlers

Lessons from Black Families and their Babies

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Presentation at the Early Childhood Investigations
February 24, 2022



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A graphic with a dark blue background and white text. On the left is a portrait of Iheoma U. Iruka, and on the right is a portrait of Kamyé Hugley. The text in the center reads 'SPEAKERS', 'Iheoma U. Iruka', '&', and 'Kamyé Hugley'.

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Thank you for the invitation!

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Honoring Native Lands

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE, WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES' ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.
LUMBEE TRIBE PROVIDES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS WITHIN THE AREAS OF CUMBERLAND, HOKE, ROBESON, AND SCOTLAND COUNTIES IN NC.



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Honoring Black Bodies

- Many parts of the US was built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.
- Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy. The wealth of our nation is due to the forced free labor of these Africans.

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When you think about it, our children exist in a duality of 'the land of opportunity,' and 'the home of racism and debilitating inequities.'

#BlackBabiesMatter
National Black Child Development Institute President and CEO
Dr. Leelah Alcorn

IT IS EASIER TO BUILD STRONG CHILDREN THAN TO REPAIR BROKEN MEN.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

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Take Home Message



- Need to address the **dual pandemics** being experienced by Black families and children.
- Must attend to the **cultural assets** of Black communities in policymaking and research
- **Antiracist policies** must center justice and whether policies address historical and current inequities of Black communities
- Engage and activate the **Black Child National Agenda**
- We must center our **excellence, heritage, and ancestral knowledge** in our research practice, and policies to meet the humanity of Black children, families, and communities.



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Ground setting



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Science of Early Development

- Early experiences are essential for **building brain** connections that underlie healthy development.
- Early adversity can change the **timing of critical periods** of brain development.
- Healthy development of the child begins in the **preconception period**.
- **Supportive relationships** between the child and the adults in life are **essential** and buffer against stress.



Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2019). *Vibrant and Healthy: Advancing Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25466>

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Lessons from the Science of Early Development

The influence of access to basic resources prenatally is powerful and limit chronic stress and help close racial and economic disparities.

Both institutional racism and interpersonal experiences of discrimination can influence the health and well-being of both children and adults in many ways.



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Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Unborn and Healthy: Advancing Science, Practice, and Policy to Advance Health Equity*. The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17126/2016>



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Advancing child health, development, and learning starts prior to birth and matters throughout the life course.

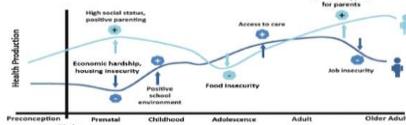


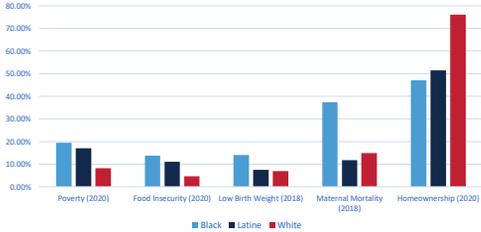
FIGURE 1-1 Variable health trajectories: Life course approach
NOTE: This figure includes several examples; however, there are many other variables that impact health trajectories (see Chapter 3).
SOURCE: Adapted from Halfon et al., 2014.

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Black households make up about ~13% of the US population but make up the largest or second largest racial/ethnic group in 19 states & DC.



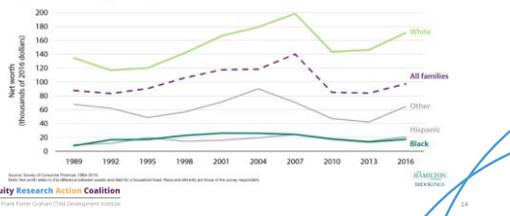
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Black and Hispanic median net worth is 8-10X less than White families.

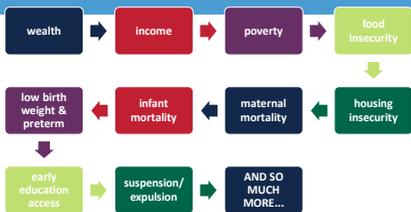
Median Net Worth by Race/Ethnicity, 1989-2016



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Disparities start prenatally and after birth...



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Black children, in particular, are likely to be in lower quality rated programs regardless of auspice.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of quality rating of child care arrangements of children at about 4 years of age, by type of arrangement and race/ethnicity: 2005-06

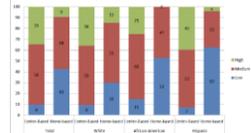
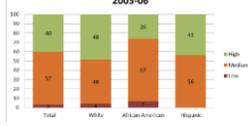


Figure 2: Percentage distribution of quality rating of Head Start centers for children at about 4 years of age, by race/ethnicity: 2005-06



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Barnett, W. S., Carlson, M., & Johns, D. (2013). Equity and excellence: African American children's access to quality preschool. Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education and Research, Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

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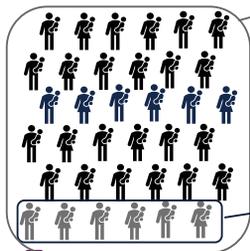


Black families and babies experience multiple adversities prior to and after birth. There is also a growing understanding of the cultural wealth that Black families use to navigate against structural racism and other racialized experiences.

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Black Parents and Their Babies - Data



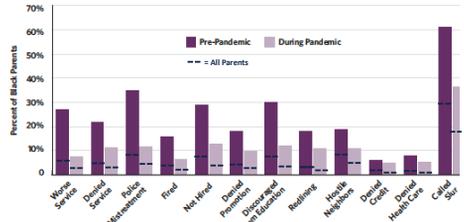
- 768 Black families/caregiver
 - Surveyed between April – March 2021
 - Average household income of \$56,097
 - higher than the 2019 median income for Black households of \$45,438
 - 7% immigrant caregivers
 - Majority English-speaking households
 - Representing 43 states and DC
- Survey focus areas
 - Surveyed families about their experiences with racism and discrimination, financial security, mental health, wellbeing, early care and education options

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More Black parents report experiences of discrimination than other parents.

Figure 1. Black Parents of Babies: Experiences of Discrimination



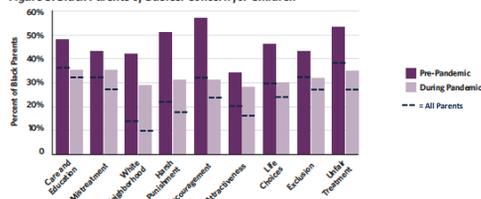
Note: N = 235, RAPID-EC surveyed between August 24, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

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More Black parents have concern about their child's racialized experiences than other parents.

Figure 3. Black Parents of Babies: Concern for Children



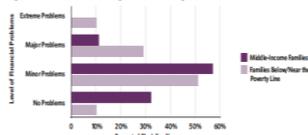
Note: N = 235, RAPID-EC survey between August 24, 2020, and March 8, 2021.



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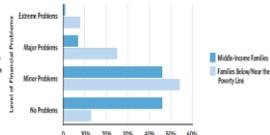
About 40% of Black families in poverty experience major/extreme financial problems compared to 30% of non-Black families in poverty.

Figure 9. Financial Strain During Pandemic among Black Families with Babies



Note: N = 145, RAPID-EC survey between April 6, 2020, and March 8, 2021.

Figure 10. Financial Strain During Pandemic among All Families with Babies



Note: N = 132, RAPID-EC survey between April 6, 2020, and March 8, 2021.



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More parents in poverty report missing well-baby visit than middle-income families. Black families likely to miss due to vaccine hesitancy, transportation, and ECE access.

Table 4. Reasons for Delaying Well-baby Checkups for Black Families and All Families with Babies

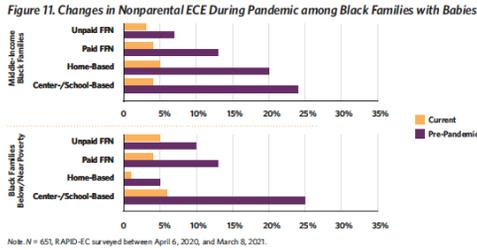
	Black Families with Babies		All Families with Babies	
	Below/Near Poverty	Middle-Income	Below/Near Poverty	Middle-Income
Missed Well-Baby	33.58%	29.91%	35.72%	23.38%
Reason for Delay*				
Concern for COVID-19	79.50%	81.45%	75.58%	74.20%
Inability to Find Early Care & Education	16.75%	5.88%	13.94%	8.55%
Time Away from Work	8.00%	9.50%	5.67%	4.81%
Cost	6.00%	6.33%	6.28%	4.81%
Caring for Family	10.5%	2.71%	6.28%	3.87%
Vaccine Hesitancy	15.25%	9.95%	9.88%	4.81%
Doctor Cancellation	9.25%	9.50%	10.90%	9.23%
Transportation	7.25%	0.90%	3.25%	0.55%
Other	8.25%	12.66%	14.34%	22.37%

Note: Black families with babies N = 401; full sample with babies N = 7242; RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6, 2020, and March 8, 2021. *Based on those who reported delaying their child's health care.



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Most Black parents reduced use of out of home care during pandemic, especially in centers. Similar use of center/school based compared to FFN and home-based programs.



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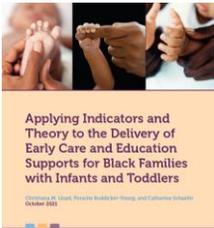
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Key Findings

- Racism and discrimination remain a concern for Black families and their babies, along with economic instability and access to early care and education options.
- Black families with babies face economic insecurity and material hardships.
- COVID-19 caused disruption in parents' and babies' health care, well-being, and early care and education placements.
- Black families begin promoting their babies' racial identity early.

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Cultural wealth are forms of capital that children of color bring with them that are often unrecognized or unacknowledged

Child FEASURES
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Preservative Policies

- No policy or policy approaches that support the cultural heritage, language, family preservation, and positive racial identity of Black families and babies.
- ****Attend to increasing wages and compensation of ECE workforce.**

Table 1. Alignment between the 3Ps Framework, *critic of family and child policy and program areas and state policies reviewed by the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Clearinghouse*

3Ps Framework: Preservation		
Racial and Ethnic Cultural Identity	Early Education (e.g., curriculum workforce coaching)	No
	Child Welfare (e.g., child care)	No



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Findings

- Need for research as well additional policy and program refinement to begin to address and dismantle systemic and anti-Black racism and bias in policy for Black families with young children
- Need for research and policies focused on economic mobility and wealth generation
- Still limited research and policies that address the cultural preservation of Black families, children and communities



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Where do we go from here?



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10 Policies

1. Maintain Child Tax Credits and Income Supports
2. Address Racial Disparities in Wages and Career Advancement Opportunities
3. Invest in Black-Owned and Black-Led Businesses, Organizations, and Institutions
4. Expand the Family and Medical Leave Act
5. Expand Health Insurance
6. Expand Universal Access to Early Care and Education
7. Address Harsh and Unfair Discipline Practices
8. Ensure Equity in Early Intervention and Special Education
9. Ensure Culturally Responsive Curricula and Practices through Workforce Development and Training
10. Pass Reparations

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take home message
#WeShallOvercome

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