

Early Childhood Education

A Summary of Some of the Available Research

US Department of Health and Human Services (2006), “The NICHD study of early childcare and youth development: Findings for children up to age 4½ years”, NIH Pub. 05-4318

The most comprehensive study to date. From 1991, 25 researchers at 10 US universities (known as the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network) reported preliminary findings in 2001 related child care arrangements to maternal attachment and child behaviour. Principal researcher Jay Belsky reported the strong correlation between longer hours of non-maternal care and behavioural problems; specifically, aggression; non-compliant behaviours; temper tantrums; demanding, disruptive, explosive behaviour; cruelty; and fighting, just to name a few. These findings were evident despite the study having a low representation of children from families that would normally display these aggressive behaviours (eg. low income, solo parent, etc). Having previously been a proponent of day care, Belsky now found that in actuality studies over the previous twenty years had pointed to similar negative effects of maternal absence on child development, but these had been buried in academic journals.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2003), “Does Amount of Time Spent in Child Care Predict Socioemotional Adjustment During the Transition to Kindergarten?”, *Child Development*, (Vol. 74. Issue 4): 976–1005

This NICHD study found that “the more time children spent in any of a variety of non-maternal care arrangements across the first 4.5 years of life, the more externalising problems and conflict with adults they manifested at 54 months of age and in kindergarten, as reported by mothers, caregivers, and teachers. These effects remained, for the most part, even when quality, type, and instability of child care were controlled, and when maternal sensitivity and other family background factors were taken into account.”

Bonawitz, E., Shafto, P., Gweon, H., Goodman, N. D., Spelke, E., Schulz, L. (2011), *The double-edged sword of pedagogy: Instruction limits spontaneous exploration and discovery*, “Cognition”, Volume 120, Issue 3, September 2011, Pages 322-330

A 2011 MIT study suggests that early childhood education “comes at a cost: children are less likely to discover novel information”. ECE has a negative effect on children’s “exploration and discovery”.

Baker, M., Gruber, J., Milligan, K. (February 1, 2006). *What can we learn from Quebec’s Universal Childcare Program?* [e-brief], Institut C.D. Howe

This 2006 8-year study of 33,000 4-year-olds and under into Quebec’s Universal Childcare Program found “some positives but some strikingly negative outcomes on children’s well-being and family functioning”. And found for “almost every measure, increased use of childcare was associated with a decrease in children’s well-being relative to other children”. It concludes that “the evidence leaves it unclear whether the program is what is best for children and their parents”.

Loeb, S., Bridges, M., Bassok, D., Fuller, B., Rumberger, R. W. (2007), “How much is too much? The influence of preschool centres on children’s social and cognitive development,” *Economics of Education Review*, (26): 52–66

This joint Stanford-Berkley Universities study found that “overall, centre-based care raises reading and maths scores, but has a negative effect for socio-behavioural measures”, and that “the intensity of the effects depend on family income and race”.

William and Wendy Dreskin, *The Day Care Decision* (1983), M Evans and Co, New York

William and Wendy Dreskin tell the story of setting up a high-quality day care centre in San Francisco. The teachers had graduate training, there were low child-to-adult ratios, and there was excellent curriculum and equipment. But they discovered that happy preschool-age children started to withdraw, lash out and inconsolably cry. They witnessed the problem with their own centre and other centres – that day care was disrupting natural family bonds as children were being forced to be away from parents before they were ready. They closed their centre.

Brian C Robertson, *Day Care Deception: what the child care establishment isn't telling us* (2003), Encounter Books, California

Sociologist J Conrad Schwartz found in 1986 that group care was associated with lower intelligence, poorer verbal skills and shorter attention.

Selma Frailberg, “Every Child’s Birthright” (1977) quoted in Marian Blum, *The Day Care Dilemma: Women and Children First* (1983), Lexington Books, pp 92-93

Clinician and researcher Selma Frailberg writes that institutional day care, no matter what the quality, is unable to satisfy the need every child has for devotion from one special adult as even the best trained caregivers are unable to treat every child with this level of devotion. This is compounded by the inevitability of caregivers leaving their place of employment and breaking the attachment a child has made. This is evident also in children over the age of 3.

Dr Raymond S Moore in “Human Events” (September 15, 1984), radio interview, retrieved from <http://www.triviumpursuit.com/blog/2012/09/24/interview-with-raymond-s-moore/>

“Harold McCurdy, a distinguished psychologist from the University of North Carolina and a leading student of genius, says that genius is derived from the experience of children being most of the time with adults and very little with their peers. So when you start assembling children in very large numbers for long periods of time, you are on the wrong course for producing strong character and intellect. The more children around your child, the fewer meaningful human contacts he will have.”