



A Portfolio

By Samantha Smeltzer
Psy 231
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Seventeen things you should do before you try to get pregnant

http://www.babycenter.com/0_seventeen-things-you-should-do-before-you-try-to-get-pregnan_7171.bc?page=1

We covered pre-conception cleansing very heavily in class, so I didn't really feel much of a need to do any further research. However, I did feel I needed to include at least one article on it. This article I found goes over 17 items a woman should consider and/or do prior to attempting to conceive. We did discuss most of these in class, but there are a few that we did not cover, such as the appropriate way to ditch birth control, how long it may take for the birth control to flush out of your system, weight management, and exercise.

I feel that this is a pretty comprehensive list for women who are working on a planned pregnancy. It covers all the basics and even mentions genic testing and family medical history concerns.

What largely appealed to me about this article was how easily it was to read, and that it mentioned items like thinking about your mental health, making sure your partner is on board, and making sure you check out the expense and what your health insurance does and does not cover. After all of these items can greatly increase stress, which is not safe for a pregnant woman or her unborn child.



The importance of Prenatal care

While looking for information prenatal care, I came across this letter from the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists to the 2012 presidential candidates. This was a short but informative letter concerning the need for prenatal care.

In the letter Dr. Martin, president of the ACOG in 2012, talked about how a lack of poor prenatal contributes directly to preterm birth, and how preterm birth can lead to a variety of birth defects, illness, and disorders.

I found this letter to be very informative and to the point. I think that Dr. Martin was clear and concise to the point and shed light on a subject that needs to be addressed. With all the talk of health care reform, especially at the time of the 2012 Presidential race, this letter had great timing and it's simplicity made it effective.

I found the statistics of various ailments that could occur from pre term birth, such as cerebral palsy, difficulty with breathing, and increased chances of behavioral and learning disabilities shocking.

<http://www.acog.org/~media/Departments/Government%20Relations%20and%20Outreach/20120221FactsareImportant.pdf?dmc=1&ts=20131021T1311024155>



Importance of Prenatal Sound and Music

<http://birthpsychology.com/free-article/importance-prenatal-sound-and-music>

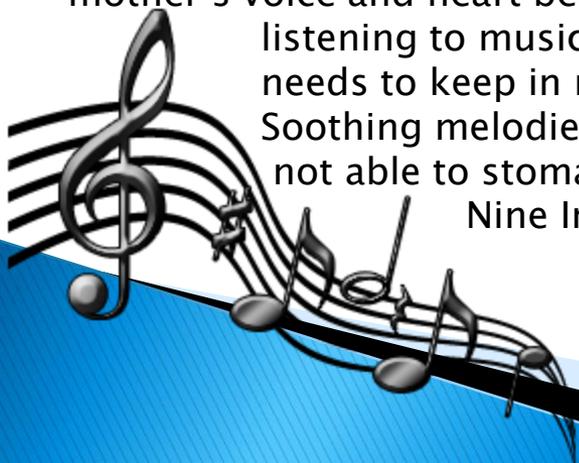
This article was really amazing. It talked about all the various studies done on prenatal sounds and music, and the important developmental aspects of hearing music and the mother's voice in the womb.

It was fascinating to hear the research behind the belief that listening to classical music can make your baby more intelligent.

While this turns out to not be entirely true, it is proven that listening to certain types of music can have a huge impact on the development of your child. This prenatal exposure can help stimulate and improve language skills, which I found to be very interesting.

One of the most interesting areas of the article for me, was how music can be considered a pre-linguistic language. I would have never thought about that. The amount of sound a fetus is exposed to is amazing, and with music being one of the most influential sounds, along with the mother's voice and heart beat. It really does put a large amount of fact to the concept of listening to music and talking to your baby in utero. One thing I believe any mother needs to keep in mind though, is the type of music that your child will benefit from. Soothing melodies will be more beneficial than hard hitting beats. So maybe if your just not able to stomach some Mozart, then at least consider some Michael Buble over Nine Inch Nails!

music prepares the ear, body and brain to listen to, integrate and produce language sounds. Music can thus be considered a pre-linguistic language which is nourishing and stimulating to the whole human being, affecting body, emotions, intellect, and developing an internal sense of beauty, sustaining and awakening the qualities in us that are wordless and otherwise inexpressible. (Whitewell)



Birthing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL6ymEn1Lq0>

The following video was pretty interesting. It's a short interview with a doula on what she believes are the five most important items a pregnant Woman needs to give a successful birth using her Chosen method. The important items include:

- Exercise (both regular and special pregnancy exercises)
- Proper nutrition to have a healthy gut, well fed brain and well nourished baby
- A supportive care giver to insure that you have the support you need for the type of birth you want
- A birth doula, whether you are birthing at home or in the hospital, to help you through the birth process



The video is informative and concise. I like that she explains her reasons for each of the items she is talking about. I also found it very interesting that with being a doula herself, she listed that last among her items. Listening to her in this short video you can tell that she is most concerned about the mother and child's well being.

Weird and wonderful world of hypnobirthing

<http://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news/news.php?id=1348858>



This piece was interesting because it was essentially one woman telling her story of hypnobirthing and how she came to choose that method of delivery. It also addressed some of the more common myths about hypnobirthing, such as it's "hippie" or one is actually being hypnotized, none of which are true.

I enjoyed how this woman, Jenny Philpot, told her story and related her experience in a way that makes this alternative method more appealing to individuals, like myself, that are leery of not being in a hospital and under a doctors care since that is what most of us are raised to believe is needed.

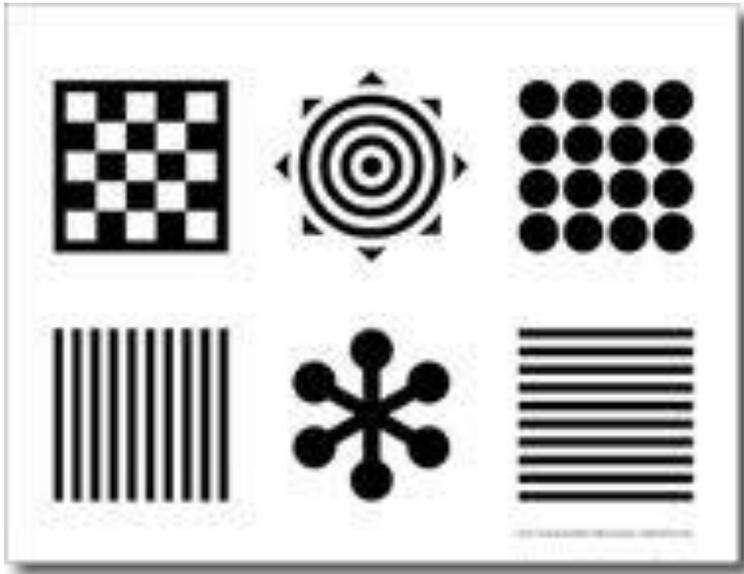
I also found the fact that the author cited references to various celebrities that use and support the method to be

rather genius, as it makes it even more appealing to the general public that are not aware of what the method is.

A take home message that I got from this article is that this truly is a safe method, but one should have at least a midwife present. Additionally, I learned that this is one of the most natural forms of delivery. I don't believe that is a thought that occurs to most individuals. Women have been giving birth for centuries. It wasn't until in the last century or so, that medical care was available. It seems to me that having a natural child birth should not be a scary thing, it is after all a natural experience. Our society should start embracing our natural instincts again, and hopefully have some happier and healthier babies!

Myths About Child Development: Plasticity and the Brain

This article speaks largely about how the brain develops and what areas develop with experience. Largely it seems that the area of the brain that uses environmental stimuli for its development is the visual cortex. This makes sense seeing as the positioning of our eyes changes as we grow, and that our vision changes over time. Additionally, if an individual were to lose an eye he/she can learn to compensate for that loss to an extent.



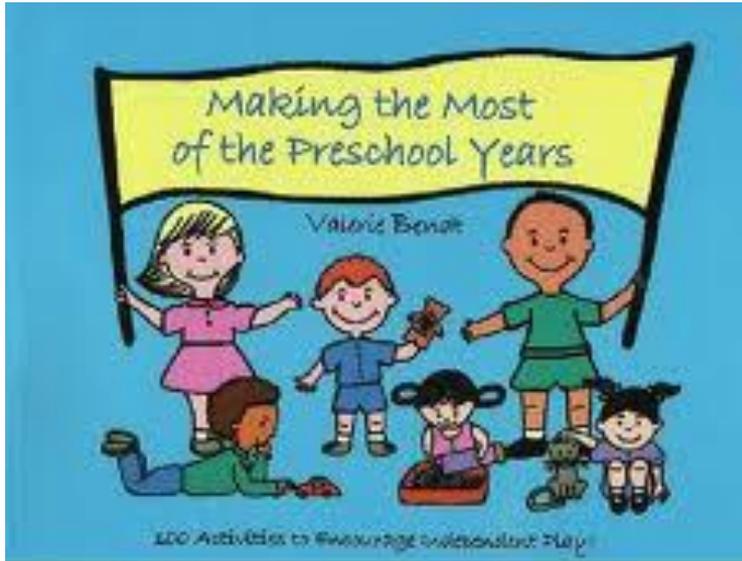
This also supports the notion that a young child needs a lot of visual stimulus to help them learn and mature. Now I know it's not just for cognitive reasons, but also to help develop one's visual cortex!

I found this particular interesting since I am, myself, a very visual person. I have to wonder though if even at an older age you can improve your depth perception. And if so, what type of activities would have to be done.

- ▶ <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/child-myths/200907/myths-about-child-development-plasticity-and-the-brain>

How Children Develop During the Preschool Years

http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=334



I love this article! It is jam packed full of great information pertaining to the developmental milestones of young children. This would make a great comprehensive list of achievements a parent should be looking for in their developing child. It also includes a corresponding list of what the parents/care givers can do to help nurture these milestones and insure that their child is ready for their school years.

One of my favorite aspects of this article was the section that emphasizes the importance of pretend play and how to foster play for you child so that it is highly beneficial for them. I have always known that play is important, but not in this context. I believed that a child should play to explore and have fun. This article however, makes it evident that play is also

important for a child's development in areas including but not limited to: problem solving, creative expression, emotional expression and communication skills.

There was another area of this article that made me extremely excited, and that was to see that it included a list of reading material for young children and examples and suggestions of how to set a good example for your children when it comes to reading. You always hear about the importance of reading to your child, but this article shows how even small tasks such as keeping lists around the house can reinforce the importance of reading. Children who see parents reading in a variety of ways, like lists and letters, can increase a child's curiosity of the different types of reading and the different content being read.

An Environment that Positively Impacts Young Children

By Rebecca Isbell, Ed.D.

http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=334

“If she spends her day in an effectively designed environment, Jessica will be physically, emotionally, aesthetically, and intellectually nurtured. This appropriate environment can maximize her intellectual potential and provide a foundation for the development of her emotional security.” (Isbell)

This article by Rebecca Isbell provides some insight and interesting information about how the environment of a day care or preschool setting can have a profound impact on all aspects of development for the young child. It speaks to everything from cognitive development to language development.

I found this to be of particular interest because it truly spoke to the importance of the physical surroundings of a child. Everything from colors and other visual stimuli to having designated areas and different set ups for various activities can have different impacts on how children respond to the daycare/pre-school environment.



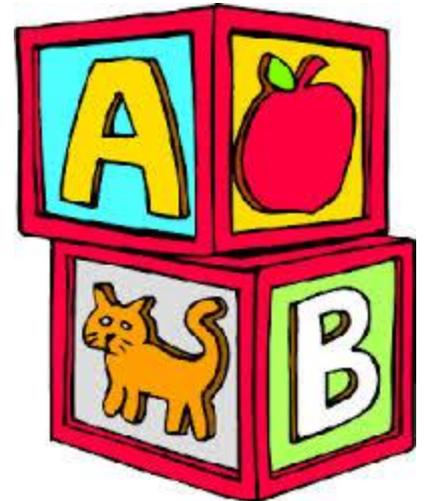
I'm not a mother myself, but prior to reading this article, I'm not sure that I would have thought to look at many of these different factors if I was looking for a daycare/preschool center. My main concern would have been cleanliness and location. Now I am aware of other important factors in choosing a child's environment.

“Young children strive to make sense of the world in which they live. They try to organize the visual images and concrete objects in their environment into meaningful systems. Children want to determine how the space works and what activities can happen in this place. Today's young children are spending a large number of hours in a "new" environment—child care. Some children who begin attending child care in infancy may spend as much as 12,000 hours in this setting. This massive number of hours in one environment demands that the space be carefully designed to create the "best" place possible for young children.” (Isbell)



In the daycare or preschool environment it is important to make sure that the space children are in is designed to stimulate their developing minds. Making an optimum space can include appropriate color schemes, layout of the space (dividing it into play, reading, music areas, etc.) stimulating images on the walls, and objects that are around. These seemingly small changes and attributes to the environment can have a great impact on the way our children develop.

It seems to me that all of this information can also be applied all parts of the home. Not all families can afford a home with a play room or even to add in exciting stimuli for their children. However, I do believe that with some small effort anyone can make a more stimulating environment for their children. It could be as small as allowing your child to make art and put it up on the walls of the kitchen or dining room to adding some fun colored area rugs or pillows in the living area.



“Children who have severely limited opportunities for appropriate experiences will be delayed; this may permanently affect their learning. But, children who have the opportunity to develop in an organized and appropriate environment are challenged to think and use materials in new ways.” (Isbell)

This section of the article spoke about how the objects in a given space can either stimulate a child to learn and develop or possibly stunt their growth. Having objects such as a large ball for the child to play with will help that child develop not only physically, such as gross motor skills, but also in a cognitive way with identifying the object and learning its function. This article has provided an insight to how important exploring new objects is to a child’s development. This is a concept that we have talked about not only in class but also witnessed it first hand in my observation and volunteer hours at various pediatric occupational therapy clinics.

This article by *Rebecca Isbell*, intrigued me. I’ve learned so much from it! Having come from a family of elementary school teachers and having a mother that worked at a daycare for years, I knew how important the daycare and school setting is for a child’s development and Enrichment. However, I didn’t realize the significance Some seemingly insignificant things . The importance of the type of toys, the décor, and having separate areas for the different activities can have significant impacts on the growth of a child’s cognitive functions. This article reminds me of the admiration and gratitude the individuals who care for our children deserve. I now know how much more they deserve from us, especially knowing the hard work gone to planning and creating a a quality day care to help our children develop and mature.



During the first eight years, children are developing their visual acuity. Their perceptions of objects, movement, and print are expanded as they have opportunities for experiencing interesting visual images. Changes and variations of design intrigue children and cause them to visually attend to the unusual. The young child's environment that includes interesting visual aspects draws them to examine a painting on the wall or recognize a drawing that they have completed. Displays and panels provide visually interesting content to examine as children move about in the classroom space. In the past, many early childhood classrooms were so filled with commercial decorations, materials and, "stuff" that young children were visually overwhelmed. Today, we are working to have less clutter and a more organized display of materials and work, so young children can visually attend to and enjoy the important features of the environment. (Isbell)

This is another excerpt from the article by Rebecca Isbell. I can not say enough how much I learned from reading this and wanted to share some of the sections that I found most intriguing along with what I believe are some strong visual examples or illustrations of the items she is addressing.





“An effective environment is designed so even the youngest of children can become independent. There are many opportunities for them to be successful as they work to do things for themselves. They are not dependent on the teacher and constantly asking for every material they need. (Isbell)

**An orderly display of accessible materials grouped together will help children understand that they are capable of making decisions. The environment will communicate to them, "you can make the selection, you have good ideas, and you can carry out the plan for yourself."
(Isbell)**



Infant Brains Benefit from Breastfeeding

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8WBoj3RojXs>



This video was short and sweet about the benefits of breast milk versus formula. Dr. Saputo was very concise with his information. He was able to communicate in a clear way that we need to stop trying to bypass mother nature and go for the real deal. He enlightened me to the facts that there have been several studies done that show that infants that are breast fed, demonstrate a higher IQ along with better motor skills and increased myelin formation in the brain. This increase in

Myelin allows for the neural system to develop faster and function at a higher rate as the myelin helps to conduction nerve impulses along the axons of nerves.

Dr. Saputo's video definitely makes a compelling argument for breastfeeding when ever possible. There are cases though when a mother is not able to breast feed, whether due to lack or milk production or the need for some sort of medication. So I have to wonder, with the increases in today's technology, will we ever get to a point where formula will be as good as breast milk?

The Moral Life of Babies

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&

This article was rather intriguing. In it the author, **PAUL BLOOM**, wrote about how babies show morality. He referenced several experiments where a baby's sense of right and wrong were tested. The general result was that babies are drawn to good actions and people versus bad actions and people.



Mr. Bloom also discussed how this may develop into how an adult sees right and wrong, and does state that a child's sense of morality is not the same as an adults.

This has me wondering about many different things. How does this play into nature versus nurture? What does this mean for that age old argument? Are we justified in believing in the "good" in people?

I think that a major item to take away from this article and these studies is that we are born with a sense of right and wrong, good and bad, and that we need to nurture this innate sense. The question is how do we accomplish this? What is the best method, and is there a best method?

This also raises a thought as to how the media plays into how our children's sense of right and wrong develop. Should we allow them to watch the news? News tends to be filled with many items in our society that are "evil" or unpleasant, like murders and controversy. How much do the cartoons they watch affect them? I was raised watching Looney Tunes and Bugs Bunny, which some consider violent for children. I would not say that these cartoons gave me any violent tendencies or any negative impact on my development. On the flip side, some of the cartoons, and video games, and movies today are so much more realistic and violent than even 10 years ago, I do believe that can cause a propensity of violence and create a negative impact relating to a child's development.

Co-Sleeping with your Baby

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sleep/cosleeping.html#>

Co-sleeping in the United States is a controversial method. From what we have learned in class, and I've read in this article I can understand why. There are risks involved, such as rolling over on your child, possible increase risk of SIDS and increased separation anxiety as the child gets older.

This article points out all of these possible cons to this method, but also brings to light the benefits of co-sleeping, including increased breast feeding, better sleeping habits, makes it easier for the mother to sync with the infant's sleep cycle and can increase the bond between the parents and child.



I think the biggest take home message from this article is that depending on your personal lifestyle and health you as a parent need to make an informed decision as to whether this is a safe method for you to use. If it's not safe for you and your infant, then there are many alternative ways to achieve similar benefits to traditional co-sleeping. Some of these alternatives include: special cribs that can be connected to the bed or just having a crib or bassinet in your room next to the bed so that you are in close proximity to your child. I also believe after having read this article that if you do decide that co-sleeping is a method that is safe for you and your infant, that you must really take heed to the precautions and make the modifications needed to insure that your infant is as safe as possible.



The Benefits of Co-Sleeping

<http://www.attachmentparenting.org/support/articles/artbenefitscosleep.php>

This second article on co-sleeping provided some similar information as the first article I read did, however it went a bit more into the benefits of the practice than the first.

Some of the short-term or immediate benefits mentioned are the same such as better promotion of breast feeding, better sleep habits for both parents and child. There are a few subjects this article mentioned that was not covered in the previous article, such as increased protective instincts from the mother and potentially a

decrease in risk of SIDS due to the presence of the parents, who may notice when the child stops breathing and can stimulate them. The article also provided some interesting research as to the long term benefits of co-sleeping. These included higher self-esteem, increases in positive behavior from the child and an increase in satisfaction of life.

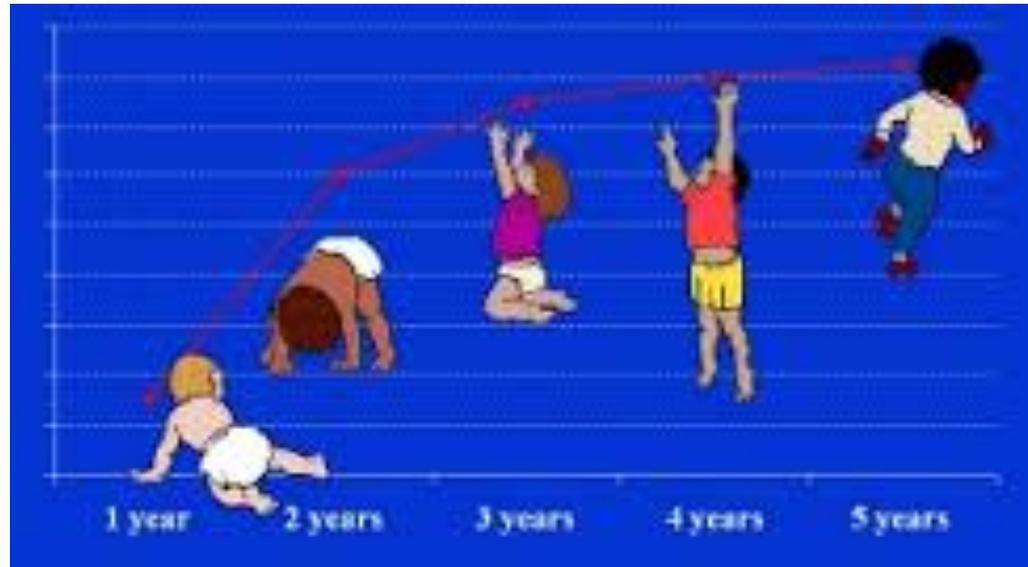
This article that went further in depth to the benefits of co-sleeping. I felt made a more compelling argument in favor of the practice that is so common in other countries. It illustrated not only the benefits that a parent a child could experience immediately but also the possible long term benefits for the child.

After reading both articles, I would have to agree that the pros far out way the cons where co-sleeping is concerned. This is definitely a method I would consider if I were to have a child; however, I would have to go with one of the modified versions (the co-sleeping crib) as I know my sleep habits would not be conducive to what is stated as safe co-sleeping.



Infancy and Toddler hood

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ewEMSt8WNQ>



I found the attached video to be rather interesting and informative. In this video, the author discusses ways to help your child develop in the first two stages of development as defined by Eric Erickson. She references Mary Ainsworth's views on attachment and how your interactions with your infant will affect how he or she develops and learns to respond to others. Providing conditions such as the love, affection, food and care that children crave can help develop a strong sense of secure attachment to their parents or care givers. This video provides some very valuable information for new parents who have not had much experience with children. This may help them understand how important their roles are in their child's development.



New Details About Brain Anatomy, Language in Young Children

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131008182351.htm>

"We found that between the ages of 2 and 4, myelin asymmetry doesn't predict language very well," O'Muircheartaigh said.

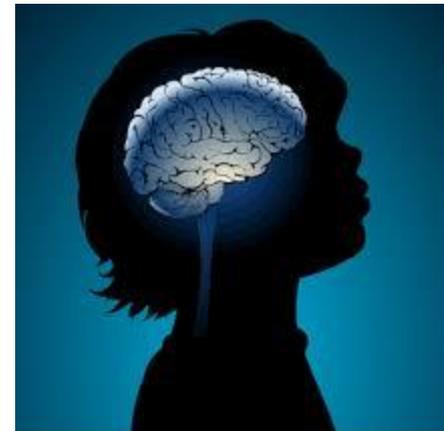
"So if it's not a child's brain anatomy predicting their language skills, it suggests their environment might be more influential." (Deoni and O'Muircheartaigh 2013)

This article talked about some rather interesting studies on how the brain develops in regards to language skills. One would assume that the brain grows as language develops at a rate that is similar to that of the language development. However, this article cites studies that say otherwise. This article indicates that the environment is actually more important to language development than the growth of gray matter in the brain.

I can see how environment being more influential in language development could be true. The crucial periods for language development are between 2 and 4, yet even if a child has normal brain function, if their care givers are not enriching their learning environment, their language skills can be greatly delayed. This, in fact, actually provides further evidence of how a important a child's environment is to their development.



Sean Deoni, left, and Jonathan O'Muircheartaigh studied brain scans and tested language skills of 108 children aged 1 to 6 years. Development of language skills, it turns out, may be heavily influenced by the child's environment. (Deoni and O'Muircheartaigh 2013)



A Father's Love

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/06/120612101338.htm>

I found this article to be very intriguing because it really spoke about how much a father can influence a child's development and sense of self. This is a topic I don't feel gets much attention. We hear and have discussed care givers in general, the environment, genetic factors, and politics. Additionally, you hear so much about a mother's influence, but you don't hear as much discussion of the father's influence in a child's development.

As most individuals realize, the parents and care givers are the most influential on a child's cognitive and personal development. However as I stated earlier, usually the emphasis is placed on the mother. This article references research that states that the father is generally more influential. I found this to be very insightful, and when one stops to think about it, it makes

complete sense, especially in our society where men are still largely seen as the head of the house. It makes sense that a child would look to the provider of the family for love and care, and when rejected by that person, it would have a lasting effect. On the flip side, if one is given the attention so craved for by that head of the house, it makes sense that they would develop a strong sense of self and a positive outlook for that child.

So my remaining question after reading this is, why do we place so much emphasis on the mother when it makes so much sense that the father is just as or more influential in our society?

A father's love contributes as much -- and sometimes more -- to a child's development as does a mother's love

Society for Personality and Social Psychology 2012,



For Low-Income Families, Substandard Housing Takes Toll On Children

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/10/131022132145.htm>

We had some discussion in class about how the environment can affect development. However, I didn't feel that housing was really covered as much as it could have been. I've worked as a delivery driver for a few years and seen so many different types of housing environments from trailer parks and low-income apartments to affluent homes and noticed a large difference in attitudes of the individuals and families that resided in these different environments. Not everyone fits a certain mold by any stretch of the imagination, but there were some common factors that in my limited experience I was able to observe. I wanted to learn a bit more about how housing, in particular low income housing could affect the development of a child.

What I liked most about this article is it spoke to a large percent about an issue I have noticed in our society. That is that we, as a nation, are **not building** affordable housing! I have seen numerous high end apartment complexes and neighborhoods go up over the years, it's ridiculous. The evidence from the article that substandard housing is very detrimental to a child's development and well being is overwhelming. Children living in these conditions are proven to have lower self esteem, poor academic performance, more negative outwards views and aggressive behavior. I believe that this article should be shared with all housing contractors and developers. It sheds so much light on the topic in such a concise manner.



Extremely telling was the finding that poor housing quality was the most consistent and strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in low-income children and youth (Boston College 2013)

Young children benefit from experimental welfare programs

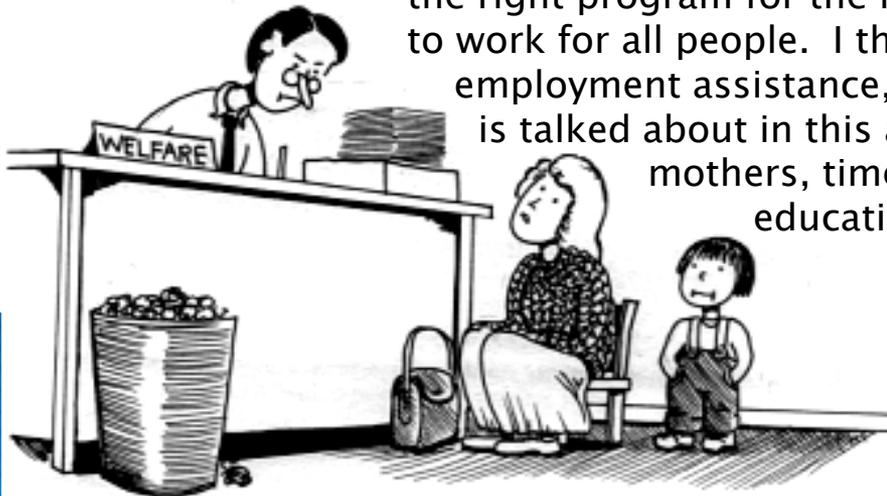
<http://www.apa.org/monitor/oct01/childbenefit.aspx>

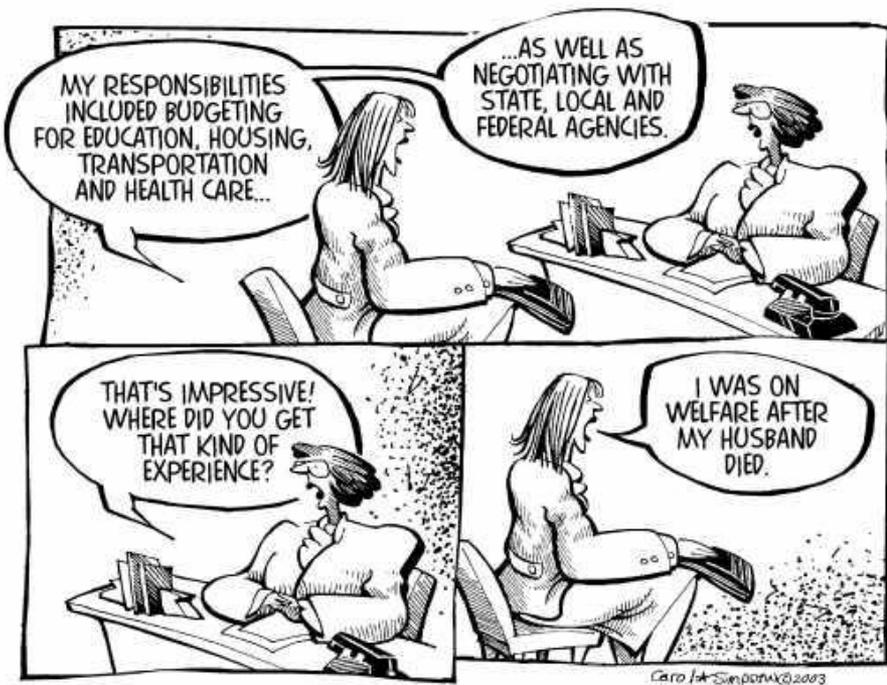


This article provided some interesting information about possible welfare reform and the benefits for our children. While the programs mentioned in the article are experimental, geared towards single mothers and not actual programs that are fully implemented, the results were very positive and make a great argument for more welfare reform in our country.

The article referenced studies that had positive impacts on school performance, overall behavior and increased sense of well being from not only the mother, but also the youngsters.

I felt that the information to take away from this article is that if we truly work on finding ways to help those in need, we can effect a positive change and increase the percentage of individuals who are able to get off the welfare system. The main issue seems to be finding the right program for the individual families. Not all programs are going to work for all people. I think that the not only needs to be the employment assistance, medical, child care and cash assistance that is talked about in this article, but I believe, especially for young mothers, time management and stress management education would be greatly beneficial.





As I was looking for images to go along with the article I found on welfare programs and the impacts on child development, I found that I was bombard with more negative political cartoons and imagery than ones that I feel truly depict what the majority of welfare recipients. Most images I found were very harsh to the welfare community. Depicting them as lazy, selfish and greedy. These are two cartoons I found that depict the majority of individuals on welfare in what I feel is a more accurate light.

The above cartoon I feel illustrates very well just how hard it is for a family, especially a single parent has to work to gain support in their time of need. The cartoon in the lower corner, is a bit harder for me to understand, as I don't know much about Regan's administration, however I do feel that it illustrates how many people feel about welfare in general. That the consensus is that they need to provide for themselves, but it's okay for our government to spend so much money helping other countries.



Hungry? Ha, ha! No, he's not hungry, Jason. That's a welfare penguin. He's just looking for a handout.



These are the types of images I was overwhelmed by when looking for images to go along with my article on welfare and child development. While they do not necessarily go along with the topic of this class, I was so shocked by the number of these types of images that I felt I had to include a few of them.

This imagery makes me feel ashamed that so many people in this country have such a limited view of the welfare system. Yes, there are people who abuse the system. I've seen that first hand. I don't believe, however, that the families and individuals who truly need this assistance should suffer because of the poor choices of the few.

On that note, I have to wonder how many of the individuals that abuse the system were brought up in the system, and of these individuals, would the outcome have been better if some of these experimental programs were in place and they had more opportunity for self improvement.



Character Education at Julian Elementary

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaaZTprxg8Y>



This is one amazing elementary school! I was looking for some more information on character education, as its mention in class peaked my interest, and I stumbled across this video.

This school has accomplished some amazing feats! Increasing attendance, improved behavior, increase in academic performance, improved sense of self and community awareness. I didn't know much about character education or what it really was until I saw this video! This school is really leading the way to what I know believe can be a huge improvement on our education system and society as a whole.

These kids are learning so much more than their ABCs at school. They are learning how to be a part of society and how to help not only others, but themselves as well.

The emphasis on learning trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and what it is to be a citizen in addition to the standard academics, is definitely proven itself in this school. This is the type of program that I believe all schools and communities can benefit from. It would definitely take work and participation from parents, siblings and the rest of the community as this school demonstrates, but the end results are amazing. I'd love to see more of this type of structure and work in our schools and in our society in general. So many people talk about the issues we have as a society here in America, such as lack of community, lack of responsibility etc, but are doing nothing about it. Well, here's a way to start addressing these issues. Kudos to Julian Elementary, continue leading the way and shaping the youth of our future!



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