ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: THE EFFECTS OF THE EFFECTIVE BLACK PARENTING PROGRAM ON THE PARENTING PRACTICES OF PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

Diane Elizabeth Wessel, Masters of Science, 2005

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The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention on the parenting practices of African American parents with children in preschool. Although studies have previously examined the relationship between parent education programs and parenting, few studies have been conducted with at-risk African Americans. This study proposes a secondary analysis of data from the larger study entitled, "Fostering Resiliency in At-Risk African American Children." These data were used to evaluate the *Effective Black Parenting (EBP)* program, which was adapted and implemented with 33 parents in the urban Washington, DC area, who had a child in Head Start. In addition, 31 parents served as the comparison group in a quasi-

experimental design. Analyses revealed that following the program, the intervention group demonstrated more use of positive control and less use of spanking than the comparison group. Programmatic implications and future directions for research are presented.

THE EFFECTS OF THE EFFECTIVE BLACK PARENTING PROGRAM ON THE PARENTING PRACTICES OF PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

by

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Statement of the Problem

The effect of parenting practices on the behavior of children has been long discussed by family theorists. Parents have a profound influence on the cognitive, social, and emotional development of their children (Slater & Power, 1987). A number of parenting education programs have been developed to help parents acquire optimal parenting practices, including authoritative parenting styles that encourage parents to utilize high levels of both nurturance and positive control (Baumrind, 1967; Jackson, Brook-Gunn, Huang, & Glassman, 2000; Power & Chapieski, 1986). Previous studies have shown that parental participation in such parenting education interventions is related to a decrease in children's behavior problems (Bernazzani, Cote, & Tremblay, 2001; Veening, Blampied, & France 2003) and an increase in children's social skills (Cann, Rogers, & Matthews, 2003).

To date, the majority of research conducted on parenting education programs has focused primarily on white, middle-class populations (Gorman, 1997). However, minority populations in urban neighborhoods are also likely to benefit from participation in parenting education programs. Low-income communities experience disproportionately high rates of risk factors for positive parenting including poverty, community violence, substance abuse, and social isolation. African American children are statistically more likely to live in violent low-income neighborhoods than Caucasian children (Children's

Defense Fund, 1990; Huston, McLoyd, & Coll, 1994; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). These environmental risk factors make families more vulnerable to poor parenting practices as well as poor child development outcomes. For example, research has shown that substance abuse increases parental stress (Kelley, 1998) and reduces secure mother-child attachment (Busby-Pope, 2003; Kelly, 2003) which is likely to increase social and behavioral problems in children.

Participation in parent education programs may help to increase the authoritative parenting practices utilized by parents in poor, urban neighborhoods. Such practices may increase parents' ability to protect their children from environmental risk factors such as violence and substance abuse. However, there has been little research literature that examines the impact of positive parenting education on minority populations, including urban African American families. One parenting program aimed at this population, the *Effective Black Parenting* program, was designed to incorporate a cultural framework that emphasizes African American family strengths. The *Effective Black Parenting* program focuses on teaching parents authoritative parenting skills in order to increase their use of positive parenting practices. This study will examine the effectiveness of the *Effective Black Parenting* program in enhancing the positive parenting practices of African American parents of preschool children in low-income urban neighborhoods.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Parents have a profound influence on their children. The parenting practices employed by a parent can shape the physical, social, and emotional development of children (Jackson, Gyamfi, Brook-Gunn, & Blake, 1998). In order for children to develop the necessary skills to succeed in life, parents must take an active role. Certain parenting practices, which are collectively termed the authoritative style of parenting, have been shown to increase child competence and positive child behavior. Authoritative parenting involves a high amount of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control (Slater & Power, 1987). The influence of parenting practices is too significant to be overlooked by research in high-risk neighborhoods. Research suggests that children must experience such parenting behaviors during the early years of life in order to develop a positive self-image and to enable them to communicate their personal needs to others (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992; Slater & Power, 1987). Without these vital parental contributions, children may experience difficulty not only with personal communication but also with their learning and social skills.

Unfortunately, there are a number of factors that have been shown to reduce parental involvement in the lives of their children, especially in high-risk urban neighborhoods. For example, research has shown that parental substance abuse increases parental stress and psychopathology, which often diminishes the involvement of parents in the lives of their children (Cushing,

2003). In addition, there may be few resources to help parents in high-risk neighborhoods develop positive parenting practices.

Parenting education programs have been designed to increase the use of positive parenting practices by parents in high-risk neighborhoods. Such programs are aimed at increasing parents' use of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, positive control, and family routines, as well as decreasing parental use of spanking. An increase in positive parenting should help to reduce negative behavioral outcomes among children in this population.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The conceptual framework for this study relies on multilevel ecological systems theory, which suggests that children do not develop independently of ecological circumstances (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986). Bronfenbrenner suggests that individuals are influenced by four specific and connected ecological systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem. These ecological systems closely resemble influences at four levels: the individual level (microsystem), the family level (mesosystem), the community level (exosystem), and the larger societal level (macrosystem). When family, community, and/or societal factors are stressful, children are at risk psychologically, cognitively, and physically, and when factors are supportive and protective, children are more likely to exhibit positive developmental outcomes (Harden & Koblinsky, 1999; Letiecq &Koblinsky, 2003; 2004). Protective factors may partially explain why some

children display resilient behaviors in spite of living in a negative environment (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993; Garbarino et al., 1992; Harden & Koblinsky, 1999).

Factors at the family level, such as parenting practices and behaviors, are likely to have a profound influence on children who are at the preschool age. Although young children are exposed to factors at all levels, family level factors may buffer negative influences from the community (exosystem) and societal (macrosystem) levels. In this study, parenting practices, including nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, positive control, family routines, and spanking represent the family level of influence.

The parent education program in this study can be considered an influence at the community level. Community variables such as violence and substance abuse that may affect this population should be recognized but are not measured for the purposes of this study. In addition, Afro-centric cultural focus and pride should be recognized as societal factors that may have an influence on this specific population.

Using ecological theory that posits that change at one level will create change in another level, this study examines the impact of the *Effective Black Parenting* program on the use of positive parenting practices by parents of African American preschool children who attend Head Start programs. Specifically, the study will address the question: Does the participation of caregivers in the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention increase their use of

positive parenting practices and decrease their use of one negative parenting practice?

Positive Parenting

Baumrind (1967) identified three distinct parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. Each parenting style is associated with specific behaviors and parental characteristics. The behaviors are often examined along two dimensions: nurturance and control. Authoritarian parenting involves the use of control, physical punishment, and coercive tactics to direct child behavior. Parents exhibit little nurturance, and rules are established by the parent with little or no discussion with the child. The strict discipline and control of authoritarian parents may hinder development of children's independence (Baumrind, 1967) and contribute to aggression and behavior problems (Power & Chapieski, 1986).

Permissive parenting is defined by non-punishment, unclear boundaries, and a lack of follow-through with discipline (Baumrind, 1967). Permissive parents exhibit high levels of nurturance and low levels of control. Children of permissive parents may exhibit externalizing behavior problems such as aggressive or impulsive behaviors, or internalizing behavior problems such as anxiety and depression (Holmbeck, 1994).

In contrast to authoritarian and permissive parenting, the authoritative parenting style has been shown to be a predictor of positive child behavior outcomes (Jackson et al., 2000; Roberts, 1989). Authoritative parents

emphasize the expression of warmth, nurturance, and consistency. Parents encourage communication and discussion of feelings regarding rules and expectations (Baumrind, 1967). Authoritative parenting involves high levels of both nurturance and positive control.

Baumrind's theory of parenting styles was shaped through studying predominantly white, middle-class families. Recent theorists have begun to wonder whether these parenting styles function the same way in African American families (McGroder, 2000; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2000). It has been suggested that African American parents are more authoritarian than white parents and that this difference is related to the high-risk environments in which many African Americans live (Brody & Flor, 1998; Murry et al., 2001). Brody and Flor (1998) found that low-income African American mothers tend to utilize a "no-nonsense" style of parenting involving high levels of both control and nurturance. They further showed that firm control within a positive parent-child relationship is related to positive outcomes in African American children.

The latter findings are supported by additional research with single African American mothers with children in preschool. Jackson et al. (2000) conducted an analysis of data collected from 93 low-income single Black mothers (average age 29) who had previously been on welfare. Mothers had preschool children between the ages of 3 and 5. This analysis found that mothers who were more supportive and involved parents had children who had

better preschool ability and fewer behavior problems. Parents who are involved with their children exhibited more positive control over their children.

While Baumrind's three parenting styles are based on dimensions of nurturance and control, other theorists have focused on parenting constructs of parental structure, support, and control (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rollins & Thomas, 1979; Slater & Power, 1987). Structure refers to parents' involvement and role as models of socially mature behavior, as well as their efforts to provide organization and consistency in the child's environment (Slater & Power, 1987). Parental support is the parent's ability to help the child feel accepted, approved, and comfortable through expressions of nurturance, affection, and warmth (Koblinsky, Morgan, & Anderson, 1997). Parental control is defined as the amount of authority the parent exerts over the child through methods such as punishment or discipline (Koblinsky et al., 1997; Slater & Power, 1987). The concepts of parental control and parental support resemble Baumrind's original ideas on parenting styles; however, structure also appears to have a significant influence on child outcomes.

There is a lack of research that examines the influence of parent education programs on the use of positive parenting practices by African American parents in poor, urban neighborhoods characterized by high levels of community violence and substance abuse. However, this research is vital given that African American children who are exposed to violence and substance abuse display a high rate of negative behavioral outcomes (Li,

Stanton, & Feigelman, 1999). Positive parenting may prove to be a protective factor for child behavior outcomes in these high-risk neighborhoods. Children raised in these environments display more positive behaviors and reduced behavioral and social problems if they have supportive and involved parents (Sullivan & Farrell, 1999). Thus, it is important to evaluate the impact of parenting interventions on the parenting practices employed by parents in high-risk environments.

Family Routines

One way in which parents provide structure in children's lives is through the use of family routines. Family routines are observable, repetitive behaviors that involve two or more family members and occur with predictable regularity in the day-to-day and week-to-week life of the family (Jensen, James, Boyce, & Hartnett, 1983). Wolin, Bennett, and Jocobs (1988) view family routines as components of family rituals which include a broad variety of meaningful family activities. They categorized family routines into three dimensions: 1) family celebrations, typically relate to culture and include annual religious celebrations, rites of passage, and secular observances; 2) family traditions, are less culturally influenced and more individually determined by each family and include summer vacations, anniversary and birthday customs, and visits to extended family; and 3) patterned routines which occur most frequently and include activities such as leisure time activities, dinner time, and bedtime routines (Wolin et al., 1988). Family

routines provide structure to daily life and help to define the roles of each family member (Wolin et al., 1988). In addition, family routines contribute to making family life predictable and stable (Wolin & Bennett, 1984), increasing family continuity and security over time (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1992).

Family routines were examined in a study of competence promoting parenting that involved 139 rural African American single-mother-headed families with a child age 6-9 (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999). This study found that competence promoting parenting and family routines were related to decreased conduct problems and increased self-regulation and social competence in children (Brody et al., 1999). In addition, Wolin et al. (1988) examined data that had been collected over several years during three previous studies with alcoholic parents and their children. These data revealed that families who were able to maintain their rituals were less likely to transmit their alcoholism to their children. While the sample in the study by Wolin et al. consisted of predominantly Caucasian families, it is possible that family routines may have a similar protective influence for African American families.

Keltner (1990) conducted a study with 91 African American preschool children who attended a metropolitan Head Start program and found that family routines were positively related to cooperative and compliant behaviors in children. In addition, Keltner found that children from families who had predictable routines showed more participation and greater interest in school

activities. These findings suggest a need to examine how parenting education programs influence low income African American mothers' use of family routines.

Discipline

As noted, parental control is another construct that has been linked to various child outcomes. Parents may exhibit control over their children through the use of discipline. The type of discipline techniques employed by parents might have an effect on the later behavior of children. Although the topics of physical discipline and spanking have long been debated among family researchers, it is generally agreed that more positive parenting methods are preferable to corporal punishment (Hyman, 1997). Studies have shown that parents who avoid corporal punishment are likely to use more reasoning and discussion with their children and are less likely to become verbally aggressive as compared to parents who use mild or severe corporal punishment (Walsh, 2002).

The frequency of physical discipline utilized by parents may be influenced by parental stress, particularly in low-income families. A study was conducted with 188 African American parents who were currently or formerly on welfare and who had children in preschool to examine the relationship of parent stress and frequency of physical discipline (Jackson et al., 1998). The results revealed a strong relationship between parental stress and frequency of spanking. In addition, this study found that there was a protective relationship

between maternal education and frequency of spanking, suggesting that increasing parent education may help to reduce the use of physical discipline.

Another study examined the long term memories that are associated with spanking and physical punishment. This study used qualitative research methods, including storytelling and biographical history, to inquire about adult memories of the disciplinary practices used by the parents of participants. Sixteen individuals (13 women and 3 men) from low-income, ethnically diverse, communities participated in the study. Individuals who reported memories of childhood punishments including spanking, hitting, and/or whipping reported that these punishments created long-term feelings of shame, humiliation, and hatred (Garvey, 1999).

Stress and Parenting

Parents who reside in low-income, urban neighborhoods are at an increased risk for environmental and personal stress. This stress is likely to influence the parenting practices of caregivers. Byron (2003) found that high levels of parent stress are related to the quality of parenting, with higher levels of parenting stress associated with lower levels of quality parenting. In order to improve the quality of parenting it may be important to reduce parental stress levels. Research has consistently shown that parent stress is related to social support available to the caregiver. Caregivers with higher levels of stress report less social support (Sepa, Frodi, & Ludvigsson, 2004). Intervention programs such as the *Effective Black Parenting* program have the potential to

provide social support, reduce parental stress, and encourage parents to become more active participants in their child's life.

Environmental Stress and Parenting

In addition to parenting stress, the urban African American population that will participate in this study is likely to encounter increased environmental stress such as exposure to community violence and substance abuse risks. Families in the District of Columbia are at significantly "high risk" for adverse outcomes based on the "Family Risk Index", with a rate of 39% as compared to 14% for families in the nation (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1999). Compared to other Americans from various racial/ethnic backgrounds, African Americans are more likely to live in low-income areas (Brook-Gunn, Klebanov, & Duncan, 1996) where crime and violence occur more frequently. Positive parenting practices of parents in this environment may be aimed at reducing the effects of environmental stress on children.

Community Violence

Parents in low income, urban communities have reported concerns about the impact of community violence on children (Holland, Koblinsky, & Anderson 1995; Randolph, Koblinsky, & Roberts, 1996). Parents of young children can have a significant impact on the frequency of their childrens' exposure to community violence and the effects of this violence on their children. Cicchetti and Lynch (1993) found that parents who are highly involved and who closely supervise their children on a daily basis are less

likely to have children who are subjected to community violence. Studies have found that parents of young children in violent neighborhoods show evidence of great efforts to control their children's behaviors and to provide structure and nurturance in the home (e.g., Holland et al., 1995; Mohr, Fantuzzo, & Abdul-Kabir, 2001). Theorists have suggested that parenting practices and family relationships may act to buffer the effects of exposure to community violence on child behavior outcomes (Gorman-Smith, 1998; Randolph, Koblinsky, & Roberts, 1996).

Research is needed to inform prevention and intervention programs that offer parent training to urban African American populations. These programs are directed towards helping parents to improve their parenting skills with the ultimate goal of addressing the social and emotional needs of their children (Collins, 2000). Currently, little is known about how such parenting interventions influence the specific parenting and disciplinary behavior of participants. More research is needed to focus on the impact of parent education programs on the parenting practices of parents with preschool children who live in violent neighborhoods.

Substance Abuse

A second source of environmental stress for parents in low-income communities is the use and sale of drugs. Children who are raised in characteristically poor neighborhoods are at higher-risk for delinquent behaviors than those who live outside these neighborhoods, especially the use

and sale of drugs (Greenwood, 1992; Li, Stanton, & Feigelman, 1999). However, parents can reduce the likelihood that their children will participate in drug-related activities. In their longitudinal analysis of over 650 adolescent subjects, Sullivan and Farrell (1999) found that parental supervision was a protective factor against drug use. Further research has also shown that parenting style is related to adolescent drug use such that authoritative parenting styles are associated with lower rates of adolescent drug-use (Pilgrim, Luo, Urberg, & Fang, 1999). This research suggests that parenting education programs that emphasize authoritative parenting styles and that encourage increased parental involvement during children's preschool years may help to reduce the future risk of drug use among children in urban neighborhoods. The potential for parenting behaviors to influence child development appears greatest during children's early years. Thus, positive parenting programs directed at parents of preschool children in urban neighborhoods may help to protect against later substance use and abuse.

Parent Education Programs

While there is some literature available regarding parent education programs, there is little information regarding programs that specifically target at-risk populations. Previous studies have shown that parent and family intervention programs have had little success in involving families of low socioeconomic status, who have fewer social resources and often experience more stress (Miller & Prinz, 1990; Tolan & McKay, 1996; Webster-Stratton,

1990). Tolan and Guerra (1994) recognized that although low-income individuals are at greatest risk for problems, this population is the least likely to be the target of prevention programs. In addition, the culturally sensitive parent education programs that have been developed have been evaluated against a literature of traditional parenting programs, which may result in inaccurate conclusions about program efficiency and success (Gorman, 1997).

Research regarding parent education programs conducted with other, non "at-risk" populations has shown that these programs are successful in increasing parenting skills, positive child behavior, and other family factors. Cann, Rogers, and Matthews (2003) examined the effects of an intervention program through a quasi-experimental study conducted from 1999-2003 with 575 Australian mothers of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds who had children ranging in age from 1-15 years. The mean age of children was 4.5 years. An analysis of pre- and post-intervention data found that participation in the program was related to a decrease in dysfunctional parenting practices, an increase in confidence in parenting, and a decrease in disruptive child behaviors, as compared to a control group. In addition, these researchers found a reduction in levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and conflict reported by parents.

In a review of several intervention programs that were directed at high-risk adolescent parents of diverse races, research found that the interventions were generally successful in increasing the mother's knowledge about

parenting and improving her interaction with her child (Stevens, Nurss, & Hough, 1995). In addition, this review found that children of mothers who attended the program were likely to show enhanced cognitive development and less risk of failure in school.

Research has generally shown that family intervention programs have been successful in increasing positive parenting practices and reducing parent stress. A study conducted with both black and white mothers with children under the age of 5 found that a parent education program was successful in reducing parent stress (Wolfe & Barton, 2003). However, parent education programs have typically overlooked vulnerable populations that might be most in need of assistance and parenting education. The few studies that have examined the impact of a family intervention program have targeted at risk parents of adolescents rather than parents with younger children. Therefore, this study will examine a family intervention program that was developed to specifically target high-risk, urban African American parents of preschool children.

The *Effective Black Parenting* Program

The intervention program used in this study was a modified version of the *Effective Black Parenting* program (Alvy, 1994). Some of the specific objectives of the program were to: increase positive parenting skills, increase family strengths, decrease harsh physical discipline, and to decrease behavior problems in children. The *EBP* program was developed for African American

parents and was adapted specifically to the cultural values of the target population. This program is further described in the Methodology section of this paper following the description of the sample.

Purpose of the Study

This study proposes to examine the impact of a parenting education program, the *Effective Black Parenting* (*EBP*) program, on targeted parenting practices of African American parents of preschool children. The sample of African American families who participated in this study reside in characteristically poor, inner-city neighborhoods with high levels of community violence and drug activity. Participants in the study have a preschool child who is between the ages of 3 and 5. Children who are raised in these neighborhoods are more frequently faced with risk factors and may benefit from programs focusing on positive parenting.

The proposed research question for this study is: Did the *Effective Black Parenting* program prove successful in improving the parenting practices of those who participated in the intervention? This question is examined through three more specific questions regarding the intervention group: 1) Did the *Effective Black Parenting* program increase positive parenting practices such as nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control? 2) Did the *Effective Black Parenting* program increase use of family routines? 3) Did the *Effective Black Parenting* program reduce the frequency of spanking the child?

Definition of Variables

Independent Variables

Participant Group

Intervention group is defined as parents or caregivers of Head Start children who participated in the *EBP* Program.

Comparison group is defined as parents and caregivers of Head Start children who did not participate in the *EBP* Program; this group served to rule out confounds such as maturation and history.

Time

Pretest is defined as data that were collected with both groups prior to the start of *EBP* program with the intervention group.

Posttest is defined as data that were collected with both groups after the intervention group completed the *EBP* program.

Dependent Variables

Nurturance is defined as the caregiver's provision of support, warmth, encouragement, and caring behavior towards the child. (Slater and Power, 1987)

Responsiveness is defined as the caregiver's reaction to the child's needs with timely and appropriate responses. (Slater and Power, 1987)

Consistency is defined as the extent to which the caregiver uses uniform childrearing practices, adhering to routine principles while providing guidance to the child. (Slater and Power, 1987)

Positive control is defined as the caregiver's provision of appropriate discipline, direction, and restraint when managing the child's behaviors. (Slater and Power, 1987)

Family routines are strength-promoting, repetitive behaviors, involving two or more family members and occurring with predictable regularity in daily family life; examples include children having a routine bedtime, the whole family eating dinner together at night, and reading or telling stories to the child at night (Jensen et al., 1983).

Spanking is the use of physical force by a parent to discipline the child including striking the child with a hand, belt, or another object (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 1995).

Descriptive Variables

Child gender is the gender of the target preschool child, male or female.

Parental education level is the number of years of education that the primary caregiver of the target preschool child completed.

Hypotheses

Based on prior examinations of parenting programs (Bernazzani, Cote, & Tremblay, 2001; Veening, Blampied, & France 2003), it is expected that parents who participate in the *Effective Black Parenting* (*EBP*) program will exhibit a significantly greater increase in positive parenting practices (pretest to posttest) than the comparison group. The following hypotheses address expectations regarding the various parenting practices that will be tested:

1) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of nurturance than parents in the comparison group.
2) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of responsiveness than parents in the comparison group.
3) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of consistency than parents in the comparison group.
4) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of positive control than parents in the comparison group.
5) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of family routines than parents in the comparison group.

6) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit a greater reduction in the number of times they spank their children during a week-long period than parents in the comparison group.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Sample

This study proposes a secondary analysis of the larger study entitled, "Fostering Resiliency in At-Risk African American Children: A Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention Intervention for Head Start Parents." The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration with Dr. Sally Koblinsky and Dr. Suzanne Randolph as co-principal investigators. Parents and caregivers who completed interviews and questionnaires during the larger study provide the data for this project.

Subjects for this study were 64 parents and primary caregivers who were interviewed during the larger study. The sample included 33 parents with preschool children in Head Start programs who participated in the intervention group and completed the *Effective Black Parenting* program. Another 31 parents of preschoolers attending Head Start programs in neighborhoods similar to that of the intervention center served as a comparison group. Most (97%) of the intervention participants were female. Demographic characteristics of the intervention and comparison groups can be found in Table 1.

All participants resided in violent neighborhoods in the Washington, DC area as established by Metropolitan Police Department uniform crime data. Parents were considered low-income by the standards set by the Head Start

program, with incomes less than or equal to the federal poverty line which in 2001 for a family of 4 was $17,650 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Intervention

The *EBP* (Center for Improvement of Child Care, 1996) program was developed to assist parents in raising confident and healthy African American children. The program is based on a 16-session curriculum; however, to fit the time constraints of the participants, the program evaluated in this study was adapted to 8 consecutive weekly three-hour sessions. Each session focused on the major topic of parenting techniques for preschool children, as well as topics addressing issues such as life goals and the effects of racism on parenting. Sessions utilized several key components such as parent education lecture/discussion, role plays, small-group exercises. Charting assignments were also designed for parents' to record their use of positive parenting skills, praise, and nonphysical discipline techniques. Session topics can be found in Appendix A.

The program presentation incorporated features that would acknowledge and appeal specifically to the African American target population. Some of these adaptations included the use of African proverbs to guide discussions, displaying flags from the American states as well as several Caribbean nations and African countries, and recognition of the class elder before each session

began. Two African American instructors and one Caucasian instructor taught the *EBP* classes. Culturally specific classes were taught by African American instructors, while the Caucasian instructor taught general parenting principles and behavior charting homework assignments. Each session ended with the participants and project staff holding hands for a closing ceremony, which included Black music and poetry.

Participants were required to attend at least 75% of the scheduled sessions, to attend make up sessions (generally 30-90 minutes) with instructors for missed classes, and to complete all homework assignments in order to graduate from the program. Transportation and reminder phone calls were provided to participants in order to maximize attendance. Child care was provided for participants while they were taking part in the session. Head Start teachers and relatives of the children were used for child care because they were already familiar with the children. Meals were served to participants and their children not only to promote attendance, but also to build social support networks for parents and to encourage parent-child interaction. The amount of exposure that participants had to the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention is was termed their "dosage." The dosage chart displaying the attendance rates for individual participants can be found in Appendix B.

Two graduation ceremonies and dinners were held for the two cohorts at the Student Union at the University of Maryland. At the graduation ceremonies, each participant wore a University of Maryland graduation robe.

Graduates were also given a Kente cloth stole to wear with their robe and a framed diploma.

Instruments

The dependent variables measured several aspects of parenting: nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, positive control, family routines, and use of spanking as a discipline technique. The Parenting Dimensions Inventory (PDI; Slater & Power, 1987) was used to assess four parenting practices. The 26-item scale, presented in Appendix C**,** has four subscales to measure positive aspects of parenting: nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control. Caregivers were asked to respond to statements such as "I encourage my child to talk about his or her troubles" and "I believe a child should be seen and not heard." Participants gave one of six responses, which ranged from a rating of 1 (not at all like me) to 6 (highly like me).

Nurturance was defined as the caregiver's provision of support, warmth, encouragement, and caring behavior toward the child. The nurturance subscale consists of the following items on the PDI:1, 9, 10, 11, 16, and 24. Responsiveness was defined as the caregiver's reaction to the child's needs with a timely and appropriate response. The responsiveness subscale consists of the following items on the PDI: 14(reverse), 15, 19(reverse), and 21(reverse). Consistency was defined as the extent to which the caregiver uses uniform childrearing practices, adhering to routine principles while providing

guidance to the child. The consistency subscale consists of the following items on the PDI: 3(reverse), 5(reverse), 6(reverse), and 7(reverse). Positive control was defined as the caregiver's provision of appropriate discipline, direction, and restraint when managing the child's behavior. The positive control subscale consists of the following items on the PDI: 1, 2, 3 (reverse), 4 (reverse), and 5 (reverse).

The responses to each of the individual items on the subscales were totaled and averaged to provide a score for each of the four parenting dimensions. Scores range from one to six and higher scores for each dimension are optimal. According to Slater and Power (1987), the PDI has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure with low-income African American mothers. Validity of the measure was established in several studies with African American parents (e.g., Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992). The Cronbach alphas for the subscales of the Parenting Dimensions Inventory in this study are as follows: .76 for nurturance, .64 for responsiveness, .80 for consistency, and .63 for positive control.

Family routines were measured using eight items selected from the Family Routines Inventory (FRI; Jensen et al., 1983). This abbreviated scale, presented in Appendix D, included items from the original 28-item instrument that measures positive, strength-promoting family routines. The number of items was restricted due to the length of the interview (90-120 minutes) and the importance of using items in which single mothers could participate with their

children. Caregivers were asked to respond to statements, such as “I read stories to my child” and “Our whole family eats dinner together at night.” One item, “My family attends church together”, was added by the researchers in this particular study, because it was thought to be culturally specific for African American families. Participants gave one of four responses, which ranged in rating from 1 (almost never) to 4 (always/everyday). Total scores are summed and higher scores are considered optimal. Jensen et al. (1983) administered the FRI to a diverse group of families, and reliability correlation coefficients were reported to be in the acceptable range from .74 to.79. More recently, the FRI had a Cronbach alpha of .73 in a study of single-parent African American families (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999). In this study, the Cronbach alpha for the complete *Family Routines Inventory* scale was .58. When item 6 (“Our family visits with our relatives”) was deleted, the alpha improved to .64. Analyses were run on the scale with item 6 deleted.

The frequency of spanking**,** an additional dependent variable, was also measured. Specifically, parents were asked, “How many times in the past week did you spank your child?” This item was chosen because it provided a concrete time period thought to be short enough for parents to respond accurately. Indeed, parents often recalled the activities and misbehavior of their children during the previous weekend in answering this question.

The Family Information Form used in the larger study provided information about the two descriptive variables of child gender and parental

education. These questions can be found in Appendix E. Parent education was measured by number of years of schooling reported by the parent.

Procedure

Parents were assigned to the intervention or comparison group based on their child care center. Three Head Start centers were selected based on community characteristics to participate in the larger study. Two Head Start centers were used for the intervention condition and one Head Start center was used as the comparison condition and to rule out confounds of maturation and history. Assignment was purposive, not random. Transportation, reminder phone calls, child care, and meals were provided to participants. Caregivers in both the intervention and comparison groups were provided a stipend of $200 at the completion of the study for their participation.

Data were collected through individual interviews with parents and primary caregivers in both intervention and comparison groups before and after the program. The total interview conducted in 2001 included measures of: family demographics, parenting, child social skills, and child behavior problems. All parents and caregivers who participated in the study signed consent forms and were informed that their identity would remain confidential. Demographic information regarding the child (age, sex), the caregiver (age, marital status, education, employment status), and the family (housing environment, number of family members) can be found in the results section in Table 1.

A separate data file was created for the purposes of this study that contained only the needed variables for the secondary analysis: demographic characteristics of caregivers and children (Family Information Form), scores computed from parents' reports of parenting practices (Parenting Dimensions Inventory), scores computed from parents' reports of family routines (Family Routines Inventory), and scores for uses of spanking.

In the larger study, after obtaining Informed Consent, participants in both groups were administered all pre-test instruments in face-to-face interviews at the Head Start centers. Trained graduate students and faculty members conducted the interviews. Those participants who were selected for the intervention then participated in the *EBP* Program over a period of eight weekly sessions, after which they received the post-tests, also in a face-to-face interview format. The comparison group parents received the pretests and post-tests at their Head Start centers during a period that coincided with the beginning and end of the intervention program.

Data Analyses

For this study, data were used from both the pretests and posttests of the larger study on the impact of the *Effective Black Parenting* program. All data were coded and entered into computer files for analyses using SPSS. Preliminary analyses employed basic descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, to compare demographic characteristics of the intervention and comparison groups. Cronbach's alphas were used to determine the internal consistency of the Parenting Dimensions Inventory and the Family Routines Inventory.

To test the study hypotheses, difference scores were calculated for each dependent variable to examine changes from pretest to the posttest. Mean difference scores for the intervention and comparison groups were evaluated using independent sample *t*-tests to determine if changes in parenting practices reported by the intervention group were significantly different than changes reported by the comparison group. A separate one-tailed independent samples *t*-test was performed for each dependent variable including: nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, positive control, family routines, and frequency of spanking.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics for the caregivers who participated in this study can be found in Table 1. Thirty-three caregivers with children in Head Start programs graduated from the *Effective Black Parenting* program and served as the intervention group. One parent who participated in the *EBP* program did not complete the posttest and was not included in the analyses. All parents who participated in this study were African American in race. The comparison group consisted of thirty-one additional caregivers who also had children in Head Start programs. Again, one caregiver did not participate in the posttest and was excluded from analyses. More than 90% of caregivers in this study were mothers; however a few fathers and grandparents participated as well. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 43 in the intervention group, and from 19 to 54 in the comparison group, with mean ages of 31.4 and 31.8 respectively in the two groups.

Participants in the intervention and comparison groups had similar educational backgrounds. The intervention group has a mean of 12.7 years of education, and the comparison group had a mean of 12.1 years. The groups were also similar in the number of children that lived in the household. The intervention group had a mean of 3.2 children per household, and the comparison group had 2.6 children per household. Each participant had a target child who was between the ages of 3 and 5 years of age and attended Head

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of the Intervention vs. Comparison Group

	Intervention (n=33)	**Comparison** (n=31)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Caregiver's Age (years)	31.4 (7.72) (Range 19-43)	31.8 (8.93) (Range 19-54)
Number of Years of Caregiver Education	12.7 (1.54) (Range 9-16)	12.1 (1.15) (Range 10-15)
Number of Children In the Household	3.2 (1.42) (Range 1-6)	2.6 (1.52) (Range 1-7)
	Number (Percentage)	Number (Percentage)
Marital Status		
Single	18 (53%)	20 (63%)
Single, living w/partner	7 (21%)	6 (19%)
Married, living w/spouse	5 (14%)	3 (9%)
Married, not living w/spouse	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Separated	2 (6%)	2 (6%)
Divorced	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Widowed	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Employment Status		
Employed	22 (65%)	21 (66%)
Not Employed	12 (35%)	11 (34%)
Caregiver Relation to Child		
Mother	31 (91%)	28 (88%)
Father	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Grandmother	0 (0%)	3 (9%)
Other	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
Target Child's Sex		
Female	18 (53%)	15 (47%)
Male	16 (47%)	17 (53%)

Start. The target children for the intervention group consisted of 18 girls and 16 boys, while the comparison group targeted 15 girls and 17 boys. Independent *t*-tests and chi-squares did not reveal significant differences between the groups in age, educational background, number of children per family, or sex of the target child.

The marital status of the participants was also similar in both groups. The majority of participants, 53% of the intervention group and 63% of the comparison group, were single at the time of the study. An additional 21% of participants in the intervention group were single but living with a partner, with less than 15% married and living with their spouse. Marital status was comparable in the comparison group with 19% single but living with a partner, and less than 10% married and living together. About two-thirds of both the intervention and comparison groups were employed. Chi-square tests did not show significant differences in the marital or employment status of the two groups.

Parenting Practices of Intervention and Comparison Groups at Pretest

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the pretest scores of parenting practices for the intervention and comparison groups. Mean pretest scores for the intervention and the comparison groups were computed to determine if there was a difference between the two conditions at the beginning of the study. Mean scores were found for each of the subscales of the Parenting Dimensions Inventory, the Family Routines Inventory, and the frequency of spanking. A series of *t*-tests

Table 2.
Parenting Practices of the Intervention vs. Comparison Group at Pretest

	Number of items	Range	Total Mean	SD	Item Mean
		Intervention (n=34)			
Nurturance	6	2.67- 6.00	32.06	4.85	5.34
Responsiveness	4	2.75- 6.00	20.43	3.82	5.11
Consistency	4	1.00- 6.00	18.00	4.84	4.50
Positive control	5	1.40- 6.00	23.03	5.01	4.61
Family Routines Inventory	7	1.57- 4.00	22.39	4.07	2.86
Spanking	1	0.00- 5.00	1.33	1.51	1.33
		Comparison (n=32)			
Nurturance	6	4.50- 6.00	33.13	2.64	5.52
Responsiveness	4	3.25- 6.00	19.97	3.54	4.99
Consistency	4	1.00- 6.00	17.94	5.19	4.48
Positive control	5	3.00- 6.00	23.87	3.86	4.77
Family Routines Inventory	7	1.86- 4.00	21.90	3.95	2.73
Spanking	1	0.00- 4.00	.70	1.23	.70

revealed that there were no significant differences between the means for the intervention and comparison groups on any of the parenting variables at the time of the pretest. These results confirm that the two groups were comparable on the dependent measures at the beginning of the study.

Parenting Practices Difference Scores for Intervention and Comparison Groups

The means and standard deviations of the posttest scores of parenting practices for the intervention and comparison groups can be found in Table 3. Table 4 presents the means and standard deviations for the pretest to posttest difference scores for the intervention and comparison groups. These scores measure the change from pretest to posttest on the various dimensions of parenting including nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, positive control, family routines, and the use of spanking. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate graphically changes from pretest to posttest for the intervention and comparison groups, respectively.

A series of *t*-tests were performed to identify any significant differences in the amount of change from pretest to posttest for the intervention versus the comparison group on dependent measures. In the intervention group, change scores on the parenting measures were generally in the expected direction with mean scores demonstrating improvement in parenting practices. As shown in Table 2, the intervention group increased in nurturance by an average of .06, in responsiveness by an average of .17, in consistency by an

Table 3.
Parenting Practices of the Intervention vs. Comparison Group at Posttest

	Number of items	Range	Total Mean	SD	Item Mean
		Intervention (n=33)			
Nurturance	6	4.17- 6.00	32.45	3.59	5.41
Responsiveness	4	3.25- 6.00	21.24	2.87	5.31
Consistency	4	2.00- 6.00	20.15	4.12	5.04
Positive control	5	3.40- 6.00	24.55	3.73	4.90
Family Routines Inventory	7	2.14- 4.00	23.09	3.43	2.98
Spanking	1	0.00- 2.00	.33	.71	.33
		Comparison (n=31)			
Nurturance	6	3.83- 6.00	32.77	2.96	5.46
Responsiveness	4	2.59- 6.00	19.61	3.65	4.90
Consistency	4	1.00- 6.00	18.81	5.04	4.70
Positive control	5	2.80- 6.00	22.74	4.82	4.55
Family Routines Inventory	7	1.86- 4.00	21.71	4.47	2.71
Spanking	1	0.00- 7.00	1.03	1.76	1.03

Table 4.
Mean Difference Scores for Parenting Practices of the
Intervention vs. Comparison Groups

	Intervention (n=33)	**Comparison** (n=31)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Parenting Dimensions Inventory		
Nurturance	.06 (.67)	-.06 (.55)
Responsiveness	.17 (.79)	-.09 (.70)
Consistency	.54 (.77)	.22 (1.32)
Positive control	.30 (.85)	-.22 (.76)*
Family Routines Inventory	.12 (.33)	-.02 (.48)
Spanking	-1.03 (.71)	.37 (1.33)***

*Difference between intervention and comparison group is significant at the $p < .05$.

** Difference between intervention and comparison group is significant at the $p < .001$

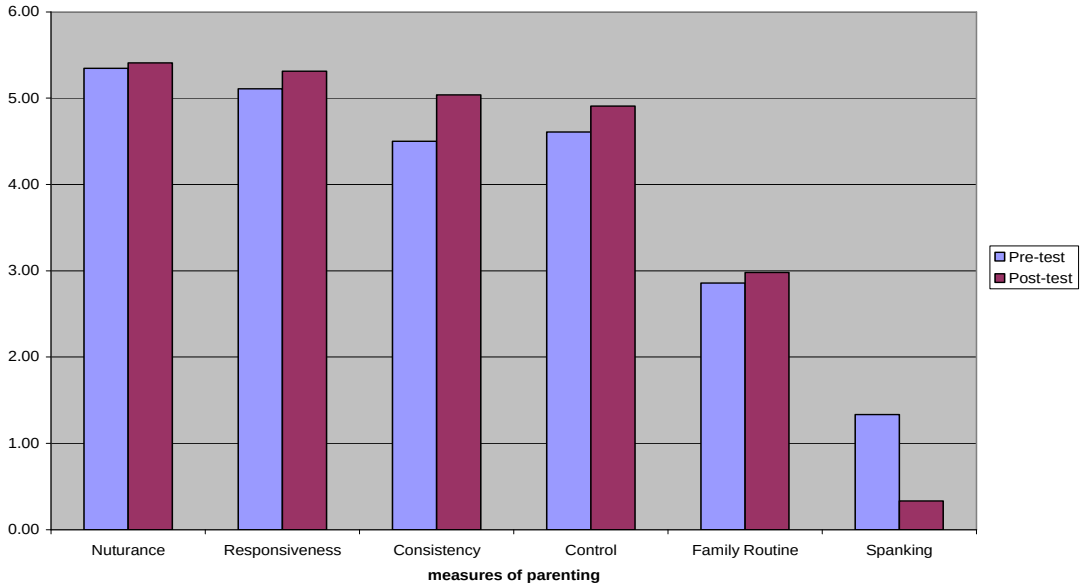

Figure 1: Changes for the Intervention Group from Pretest to Posttest

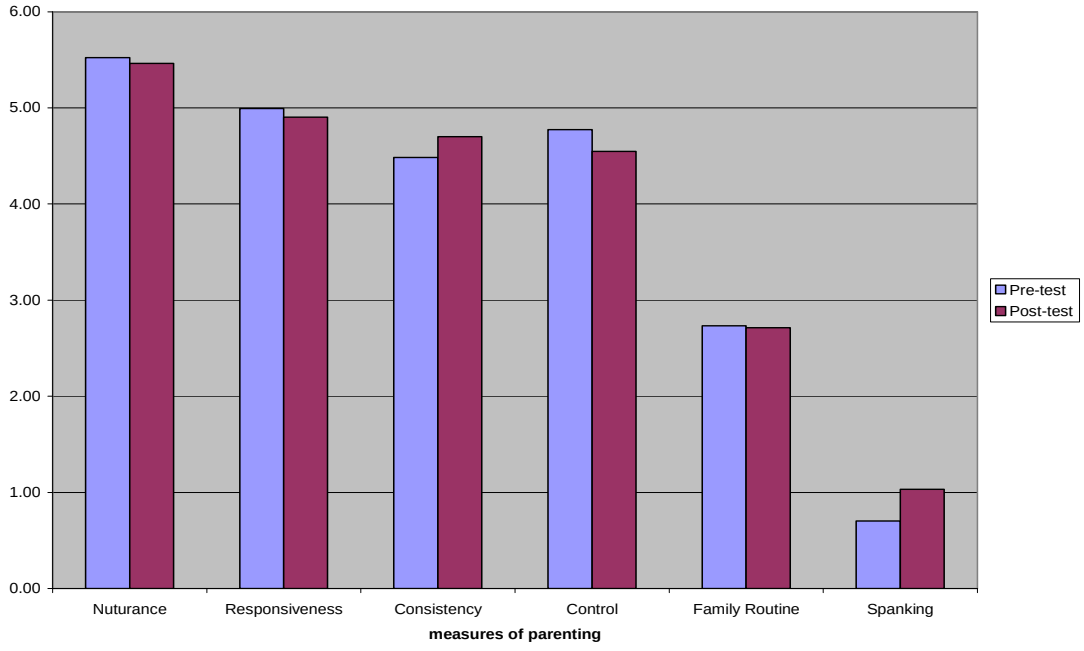

Figure 2: Changes for the Comparison Group from Pretest to Posttest

average of .54, in positive control by an average of .30, and in family routines by an average of .12. The comparison group showed a decrease in four out of five of these areas. The comparison group decreased in nurturance by an average of -.06, in responsiveness by an average of -.09, in positive control by an average of -.22, and in family routines by an average of -.02. The comparison group increased in their consistency by an average of .22. Analyses did not reveal a significant difference between the change scores of the intervention and comparison groups for the measures of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, or family routines: nurturance [t (62) = .81, n.s.]; responsiveness [t (59) = 1.34, n.s.]; consistency [t (62) = 1.19, n.s.]; and family routines [t (62) = 1.40, n.s.]. Analyses did, however, reveal a significant difference between the change scores of the intervention and comparison groups for the measure of positive control [t (62) = 2.62, $p < .05$].

Data analyses also examined change in parents' use of spanking from pretest to posttest. While the intervention group reported reducing their use of spanking with a mean difference score of -1.03 spankings, the comparison group spanked their child slightly more with a mean difference score of .37. A *t*-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups [t (58) = -3.90, $p < .001$].

Tests of Hypotheses

A summary of the study's results and hypotheses can be found in Table 5. First, with respect to positive parenting practices this study hypothesized

Table 5.

Summary of Hypotheses and Related results

Hypotheses	Results
1) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of nurturance than parents in the comparison group.	• Not supported.
2) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of responsiveness than parents in the comparison group.	• Not supported.
3) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of consistency than parents in the comparison group.	• Not supported.
4) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of positive control than parents in the comparison group.	• Supported with significance at $p < .05$ level.
5) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of family routines than parents in the comparison group.	• Not supported.
6) Parents in the *EBP* group will exhibit a greater reduction in the number of times they spank their children during a week-long period than parents in the comparison group.	• Supported with significance at $p < .001$ level.

that parents in the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention group would exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control than parents in the comparison group. Although the intervention group did exhibit some change in the positive direction for nurturance, responsiveness, and consistency, results were not significant and did not support the first three hypotheses.

However, results of the *t*-test analysis showed that there were significant differences in the change scores of the intervention and comparison groups for parents' use of positive control. Intervention group parents increased their use of positive control practices, whereas parents in the comparison group decreased in their use of positive control techniques during the *EBP* program.

Hypothesis five predicted that parents in the *EBP* group would exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of family routines than parents in the comparison group. The intervention group revealed some change in the anticipated direction and the comparison group decreased slightly in their use of family routines. However, statistical analyses revealed no significant differences between the intervention and comparison groups in their use of family routines.

The final hypothesis was that parents in the *EBP* group would exhibit significantly more reduced use of spanking than parents in the comparison group. Results of the analysis revealed that there was a significant difference between the intervention and comparison groups in the frequency of using

physical punishment over the course of the study. Intervention parents, on average, decreased in their frequency of spanking, whereas comparison group parents exhibited slight increase in spanking.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The current study examined the impact of a parenting intervention, the *Effective Black Parenting* program, on the parenting practices of low-income African American parents with preschoolers in Head Start. The intervention program evaluated in this study specifically targeted poor, urban African American parents. This study is unique among other many other parenting interventions in that the program offered was culturally adapted to address the specific needs and traditions of the target population. The program was not only originally developed to address the needs of African American parents, but was adapted to specifically meet the needs of the target population. Transportation, reminder phone calls, child-care, family meals, and participation stipends were all provided to encourage participant involvement in the program. This program was conducted with motivated caregivers who were already involved in the Head Start program and was carefully developed to optimize participation. The program may be difficult to replicate because of amount of detail that was involved in development and adaptation of the program to meet the needs of the target population. This quasi-experimental study examined pre-to post-intervention differences between the *Effective Black Parenting* and comparison groups on several measures of parenting practices, family routines, and corporal discipline to determine if the two groups exhibited different amounts of change in these areas at the conclusion of the study.

Parenting Practices

In this study, the intervention and comparison groups did not show any notable differences at the beginning of this study. The participants were similar on demographic characteristics such as age and years of education. In addition, caregivers in both the intervention and comparison groups reported using similar parenting practices in the areas of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control. Both groups also reported similar use of family routines, and frequency of using spanking to discipline their preschool children.

African American parents of preschoolers in this study, reported that the parenting behavior they were most likely to adopt was nurturance. Parents reported behaviors such as encouraging their child to talk about his/her troubles, and having warm, close moments with their child. These findings are similar to those of Brody and Flor (1998), who examined the parenting, practices of African American parents of children 6 to 9 years old. Participants in both groups generally reported levels of nurturance that were toward the upper range of the scale, indicating that parents were quite likely to utilize nurturance as a parenting practice . One additional study by Jackson et al. (2000) likewise found that African American parents of preschool children tended to be supportive and involved parents.

Parents also generally reported that is was quite like them to use the parenting practices of responsiveness and consistency. Individuals in both

groups reported that they were likely to employ both responsiveness and consistency in their parenting. While scores for responsiveness were slightly higher than those for consistency, both scores were well about the midpoint of the scale. These scores can be interpreted that participants in both groups are generally likely to employ the positive techniques of responsiveness and consistency. Scores for positive parental control were slightly lower than those for nurturance and responsiveness, but were greater then scores for consistency. Scores indicate that participants in both groups are generally likely to follow through on discipline. In addition, both groups were similar in their reports of family routines. Scores for family routines were also above the midpoint of the scale indicating that participants generally engaged in family routines several times per week. It is likely that many participants did not have family in the areas; therefore, item 6 ("Our family visits with our relatives") was omitted from the *Family Routines Inventory* in order to improve the reliability of the scale.

Initial measures of spanking also revealed that participants in the study used spanking as a discipline technique less than twice a week at the beginning of the program. On the independent measure of spanking, the intervention group reported that they had spanked their child slightly more than once a week versus the comparison group who reported spanking their child slightly less than once a week.

Changes between the Intervention and Comparison Groups from Pretest to Posttest

Parenting Practices. It was predicted that parents in the *Effective Black Parenting* program would exhibit significantly more positive change in their use of nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control than parents in the comparison group following the intervention. However, findings revealed that there were no significant differences in changes between the two groups on nurturance, responsiveness, or consistency. Results did reveal a significant difference in the amount of change in use of positive control for the intervention as compared to the comparison group. At the end of the eight-week period the intervention group reported an increase in positive control, and the comparison group reported less control. The control subscale includes items related to exercising appropriate constraint of child behavior, following through in handling child misbehaviors, and responding to misbehavior in an appropriate manner. The curriculum used social learning theory techniques to emphasize the immediate response to positive behaviors with praise and to negative behaviors with non-physical punishment responses such as mild social disapproval, time out, etc. Parents charted target child misbehaviors and parental responses to review their positive control methods with program instructors.

Family Routines. With respect to family routines, change scores indicated that parents who participated in the *EBP* intervention group generally

improved in their use of routines, while participants in the comparison group reported a slight decrease in routines. However, these differences did not prove to be significant indicating that changes in family routines did not vary between the groups.

Spanking. With respect to parents' use of spanking to discipline their preschool children results revealed that the parents in the intervention group displayed a significant difference in their use of spanking from pre-to-post-test versus the comparison group. In response to the question regarding the number of times they spanked their child in the past week, parents in the intervention group reported that they spanked their children an average of one fewer times at posttest than at pretest. Participants in the comparison group actually reported a slight increase in the number of times they spanked their child. Frequency of spanking reported by participants in this study were very similar to those found by Jackson et al. (2000) who also found that parents on average spanked less than twice a week.

The *Effective Black Parenting* program as a community level factor appears to have been successful in effecting changes on some variables at the family level of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1896). These results suggest that the *Effective Black Parenting* program may not be effective in improving parenting practices such as nurturance, responsiveness, or consistency, but may be effective in increasing positive disciplinary behaviors such as control. The lack of significant findings for three of the positive

parenting practices might be due to the initially high levels of these parenting behaviors at pretest for both groups. Participants in both the intervention and comparison groups began the study with high scores for nurturance, responsiveness, consistency, and positive control, which as mentioned earlier was not unexpected based on research on African American parenting practices (Brody & Flor, 1998; Philogene, 2002; Jackson et al., 2000). Even though reports of positive parenting practices did appear to increase slightly in the intervention group, only positive control revealed a significant change relative to the change that occurred within the control group.

Results for family routines were similar to those found for nurturance, responsiveness, and consistency. While the intervention group did reveal a slight increase in family routines, this change was not statistically different than changes that occurred within the comparison group. The curriculum of this particular program focuses more on family rules than on family routines. It may be necessary to address family routines more directly during the intervention in order to encourage change; for example, by having parents chart the use of particular routines over time and/or working on increasing the frequency of one or more routines during the intervention. More sensitive measures or larger sample sizes might also be needed to detect changes in reports of parenting practices. However, it is also likely that the *Effective Black Parenting* program helps to reaffirm positive parenting practices that participants might already possess.

Findings for Positive Control and Spanking

One of the most promising outcomes of this study was the discovery that as African American parents learn to use a wider repertoire of positive parenting practices to control their children's misbehavior, they may decrease their use of physical discipline. This finding that participants in the intervention group significantly increased their positive control and decreased the number of times they reportedly spanked their child than the comparison group is exciting. Studies have shown that parents who avoid corporal punishment are likely to use reasoning and discussion with their children (Walsh, 2002).

Parents were taught alternatives to spanking and charted children's negative behaviors under conditions when they were using nonphysical forms of discipline. When parents used these non-spanking responses, they learned that these alternatives could be effective in reducing negative child behaviors. The *EBP* intervention included charting activities to affirm the practice of praise. Parents learned that when they reinforced positive child behaviors, children often reduced engaging in negative behaviors aimed at gaining parents' attention. The reduction of spanking and increase of positive parenting skills were specific goals of the intervention. Parents who participated in the *Effective Black Parenting* program increased in positive control, a main component of authoritative parenting (Baurmrind, 1967). Positive control includes authoritative parenting practices such as encouraging

the child to discuss their feelings. These parents also remained high in nurturance, responsiveness, and consistency, other components of authoritative parenting. Thus, the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention appears to be successful in teaching and reaffirming authoritative parenting skills.

The combination of a significant increase in the use of positive control and a significant decrease in the use of spanking reported by parents in the intervention group support contentions that the two factors are closely related (Hyman, 1997). An increase in positive control might reduce the need to use any type of discipline, including the use of spanking. This may be particularly true for the target population of this study. Although African American parents are generally more authoritarian than Caucasian parents, they utilize parenting styles with high levels of both control and nurturance (Brody & Flor, 1998).

Summary

Overall, the parents who participated in the *Effective Black Parenting* program exhibited more positive change in some parenting skills at the end of the program than parents who did not attend the intervention. Although parents in the intervention group exhibited a slight increase on all of the targeted parenting skills, only changes in the use of positive control and the frequency of spanking proved to be significantly different from the parenting practices used by the comparison group. These results were not surprising based on the high level of nurturance, responsiveness, and consistency

exhibited by both intervention and comparison group mothers at the time of the pretest. Parents also reported engaging in many family routines, such as reading/telling stories to their child or the whole family eating dinner together at night, an average of several times a week. Thus, the intervention program effectively taught participants new and positive means of control over their children and discouraged their use spanking. While other measures of positive parenting did not change significantly, it is possible that the *Effective Black Parenting* program reaffirmed these positive parenting practices that are already being utilized by participants. Additional research using observations of parents' practices as well as their self-reports would shed light on this possibility.

Limitations of the Study

While the current findings do reveal some important results regarding the impact of the *Effective Black Parenting* program on the parenting practices of African American parents, several limitations of the study constrain the findings and their generalizability. First, when attention is focused on a specific target population such as the poor, urban, African American population with a child in preschool that was used in this study, investigators must be careful not to generalize the study to all populations. In addition, caregivers in this study volunteered to participate, which suggests that they were initially motivated parents. Future research should continue to examine the impact of parenting education intervention programs on parents of various

racial and socio-economic backgrounds. Further studies should also to continue to examine the effects of intervention programs on the positive parenting practices of poor, urban, African American populations who are not in formal child care settings, such as Head Start.

Another limitation of this study was the self report method of data collection. Pretest scores were high for participants in both the intervention and comparison groups on positive parenting practices. Participants initially began the study reporting that they engaged in high levels of many positive parenting practices. It is possible that participants gave socially-desirable responses to items regarding parenting practices, family routines, and the use of spanking. All of the parents were participating in formal center-based preschool programs that included frequent opportunities for parent involvement. Additional studies are needed that include parents whose children are not in formal center-based care. It was difficult to detect any significant change in parenting practices when scores were optimal initially. Instruments might not have been sensitive enough to accurately measure the effects of subtle changes due to the *Effective Black Parenting* program on parenting practices of participants. Future studies may consider using additional measures of parenting, such as observation, to more clearly detect changes in practices following the intervention.

An additional limitation of this study is the limited time period in which investigators had to conduct the intervention program with participants. The

original intervention program was developed as a 16-session curriculum but was adapted to fit into an eight-week period in order to meet time constraints of the participants. It is likely that some effects of the intervention program on parenting practices would have been significantly greater for the intervention group if the intervention were conducted over a longer duration. While it was necessary to adapt the time period for the current intervention program, future studies may want to extend the length of the intervention program. This longer period would provide more opportunity for practicing the *Effective Black Parenting* skills and to discuss progress on using these skills.

A final limitation of this study concerns the sample size. Approximately 30 participants were recruited and retained in each group. A larger sample might permit the detection of smaller, though significant, changes between the groups.

Programmatic Implications

Despite the limitations of this study, the findings have implications for development of parent education programs. The *Effective Black Parenting* program was found to be successful in increasing the use of positive control and decreasing the use of spanking for the African American parents that participated in the intervention. These findings support adapting intervention programs, such as *EBP*, for target high-risk African American populations. African American parenting practices differ from Caucasian parenting practices that have been addressed in research and programs focused on

parenting styles (Murry et al., 2001; Brody & Flor, 1998). Programs that are adapted to the target population are likely to have a greater impact on the parenting practices of the population. Future intervention programs should give considerable attention to the population strengths, values, and needs throughout their development.

The community level intervention program also appears to have been successful in increasing one positive parenting practice, positive control. However, most of the PDI measures were not significantly changed. More research is needed with parents who show a wider range of parenting practices at pretest. Again, observational and other measures of parenting should be adopted in such research to examine the effects of parenting education interventions on child behaviors and social skills to determine if changes in parenting skills do indeed benefit children.

Direction for Future Research

The current study and previous research reveal that parenting education programs can have a positive impact on parenting practices. The current study also indicates that intervention programs can be successfully adapted to meet the needs of high-risk populations, including poor, urban, African American populations. However, additional research is needed to understand the full impact of specific intervention programs on parenting practices, as well as on child behaviors. Specifically, future research is needed in the following areas:

1. Further research is needed on the effect of intervention programs on parenting skills of parents. Since scores on parenting practices are often high initially, there is also a need to employ additional objective measures to look at variation in parenting skills, such as observation.

2. Research that includes a larger study groups and examinations of dosage (extent to which participants are exposed to the intervention) are also needed.

3. Research on parent education programs should be expanded to look at the impact of culturally appropriate parenting intervention on the parenting skills of populations of parents from various races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

4. Current findings suggest the need for more research on the relationship between positive control and physical punishment. Research has shown that there are more positive discipline practices than spanking (Hyman, 1997). An increased in positive control reported by parents in the intervention group, along with a decrease in frequency of spanking suggest that these two factors are targets for intervention. More research is needed to further clarify whether there is a direct relationship between positive control and spanking for target populations such as in this study.

5. Research should also look at the impact of the *Effective Black Parenting* intervention on the parenting skills of parents of older children. Such research might also include following a sample of parents and children

from preschool through later years. This would also allowed researchers to examine the effects of programs on parenting behaviors over time.

6. Research should examine the impact of gender on the success of intervention programs. Studies should compare changes that occur between mothers versus fathers, as well as examine differences between parents of sons and parents of daughters.

7. Research on the effects of parenting intervention programs should be expanded to examine their impact on child behavior outcomes as well as parenting practices. For example, the data from the larger study (Koblinsky & Randolph, 2003) should be examined to look at parenting practices in relation to child behavior problems and social skill changes from pretest to posttest.

APPENDIX A: SESSION TOPICS

Effective Black Parenting – Eight Session Program

Topic	Lesson	Page	Overheads
Session 1			
Welcome and Orientation	Lesson One	Page 2	-
Self Descriptions	Lesson One	Page 4	-
Life Goals	Lesson One	Page 5	1
The Necessary Child Characteristics	Lesson One	Page 12	2, 3
What Black Parents Can Do	Lesson One	Page 17	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Social Learning Theory	Lesson Two	Page 26	12, 13
Homework: Charting and Counting Behaviors	Lesson Two	Page 34	14, 15
Session 2			
Welcome and Review of Charting	Lesson Two and Three	Page 34 and 49	15
Pyramid of Success vs. Street to Destruction	Lesson Three	Page 43	16, 11
Review of Home Questions	Lesson Three	Page 47	-
Effective Praise	Lesson Three	Page 52	17
Effective Praise/Role Play	Lesson Three	Page 56	-
Homework: Positive Behavior Chart and Invitation to Extended Black Families	Lesson Three	Page 59	11
Session 3			
Welcome and Review of Charting	Lesson Four	Page 68	11, 17
The Extended Black Family	Lesson Three	Page 59	11
The Meaning of Discipline – Exercise	Lesson Four	Page 69	18

The Meaning of Discipline – Traditional	Lesson Four	Page 74	4, 19, 20
The Meaning of Discipline – Modern	Lesson Four	Page 80	21, 22, 23, 11
Family Rules – Guidelines	Lesson Five	Page 104	27, 28, 29, 30
Homework: Home Activities and Charting	Lesson Four	Page 89	-

Session 4

Welcome and Review of Charting	Lesson Five	Page 97	11, 23
Family Rules & Children's Abilities	Lesson Six	Page 140	33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 11
Corporal Punishment	Lesson Eight	Page 188	22, 44, 11, 45, 16
Drugs & Pyramid of Success for AA Kids	Lesson Five	Page 115	16, 31, 32, 11
Homework: Home Activities and Charting	Lesson Five	Page 120	-

Session 5

Welcome and Review of Charting			
Thinking Parents Approach	Lesson Seven	Page 166, 170, 177	Part One: 24, 42
Using Mild Social Disapproval	Lesson Eight	Page 196	46, 47
Single Parenting	Lesson Nine	Page 219	11
Relaxation Techniques	Lesson Nine	Page 224	
Homework: Home Activities and Charting			

Session 6

Welcome and Review of Charting			
Ignoring	Lesson Nine	Page 211	26, 49, 50, 48, 24
Time Outs	Lesson Ten	Page 234, 242	51, 52, 53, 54
Chit Chat Time	Lesson Thirteen	Page 302, 309	24, 11, 69, 70, 71
Homework: Home Activities and Charting			

Session 7

Welcome and Review of Charting			
Review of Discipline	Lesson Eight	Page 188	22,44,11,45
The Point System	Lesson Eleven	Page 258, 264	55, 56, 11, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63
Drugs and the Pyramid of Success	Lesson Twelve	Page 285, 290, 298	32, 64, 11, 65, 66, 67, 28
Homework: Home Activities and Charting			

Session 8

Program Review	Lesson Fourteen	Page 315	4, 17, 23, 42
Pride and Blackness	Lesson Fourteen	Page 317, 320	7, 11
Review of Chit Chat Time	Lesson Thirteen	Page 302, 309	24, 11, 69, 70, 71
Separation vs. Continuity	Lesson Fourteen	Page 324	72, 11
Proverbs	One-day session, Parent Handbook Lesson Fifteen, Parents Handbook	Page 33 (one day session) Page 146	-
Preparation for Graduation			

APPENDIX B: DOSAGE CHART

Dosage for *Effective Black Parenting*, Cohorts 1 and 2

CODE	COHORT	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GRADUATION	Dosage Hours
201	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
301	1	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	21
401	1	X		X	X		X	M	X	X	16
801	1		X	X		X	X	M	X	X	16
1001	1	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	21
1101	1	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	21
1201	1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	21
1301	1	X	X	X	X		X	M	X	X	19
1401	1	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	21
1501	1	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	18
1701	1	X		X	X		M	X	X	X	16
1801	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
1901	1	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	18
2101	1	X		X	X	M	X		M	X	14
2201	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
2401	1	X	X	X			X	M	X	X	16
2501	1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
2701	1	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	21
2801	1	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	18
2901	1	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	18
1601	2	X	X	X	M	X	X		X	No posttest	19
2301	2		X	X	X		M	X	X	X	16
3401	2			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	18
3501	2		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	21
4201	2	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	21
4301	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
4601	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
4901	2	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	18
5101	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
5401	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
5701	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
6501	2		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	18
6701	2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	24
6801	2	X	M	X	X		X		X	X	16

Note: Graduation is not counted in the dosage; sessions marked with an X are 180 minutes and with an M are 60 minutes.

Cohort 1 average: 19.6
Cohort 2 average: 20.8
Total average: 20.2

APPENDIX C: PARENTING DIMENSIONS INVENTORY

Now I'd like to have you tell me about some of the things you do in raising your child, _____ (child's name). The card in front of you shows the possible answers:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all like me	**Slightly like me**	**Somewhat like me**	**Fairly like me**	**Quite like me**	**Highly like me**

___ 1. I encourage my child to talk about his or her troubles.
___ 2. I always follow through on discipline for my child, no matter how long it takes.
___ 3. Sometimes it is just so long between the time my child misbehaves and the chance for me to deal with it that I just let it go.
___ 4. I do not allow my child to get angry with me.
___ 5. There are times I just don't have the energy to make my child behave as he/she should.
___ 6. My child can often talk me into letting him/her off easier that I intended.
___ 7. My child convinces me to change my mind after I have refused a request.
___ 8. I think a child should be encouraged to do things better than other children.
___ 9. My child and I have warm, close moments together.
___ 10. I encourage my child to be curious, to explore, and to question things.
___ 11. I find it interesting and educational to be with my child for long periods.
___ 12. I don't think children should be given sexual information.
___ 13. I believe a child should be seen and not heard.
___ 14. I believe it is not always a good idea to encourage children to talk about their worries because it can upset them even more.
___ 15. I encourage my child to express his/her opinions.
___ 16. I make sure my child knows that I appreciate what he/she tries to accomplish.
___ 17. I let my child know how ashamed and disappointed I am when he/she misbehaves.
___ 18. I believe in toilet training a child as soon as possible.
___ 19. I believe that most children change their minds so often that it is hard to take their opinions seriously.
___ 20. I have little or no difficulty sticking with my rules for my child even when close relatives (including when grandparents) are there.
___ 21. When I let my child talk about his/her troubles, he/she ends up complaining even more.

___ 22. I expect my child to be grateful to his/her parents, and appreciate all the advantages he/she has.
___ 23. Once I decide how to deal with my child's misbehavior, I follow through on it
___ 24. I respect my child's opinion and encourage him/her to express it.
___ 25. I never threaten my child with a punishment unless I am sure I will carry it out.
___ 26. I believe that once a family rule has been made, it should be strictly enforced without exception.

APPENDIX D: FAMILY ROUTINES INVENTORY

This short section deals with some activities that some people do with their children, partner or other family members. Please tell me how often you do each activity with your family, and particularly your child _____ (child's name). The responses range from every day to almost never.

4	3	2	1
Always (every day)	**3-5 times a week**	**1-2 times a week**	**Almost never**

___ 1. My child and I play together some time during the day.
___ 2. Our family had a 'quiet time' in the evening when we do things together at home.
___ 3. Our family has certain 'family' time when we do things together at home.
___ 4. I read or tell stories to my child.
___ 5. Our whole family eats dinner together at night.
___ 6. Our family visits with our relatives. *
___ 7. My family attends church together.
___ 8. My child goes to be at the same time in the evening.

* Item was omitted from analyses

APPENDIX E: FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

1) Is (child) a girl or boy? _____

2) EDUCATION: What is the highest grade you completed in school?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+	

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