




### SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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Category/Theme: Effectiveness Trials

#### **Parent-Focused Effectiveness Trials: Understanding Heterogeneity in Effects**

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Researchers recognize that parents play a vital role in children's emotional and behavioral adjustment. In disadvantaged, urban communities, family processes that support healthy development are often disrupted, however, placing children at high risk for behavior problems, academic underachievement and school drop-out. There are a number of strategies for intervening in the parenting context, but questions are often left unanswered about key moderating influences of intervention effects and important mediating mechanisms. An important step toward maximizing the public health impact of family interventions for raising healthy children is identifying families and children who are likely to benefit (or not) and elucidating mechanisms of change in existing interventions targeted at changing the parent-child relationship.

In this panel, we focus on three different approaches to intervening with parents to improve outcomes for low-income children and youth, and each examines moderating influences of these intervention effects, but at differing levels of children's ecology—from the genetic sequence, to behavior, to the family context. The interventions also differ in key ways—one targeting parenting directly, while two target key determinants of parenting behavior. Together, they provide a rich set of information about interventions in the family context.

More specifically, the first paper examines moderation at the genetic level—testing the effects of a program targeting parents' depression, with particular attention to moderating influences by genetic characteristics. The second study tests the effects of a program targeting parent as well as teacher behavior management practices and parent-teacher communication as a means to reduce preschool children's behavioral adjustment (aggression), with attention to the moderating influence of children's behavior—focusing on initial behavioral adjustment and school readiness. The third study tests the effects of a family group approach, on social support and social networks, testing moderation by family characteristics (prior social support).

Together, the papers cover a range of intervention approaches all aimed at changing parenting behavior, but allow us to begin to understand how to most effectively intervene with parents to improve outcomes for children across the childhood age span, and for whom such strategies may be most effective. The discussant will address 1) the ways in which these strategies begin to help us to build a theoretical model in which intervention effects are considered to vary across characteristics of children, parents, and their social networks, and 2) the way in which this understanding allows for more effective program development and dissemination.

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