

Early Child Development as a Pathway to Peace: ACEV Experience

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MYRIAD INFLUENCES ON HUMAN BEHAVIOR

- ❑ Proximal and Distal Environment
- ❑ Environmental opportunities vary greatly
- ❑ Particularly in deprived environments and adverse conditions the genetic human potential may not get realized.
 - ❑ e.g. Heritability for intelligence is:
LOWER in deprived environments than what is estimated for general populations, and
HIGHER in a nurturing environment since it provides the resources for the biological potential to be realized.

- Several studies from different parts of the world point to the significant role of the caregiver, covering a broad range of developmental spheres from health/nutrition to cognitive and social development of the child.
- The **KEY** is the **PROXIMAL Environment** (Home, community...) **important above and beyond the larger socio-economic context:**

Early on Findings regarding children's

- Literacy skills (Ceci & Williams, 1997; Van Tijn & Leseman, 2004)
- School grades (Lee & Croninger, 1994; Kagitcibasi & Britto, 2013)
- Nutritional status (Zeitlin, Ghassami & Mansour, 1990)
- Problem behaviors (Mistry et al., 2002; Bayer et al., 2010)

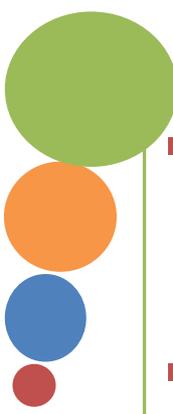
GIVEN COMPLEX SYNERGISM AND NATURE-NURTURE INTERACTION,

A GENERAL THEORETICAL MODEL:

HIGHER contribution of human capacity to developmental outcomes with LESS contextual constraints and more available resources.

- The reverse is also the case.
- Brain plasticity allows for change.
- Therefore, the lessons for social policies would be optimizing resources and minimizing constraints early on.

- **One route for policies and intervention programs:**
 - **improve environments** – increase environmental resources and decrease environmental constraints (for example, provide better educational and employment opportunities).
- **Another route for policies and programs:**
 - **build individual resources** (for example, enhancing the cognitive skills and performance of children and youth).

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- Pursuing BOTH routes promises to provide the most benefits and to lead to the best outcomes
 - Not only regarding cognitive/capacity development, but overall human development
 - More Optimal Overall Human Development starting early on is a pathway toward life-long well-being and therefore **PEACE**

IS THIS PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED?

- ❑ It probably is, but not for everyone
- ❑ Those involved in early childhood research and applications know the great potential of this period of life for enduring positive outcomes.
- ❑ Recently Yale University Child Study Center and ACEV conducted a poll concerning this potential.
- ❑ 167 Experts in Early Childhood and/or Peace Research responded to an extensive set of questions.
- ❑ 45% from developing countries

SUMMARY OF EXPERT OPINIONS

Appropriate intervention can break the cross-generational negative cycle:

A person's parenting style reflects the parenting s/he received in childhood: 90%

Changes in parenting style can influence parenting styles of the next generation: 95%

Can initiatives to support early child development and family relationships significantly contribute to peace-building? YES: 96%

■ Responses indicated a very high level of consensus among the experts on

- the importance of early life for development of the child's brain,
- the positive effects of close relationships in early life on peaceful behavior in later life,
- the trans-generational continuity of parenting styles,
- the inter-dependence of family and community.

**This high endorsement is based on empirical evidence
It needs to be made public knowledge**

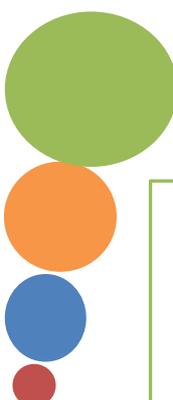


Much intervention research, mostly from the U.S. and other developed countries but progressively increasing in number in developing countries sheds light on the *potential pathways* from **EARLY CHILDHOOD** to **PEACE**

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

ACEV Experience as an Example

ACEV and its program applications derive from a 22-year longitudinal project, including an original 4-year longitudinal study and its first and second follow-up, known as the **Turkish Early Enrichment Project (TEEP)**.



THE TURKISH EARLY ENRICHMENT PROJECT (TEEP)

**LONG-TERM EFFECTS,
POLICY AND APPLICATIONS**

Kagitcibasi, Sunar, Bekman (1982-2004)

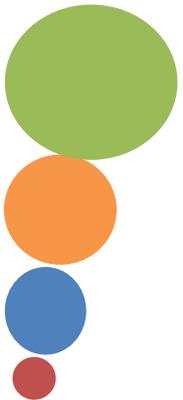
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- ❑ Families in low income areas of Istanbul (*former rural peasants*)
 - ❑ Most of the women unskilled factory workers
 - ❑ Low education levels (average 5 years)
 - ❑ 3 and 5 year old children
(*2/3rd in day care, a third of which providing early childhood education*)

INTERVENTION (Early Enrichment)

- ❑ Mother training (randomization) involving cognitive and overall parenting support (introduced by the Project)
- ❑ Center-based early childhood education

Positive gains from early enrichment:

- Positive effects of both educational day care and mother training found on IQ scores, school grades, achievement tests, and general cognitive ability.
- **Mother training** → Children had better school adjustment, more positive self concept and lower aggression
- **Mother training** → Mothers became more attentive to child, had higher educational expectations for their children, used more positive discipline strategies
- **Mother Training** → **Improvements in home environment (better family relations)**
- **Significant Implications for Peace in the home**



FIRST FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF TEEP

1992- ADOLESCENTS
(13-15 years of age)

**Kağıtçıbaşı, Sunar, Bekman (2001), *J. Applied
Developmental Psychology*, 22, 333-361**

10th YEAR TEEP RESULTS in ADOLESCENCE (13-15 years olds)

- **Higher primary school achievement
(five years of compulsory education)**
- **Higher grades in Turkish, Mathematics & overall academic average**
- **Higher vocabulary scores (WISC-R)**
- **Higher school attainment
(86% still in school beyond compulsory education compared with 67% in
the comparison group)**
- **Better social integration and social adjustment in school**
- **Better family relations; more positive retrospective
memory of mother**

OTHER IMPORTANT RESULT

- ❑ **Better parenting and maternal warmth**
- ❑ **Increased woman's intra-family status**
(more communication, role sharing & decision making with the husband)
- ❑ **Increased life satisfaction of mothers**
- ❑ **Better family relations**
(better parent-child interaction & more positive perception of the child)
- ❑ **Better school adjustment, peer acceptance**
- ❑ **Less aggression and more autonomy of the child**

Kagitcibasi (2007) *Family, Self & Human Development Across Cultures*. L. Erlbaum (Taylor & Francis)

Mother Child Education Program

Built and revised by 20 years of research experience.

- **A family program.**
- **Supports the mother with the goal of promoting the child's overall development and mother's empowerment.**
- **Has a “Contextual”, “Functional”, “Whole Child” approach.**
- **Is culturally relevant.**

COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

MOTHER SUPPORT PROGRAM:

- To sensitize mothers on subjects like child development, health, nutrition, care and also creative play activities, discipline, mother child interaction, communication, expressing feelings, and needs of the mothers.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING:

- To sensitize mothers on issues like reproductive health of women, healthy and risky pregnancies, functions of reproductive health.

COGNITIVE TRAINING PROGRAM:

- To foster the child's cognitive and social development through activities related with eye-hand coordination, verbal development, preliteracy and prenumeracy skills, and problem solving skills.

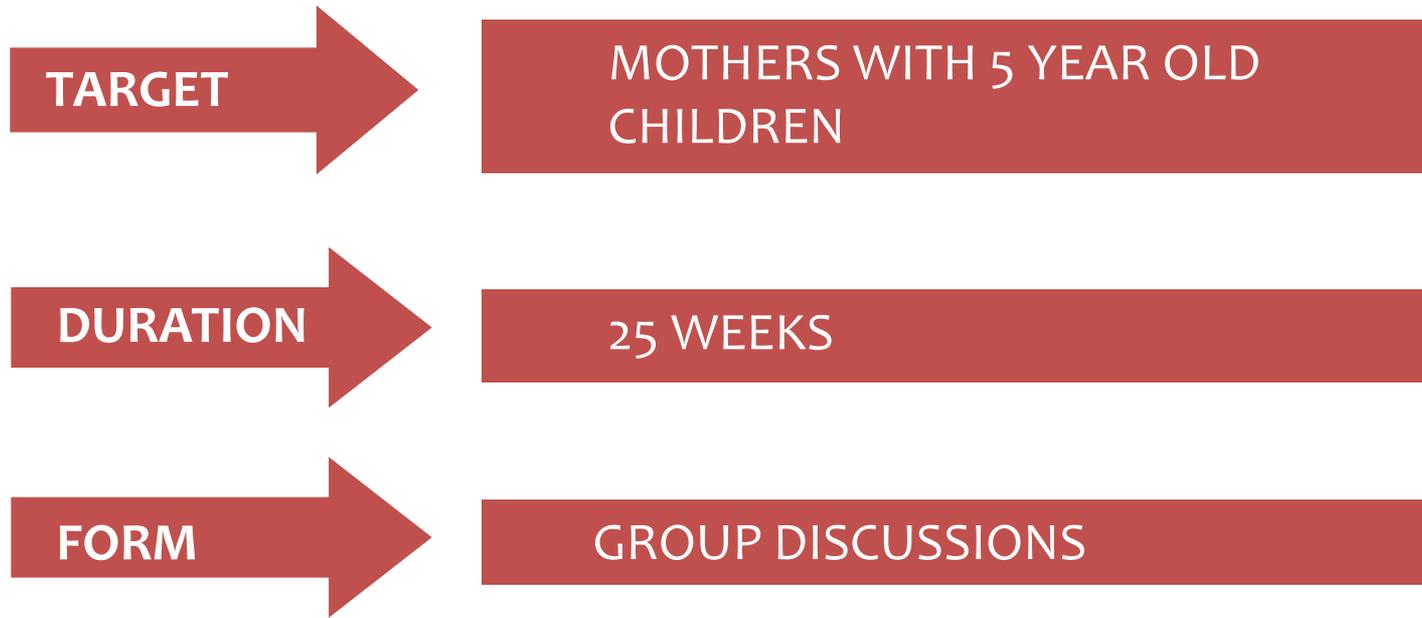
PROGRAM COMPONENTS & NEW ADDITIONS

- ❑ **Mother support/parenting**
- ❑ **Reproductive health & family planning**
- ❑ **Cognitive training program**

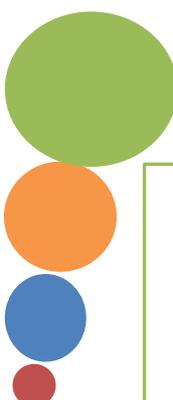
NEW Additions:

- ❑ **Child Protection**
 - ❑ **Gender Issues (violence against women)**
 - ❑ **PEACE**
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- Interactive group activity optimally using supportive group dynamics (adult education centers)
 - Translations into English, Arabic, Spanish, and Portuguese (in progress)
 - Evaluation studies

MOTHER CHILD EDUCATION PROGRAM



- By 2013, **800,000 women + children** reached.
- Extensions to Europe (Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany) and to Arab countries (Bahrain, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia).
- TV adaptations on national and international Turkish Public Television.



SECOND FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF TEEP

2004 - YOUNG ADULTS
(25-27 years of age)
22nd Year Follow-Up

Kagıtcıbası, C, Sunar, D, Bekman, S, Baydar, N. & Cemalcılar, Z.
(2009) *J. Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30, 6, 764-779

Those who had either early center-based or home based enrichment or both had:

- **Longer school attainment**
- **Higher university attendance**
- **Higher vocabulary competence**
- **Higher age at the beginning of gainful employment**
- **Higher occupational status**
- **Higher computer ownership**
- **Higher credit card ownership**

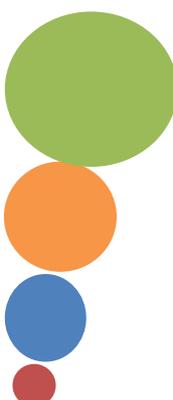
POSITIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

ARE SIMILAR RESULTS OBTAINED in PROGRAMS THAT HAVE GONE TO SCALE?

Several different programs of ACEV, mostly used in low income areas

In particular, *Father Support Program* has produced marked improvements in

- Fathers' involvement with the child
- Better family relations
- Less authoritarian and more democratic child rearing attitudes
- Improved communication with their children, spouses and others
- Bonding and sharing experiences with other fathers in the group and the community, even if coming from different backgrounds.



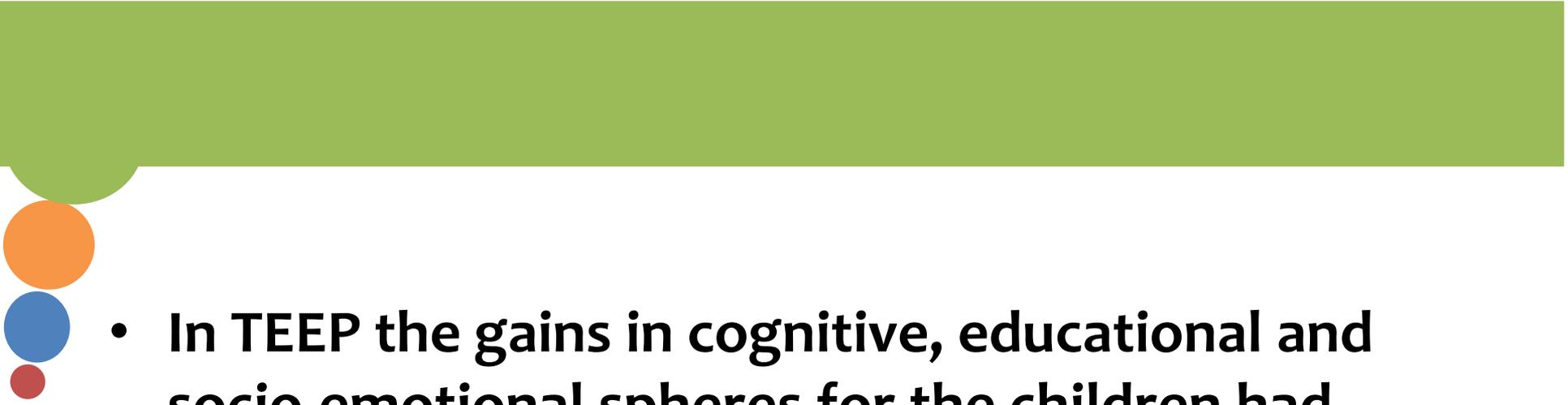
Varied implementations of Mother Support Programs have proved as effective as the original research application

- ❑ Continuous revision of ACEV Programs based on evaluation research and feedback from the field work
- ❑ **Expanding international applications**
 - In particular, the program implementation in a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Beirut, Lebanon is to be noted
 - The feedback received from the mothers in the camp is most positive. The peace implications are noteworthy

- **Based on ACEV Experience, Several Pathways can be drawn from Early Childhood Interventions (ECI) to Peace Building:**

FOR THE CHILD

- 1) **ECI can nurture a more positive early experience leading to more optimal capacity development, thus higher school performance and school attainment, with eventual more successful social participation and citizenship.**
- 2) **ECI can build better communication skills, more positive self concept, more empathy/tolerance, less aggression, better interpersonal relations, and more pro-social behavior, thus Peace Building.**

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- **In TEEP the gains in cognitive, educational and socio-emotional spheres for the children had implications for peace.**
 - **As young people develop higher cognitive skills, attain higher education, and are better integrated into society, they can expect to solve problems, resolve conflicts, avoid risks and pursue more peaceful life styles.**

FOR THE PARENT (mother & father)

- ❑ ECI can provide support to the parent for better parenting
- ❑ ECI can also contribute to better intra-family relations through improving conflict resolution techniques, role sharing, and joint decision making, especially between spouses
- ❑ More peaceful family and interpersonal relations can thus be generated particularly with better communication skills, as for example provided to the mothers and fathers in ACEV programs.
- ❑ These orientations can transfer to relations with others beyond the family and thus can build more peaceful outlooks and behaviors in general

FOR THE MOTHER/WOMEN

- ECI directly impacts the mother/caretaker
- ACEV experience has shown that the mother benefits as much as the child
- ACEV programs have functioned as ‘Woman’s Empowerment Programs’ where the woman’s self concept, sense of efficacy, as well as her intra-family status and social participation increase (Kagitcibasi, Goksen & Gulgoz, 2005; Kagitcibasi, Sunar & Bekman, 2001)
- Group programs are especially beneficial in creating a positive group support to the woman (Kagitcibasi, 2007)
- **Women’s Empowerment is a Pathway to Peace**

- **Regarding Cognitive Development and Peace,**

Much can be accomplished by reaching children early in life to build both environmental and individual capacity and resources that can be sustained over time. Improving the Proximal Environment, while enhancing individual cognitive performance, helps in turn to support that performance further, in a synergistic interaction. With **higher competence and achievement** from early ages on, peaceful behaviors and outlooks are more likely

- **More secure, less stressful and more satisfying relationships nurture early child development**
 - **Supporting early childhood development promises to transform human development as well as transforming families, with ripple effects to community**
- **This is at the core of societal development and is possibly the most enduring and the surest pathway toward Peace Building.**

www.acev.org