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# *Investing in Children and Families: What Really Counts*

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## *The Center for Human Growth and Development Symposium on Children and Families in Celebration of 50 years at Michigan*

To commemorate a half-century of research, CHGD hosted a symposium on Friday, June 6, 2014 at the Rackham Amphitheatre in Ann Arbor. The symposium's two themes focused on the effects of income inequality in the U.S. and the ramifications of social disparities on children's long-term health and achievement, and the benefits of early interventions to support healthy child development. Featured speakers were **Greg J. Duncan**, *Distinguished Professor, School of Education, University of California, Irvine*, and **Samuel J. Meisels**, *Founding Executive Director, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, and Professor, Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies, University of Nebraska*. CHGD researchers also gave presentations on various aspects of child and family development.



*Rackham Amphitheatre, June 6, 2014*

*An attentive audience from academia, government organizations, day care centers, and other institutions listen to presentations at the June 6 symposium.*

*Sponsored by the Center for Human Growth and Development at the University of Michigan  
with the generous support of the Rauner Family Foundation*

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*Greg Duncan*



*Sam Meisels*

*Keynote speakers Greg Duncan and Sam Meisels spoke on income inequality, early interventions, and the impacts on healthy child development.*

### ***“Completed Schooling in an Era of Increasing Income Inequality”***

**Greg Duncan**

It is well known that income inequality increased dramatically in the United States beginning in the 1970s. Greg Duncan’s talk presented changes in income inequality and educational attainment between children born into low- and high-income households in the U.S. between 1954-85, as well as data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. He has found that the schooling gap between high and low income children grew by half a year (about one-quarter standard deviation) and the gap in college attendance and graduation rates increased by 15 and 25 percentage points, respectively. He attempts to account for the increases in these schooling gaps with changing gaps in family income and other demographic factors (mother’s education, family size, single parenthood and age of mother at birth), and to estimate changes in the relative importance of income and these other demographic factors for children’s completed schooling.

### ***“Why the Early Years of Life Matter”***

**Sam Meisels**

Early childhood education no longer has to fight for its place in the sun. More and more, parents, educators, and policy makers understand and appreciate the critical importance of early learning for all children. Not long ago, the former CEOs of Procter & Gamble and Macy’s published an op-ed in the *New York Times* under the title “Capitalists for Preschool” in which they put forth the business case for early childhood education. And a substantial case can be made.

In the past decade alone evidence has accumulated showing that investments in young children—especially children at-risk and children with special needs—can have a significant return on human capital expenditure—a return of at least \$7 for every dollar invested. Research shows us that programs targeted towards the earliest years outstrip those focused on older students many times over. Early interventions can make a difference that can last a lifetime. Investing in early childhood makes sense.

## *The Developing Child and Family*

*The long range goal of research and training at CHGD is to optimize children's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development.*



### ***“Nutrition and Infant Brain and Behavior Development: Iron Deficiency as an Example”***

**Betsy Lozoff**

*Research Professor, CHGD; Professor of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases; Professor of Environmental Health Sciences*

### ***“Bringing Developmental Science to Research in Childhood Obesity”***

**Julie Lumeng**

*Research Assoc. Professor, CHGD; Assoc. Professor of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases; Associate Professor of Environmental Health Sciences*



### ***“Fathers: Still the Forgotten Contributors to Child Development”***

**Brenda Volling**

*Director and Research Professor, CHGD; Professor of Psychology*

### ***“Children Think and Learn About the Social World”***

**Henry Wellman**

*Research Professor, CHGD;  
Professor of Psychology*



### ***“Shining Light on Child Brain Development with functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS)”***

**Ioulia Kovelman**

*Research Assistant Professor, CHGD; Assistant Professor of Psychology*



### ***“How Developmental Science can Improve Child Health and Well-Being”***

**Alison Miller**

*Assistant Research Scientist, CHGD; Research Assistant Professor in Health Behavior and Health Education*