

Poor behavior is linked to time in day care [US] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below. Note: The study "Are There Long-Term Effects of Early Child Care?" appears in the current issue of Child Development. Those with access from an academic institution can view the full study at:

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com> ^[2]

EXCERPTS

A much-anticipated report from the largest and longest-running study of American child care has found that keeping a preschooler in a day care center for a year or more increased the likelihood that the child would become disruptive in class — and that the effect persisted through the sixth grade.

The effect was slight, and well within the normal range for healthy children, the researchers found. And as expected, parents' guidance and their genes had by far the strongest influence on how children behaved.

But the finding held up regardless of the child's sex or family income, and regardless of the quality of the day care center. With more than two million American preschoolers attending day care, the increased disruptiveness very likely contributes to the load on teachers who must manage large classrooms, the authors argue.

On the positive side, they also found that time spent in high-quality day care centers was correlated with higher vocabulary scores through elementary school.

The research, being reported today as part of the federally financed Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, tracked more than 1,300 children in various arrangements, including staying home with a parent; being cared for by a nanny or a relative; or attending a large day care center. Once the subjects reached school, the study used teacher ratings of each child to assess behaviors like interrupting class, teasing and bullying.

The findings are certain to feed a long-running debate over day care, experts say.

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