

Predictors of maternal language to infants during a picture book task in the home: Family SES, child characteristics and the parenting environment.

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Predictors of maternal language to infants during a picture book task in the home: Family SES, child characteristics and the parenting environment

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Abstract

This study investigated the contribution of child characteristics and parenting environment to the relationship between family SES/demographic characteristics and maternal language to infants. 1157 children were drawn from a representative sample of 1292 infants born to mothers in rural Appalachian counties and rural counties in southern minority U.S. communities. Mothers and their 6–8 month old babies were videotaped at home while talking about a wordless picture book. Mothers' language output and complexity were analyzed. Child temperament, age, and parenting environment (knowledge of child development and observed mother–child engagement) were

predictors of maternal language. Furthermore, their inclusion reduced the magnitude of the association between demographic characteristics and maternal language. Tests of mediation suggested that the parenting environment partially mediates the relationship between SES/demographic characteristics and maternal language. Findings are discussed with respect to identifying proximal processes that explain how SES may exert its influence on the language of young children.



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## Keywords

Maternal language; Infancy; SES; African American; Parenting; Picture book task

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