

**Research Digest:
Early Childhood Education**

Churchill, S. L., & Stoneman, Z. (2004). Correlates of family routines in Head Start families. *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 6*, 1-19.

Today's low-income families are often faced with the necessity of juggling work (possibly two jobs), child care, and multiple children in the family. The popular parenting literature places great importance on the role of routines in children's lives. The limited research on family routines along with the theoretical background behind these studies suggest that routinization within the family can buffer a child from adverse circumstances, thereby fostering more positive child outcomes.

This study examined correlates of family routines in a Head Start population in order to better understand their significance in the lives of families. The differences in gender found in this study seem to reemphasize that girls are more likely to be involved in routines within the home, and the presence or absence of these routines may contribute to girls' overall development. The establishment of family routines is an easy intervention point for early childhood educators, yet their impact on the child's social and cognitive outcomes may be limited to very specific variables and to girls. Family routines, however, may contribute to the mother's overall well-being. Given the correlations between mothers' depression and children's temperament with routines, this finding suggests that establishing routines could influence the mother's perception and her mental health. Family routines will continue to be an important intervention point for early childhood educators and will continue to be discussed in the popular parenting literature because of their malleability and relation to developmentally appropriate practices.

This Research Digest is a product of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools. The research presented is a sample of state-of-the-art research conducted in the area of early childhood education by faculty at UNL. For more information on the Center, please contact Holly Sexton at hsexton1@unl.edu

