

# Family Capacity-Building in Early Childhood Intervention: Effects on Parent and Child Competence and Confidence

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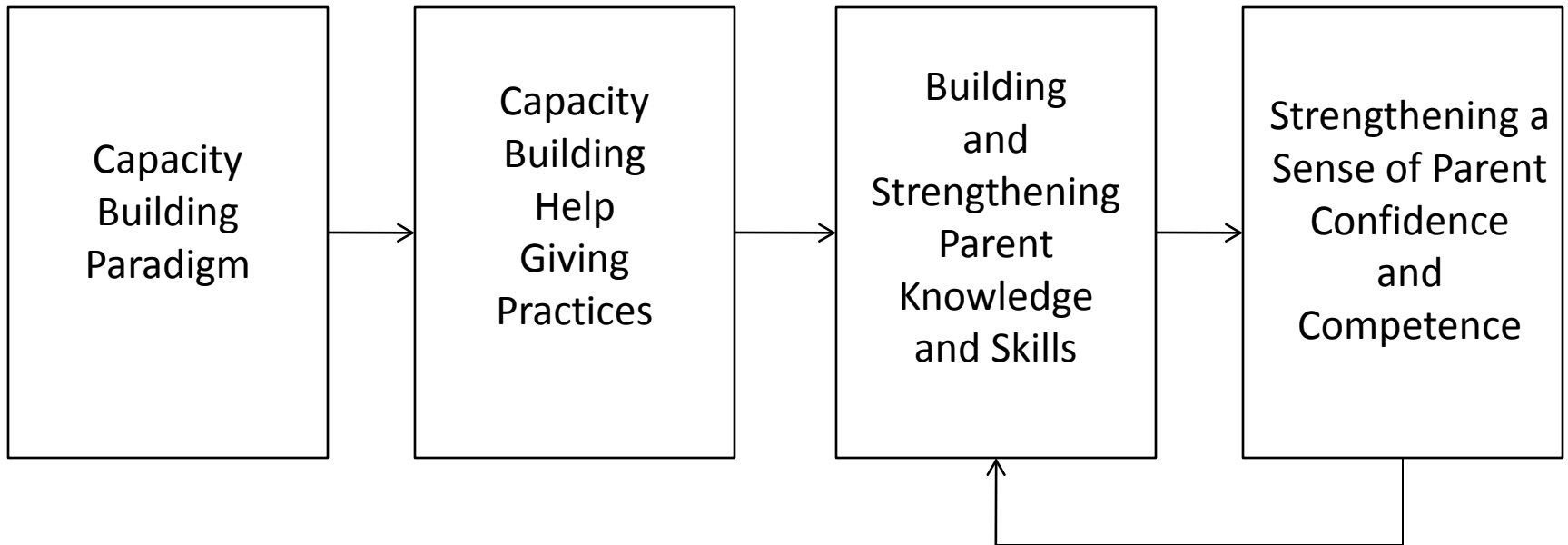
## Different Types of Capacity-Building

- Capacity-building as a model or paradigm for structuring how early childhood practitioners work with families
- Capacity-building as a set of help giver practices that build and strengthen parent and family capacity
- Capacity-building for promoting parenting knowledge and skills for carrying-out parenting responsibilities and promoting child learning
- Capacity-building for strengthening parent self-efficacy beliefs and a sense of competence and confidence

## Purpose of the Presentation

- Describe how the four types of capacity-building are related and provide a model for guiding the implementation of family-centered early childhood intervention
- Illustrate the characteristics of capacity-building and capacity-impeding early childhood intervention practices

# Relationship Between the Four Types of Capacity-Building



## Contrasting Approach to Early Childhood Intervention

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Capacity Building Models

Traditional Models

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Promotion

vs.

Treatment

Empowerment

vs.

Expertise

Strengths-Based

vs.

Deficit-Based

Resource-Based

vs.

Service-Based

Family-Centered

vs.

Professional Centered

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## Parenting Capacity-Building Paradigm

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Models	Main Focus
Promotion	Enhance and promote parenting knowledge and skills
Empowerment	Create opportunities that support and strengthen a sense of parenting confidence and competence
Strengths-Based	Build on existing parenting capabilities as the basis for promoting new parenting skills
Resource-Based	Use a range of resources and supports for enhancing parenting capabilities
Family-Centered	Engage parents in participatory experiences and opportunities based on their informed choices and family and cultural beliefs

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## Capacity-Building Help Giving Practices

Our research has consistently found two different kinds of help giving practices:

- Relational help giving practices
- Participatory help giving practices

## Relational Help Giving Practices

- Relational practices include behavior typically associated with effective clinical practice, including, but not limited to, compassion, respect, active and reflective listening, trust, empathy, and effective communication
- Relational practices also include practitioner beliefs and attitudes about family and cultural strengths, values, and attitudes, and practitioner sensitivity to these beliefs and values as part of intervention practices



## Participatory Help Giving Practices

- Participatory practices include behavior that actively involve family members in (a) informed choice and decision making and both (b) using existing strengths and abilities and (c) developing parenting capabilities as well as the skills needed to obtain resources, supports, advice, etc.
- Participatory practices also include practitioner responsiveness to and flexibility in how help is provided to children and their families
- Participatory practices and not relational practices are necessary but not sufficient for building and strengthening family-capacity

## Capacity-Building Parenting Opportunities

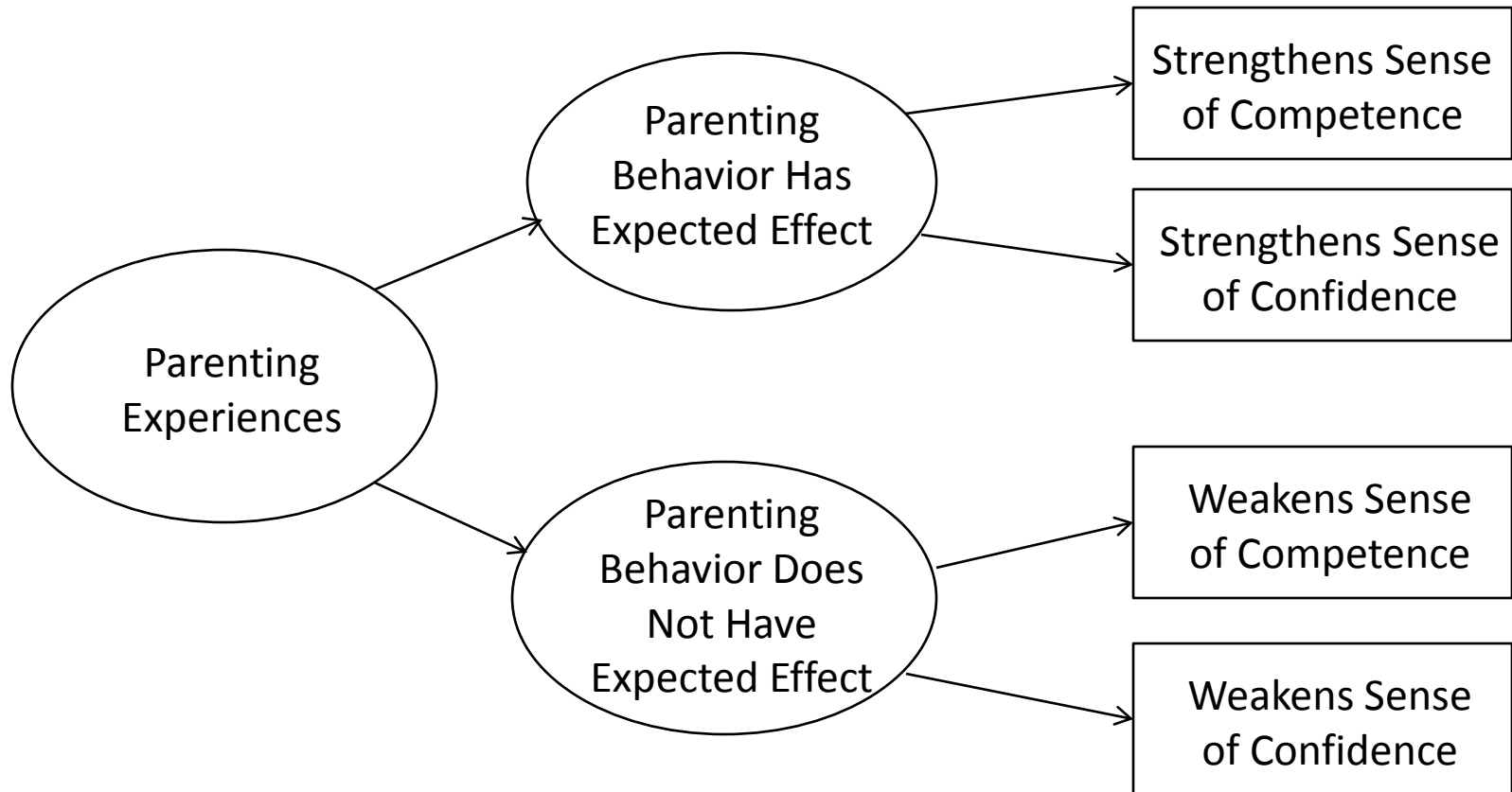
Parenting experiences and opportunities that actively involve parents in everyday, real life parenting activities are more likely to have capacity-building characteristics and consequences. These include, but are not limited to, providing his or her child everyday learning opportunities to promote child development.

## Building and Strengthening Parenting Confidence and Competence

The experiences afforded parents to build parenting capacity must also influence or change a parents' sense of confidence and competence if the parent is to sustain engagement in parenting behavior.

- *A sense of competence* refers to the (self-efficacy) belief that one's behavior will have the expected effect of outcome
- *A sense of confidence* refers to the (self-efficacy) belief that one has the capacity to perform a task competently

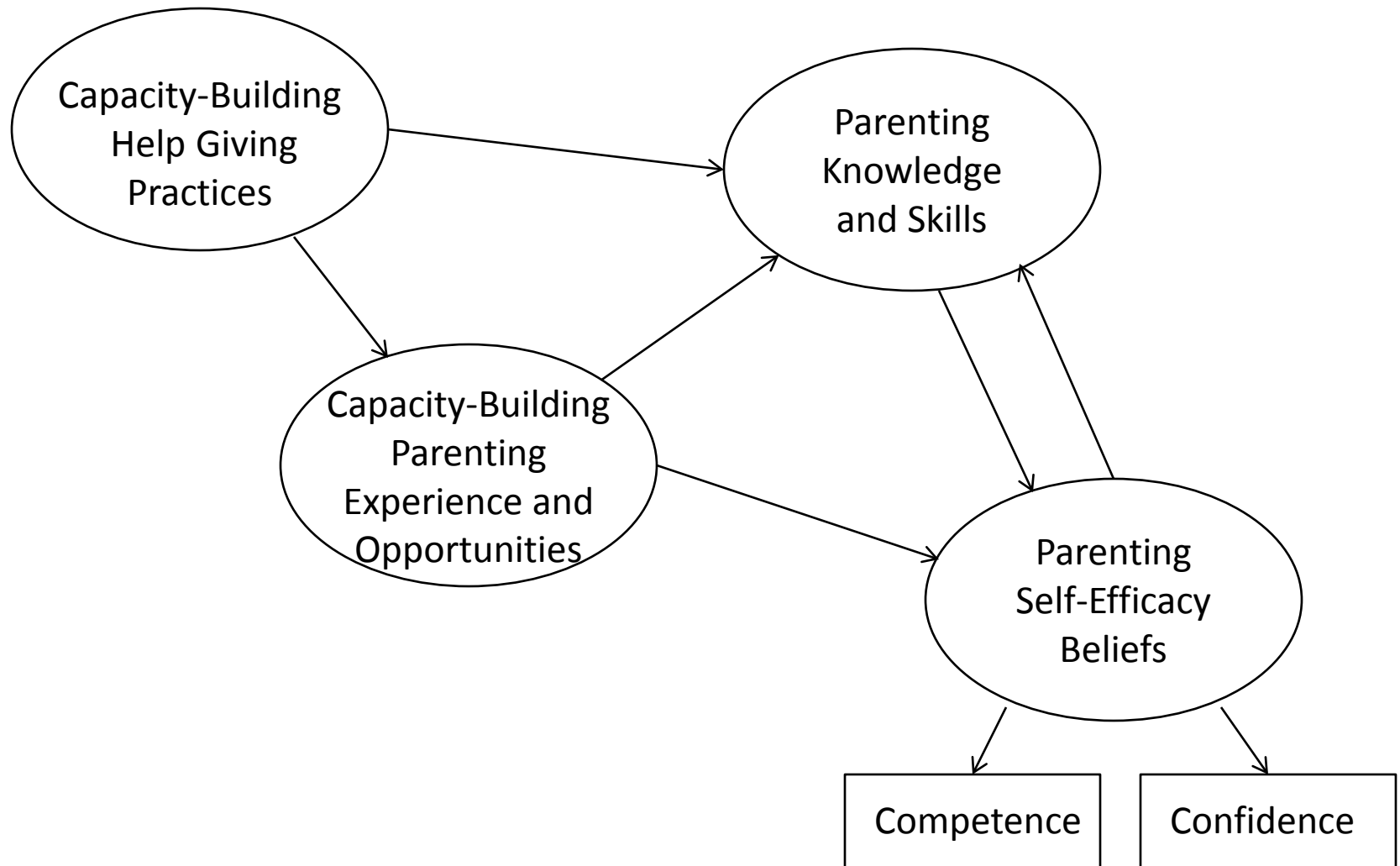
# Contrasting Consequences of Different Parenting Experiences<sup>a</sup>



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<sup>a</sup> Based on Goldberg, S. (1977). Social competence in infancy: A model of parent-infant interaction. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 23, 163-177.

# Relationship Between Capacity-Building Help Giving Practices and Capacity Building Parenting Experiences



## Parenting Beliefs Are Important Determinants of Parenting Behavior

Isabel Miguel at the University of Coimbra and her colleagues, as part of a review of research on the relationships between parenting beliefs and behavior, noted that parent beliefs about the importance of child learning opportunities are related to active attempts to engage a child in those activities.

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Miguel, I. et al. (2009). Parental ideas and their role in child rearing: The idea-behavior connection. *Italian Journal of Sociology and Education*, 3, 225 – 253.

## Consequences of the Belief-Behavior Connection

- The relationship between parent knowledge and skills and parent sense of competence and confidence is bidirectional
- Parenting behavior that has positive consequences will likely strengthen a sense of parenting competence and confidence
- A positive sense of parenting competence and confidence will likely sustain parent engagement in effective parenting behavior.

# Caregiver Confidence and Competence Associated With the Use of Contextually-Mediated Practices<sup>a</sup>

Purpose: Determine the extent to which the use of caregiver-mediated everyday child learning was associated with increased caregiver competence and confidence

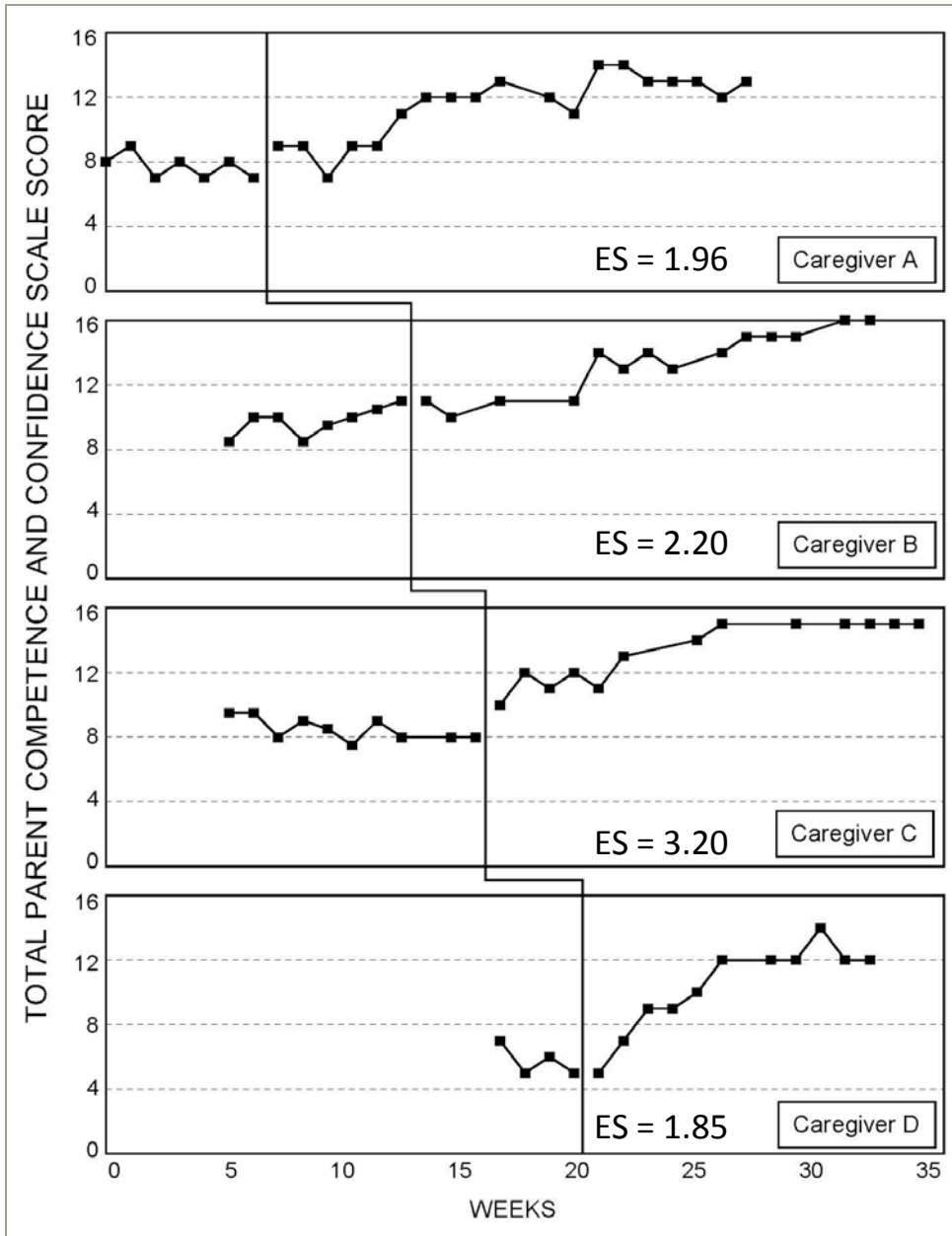
Study Participants: Three mothers and one grandmother of preschool aged children with disabilities or developmental delays

Methodology: Multiple baseline design across study participants

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<sup>a</sup> Swanson, J., Raab, M., & Dunst, C.J. (in press). Strengthening family capacity to provide young children everyday natural learning opportunities. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*.





Findings showed that promoting caregivers' use of CMP had the effect of strengthening their competence and confidence based on experimenter observations of caregiver behavior

(NOTE. ES = Estimated Cohen's *d* effect size)

## When Help is Not Helpful

I'd like to briefly describe two situations where attempts to be helpful backfired and had negative effects to illustrate how well-intentioned interventions can have unanticipated consequences. Both examples are from my own work as an early childhood interventionist.

## Illustrative Examples

- Northern Virginia Parent-Infant Education Program
  - Behavioral-based parent training program
- North Carolina Infants' Program
  - Professionally-directed home-based early intervention program

## Northern Virginia Parent-Infant Education Program

- Center-based infant and toddler early intervention program
- Equal numbers of children with and without disabilities
- Twice a week sessions each lasting 3 to 4 hours
- Child classroom component and parent training component
- One hour of each session devoted to the parent training program

## North Carolina Infants' Program

- Home-based infant and toddler intervention program
- Focus was on children with identified disabilities and delays
- Once a week home visits to demonstrate professionally developed interventions
- Parents implemented the interventions with their children between home visits

## Some Negative Effects

- Parent-training program compromised parents' sense of confidence and competence
- Home-based program created a dependency of the parents on the help giver

## Family Capacity-Building in Early Intervention in Portugal

Paula Santos and Gabriela Portugal at the University of Aveiro describe an approach to early intervention that integrates their own work with that of Ferre Laevers at the University of Leuven (Belgium) that includes many of the same characteristics that I have described as the key elements of family capacity-building and which also incorporates the key characteristics of everyday child learning that I described yesterday.

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Santos, P., & Portugal, G. (2005). *Early intervention: Early way(s) of promoting inclusion*. Paper presented at the International Special Education Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, August.

## Adapted Santos and Portugal Model

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Characteristic	Caregiver	Professional
Sensitivity	Shows an understanding of the basic needs of a child (security, affection, attention, etc.)	Uses relational help giving to develop a trusting relationship and by respecting family beliefs and values
Stimulation	Provides everyday activities to a child that invite child interactions and communication	Using participatory help giving to create opportunities for families to build their knowledge and skills, their own and their child's strengths, and the supports and resources for supporting parenting abilities
Promoting (Autonomy)	Respects children's sense of initiative by acknowledging their interests, giving them room for experimenting, and deciding how activities are performed	Supporting family members so they can design an implement everyday life in ways they desire

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# Conclusion

- The ways in which professionals work and interact with families matters if those interactions will have capacity-building characteristics and consequences
- The kinds of opportunities and experiences afforded or provided parents can have either positive or negative consequences
- Experiences and opportunities that build both parenting knowledge and skills, and promote a positive sense of parenting competence and confidence, are more likely to have capacity-building consequences.