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Maternal Investment and Early Childhood Development

Measuring what mothers do to promote their children's development has long been an important goal of social scientists. Constructing a measure informed by both the quantity and quality of mothering, however, remains a challenge. Large-scale surveys have tended to focus on mothering quantity (e.g., "How often do you read to your child?") while smaller-scale observational studies have specialized in gauging quality (e.g., coded videotaped mother/child interactions). We combine strengths from both of these traditions with data from *The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort of 2001*. A unique feature of the data is the availability of over 10,000 mother/child interactions videotaped and coded for quality. These videotaped interactions, along with traditional survey questions asked of the mother and interviewer observations, afford the opportunity to assess how well quality and quantity indicators combine in nationally representative data. Surprisingly, our results suggest that mothering *quality*—at least as gauged here—adds little to our measurement model or to our efforts to predict child development. We discuss the implications of these results for researchers trying to understand how mothers matter.