



Center on the Developing Child  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

# Leveraging Science for a New Era in Early Childhood Policy and Practice

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ECD: Leveraging Evidence for Policy and Practice in Vietnam  
Hanoi, Vietnam | 23 May 2023

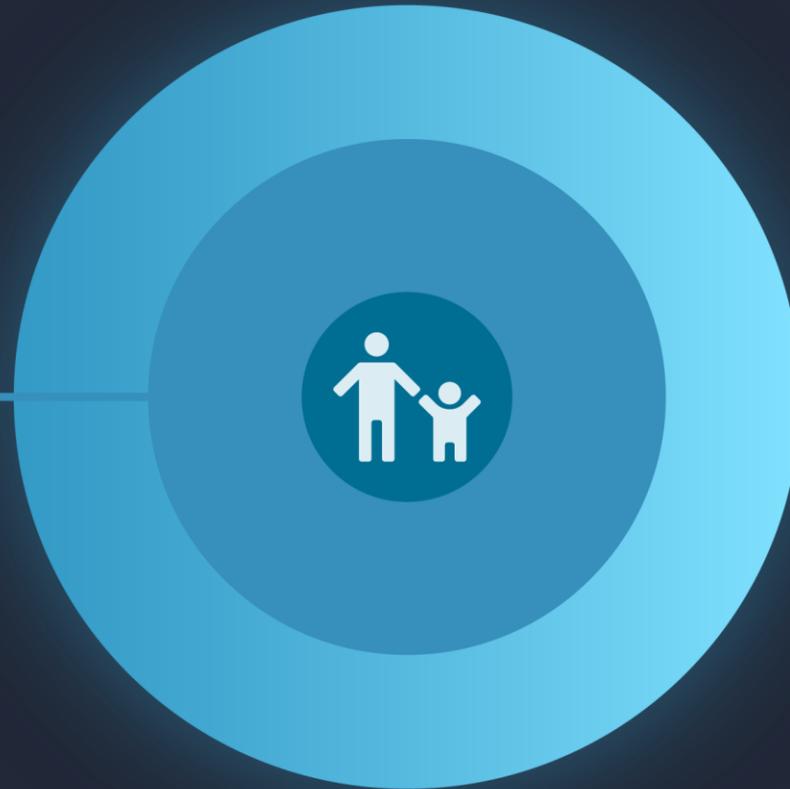
**Find Us:** Center on the Developing Child at Harvard



The time is ripe for a **mindset shift** in science-informed policy and practice.

## ECD 1.0

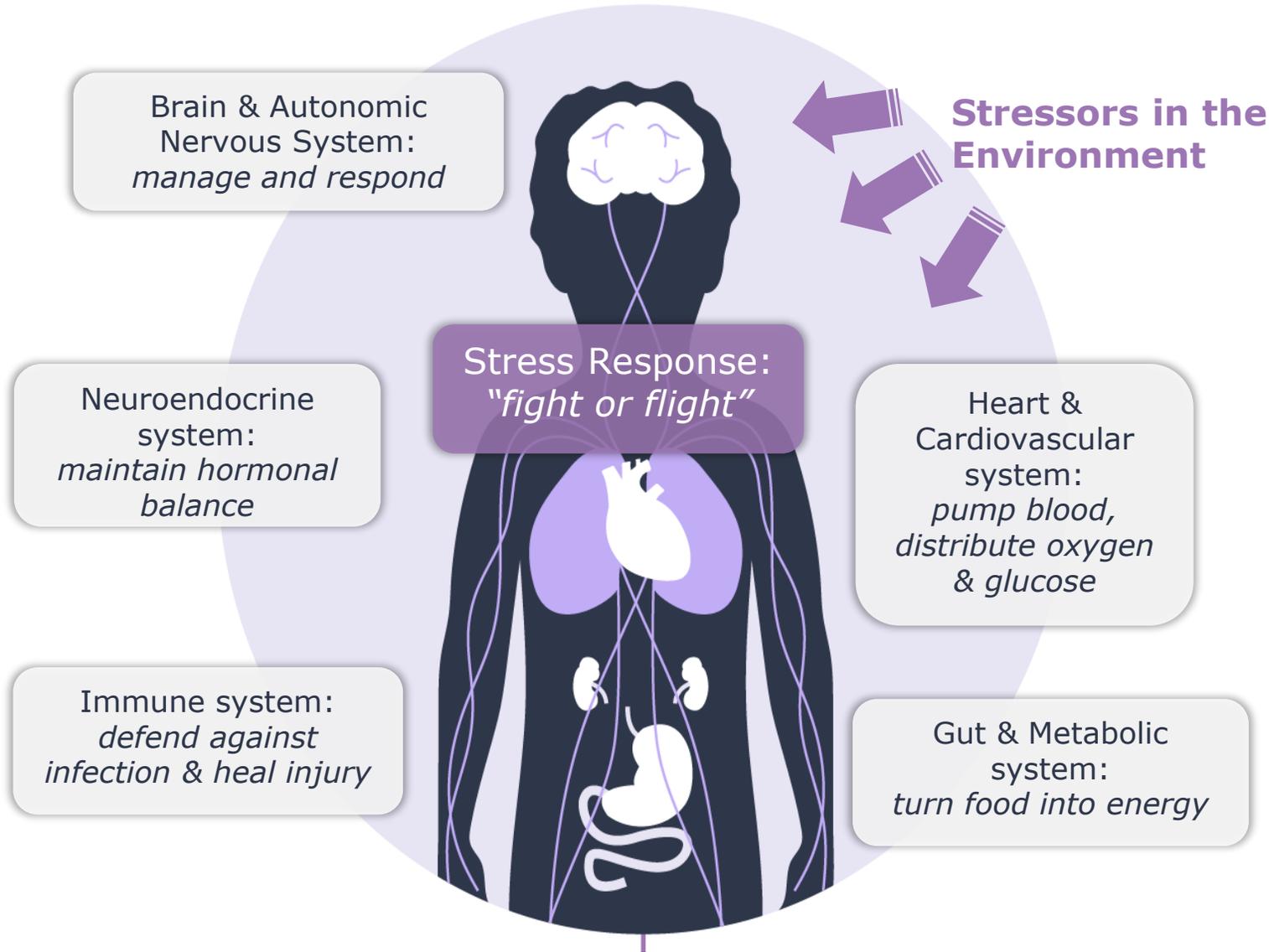
**Early brain development  
in an environment of  
relationships**



## ECD 2.0

**Connecting the brain to  
the rest of the body in a  
broader ecosystem**

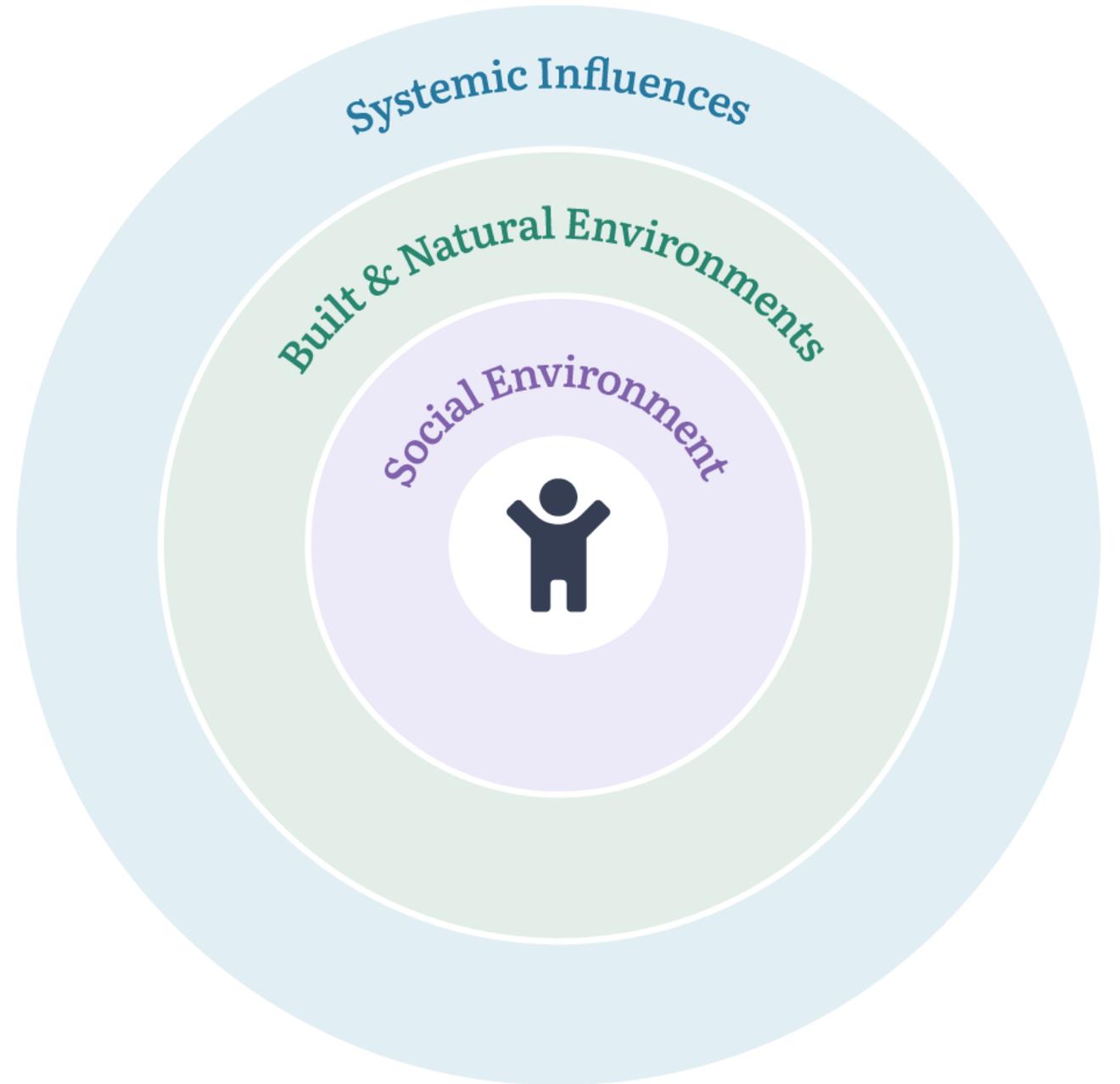
# Interactive Development of Multiple Biological Systems



***Take-Home:***  
*Supporting families with young children is as much about building a strong foundation for lifelong health as it is about early learning, social-emotional development, and school readiness.*

# Place Matters: What Surrounds Us Shapes Us

How the environment we create  
shapes the foundations of early  
childhood development





## Social Environment

The presence or absence of key influences in a child's social environment plays an important role in their development.



**Responsive relationships**



**Significant stress and adversity**



**Caregiver well-being**



**Social connectedness**



**Community supports**



**Faith and cultural traditions**



## Built & Natural Environments

The accessibility and exposure to various influences in a child’s built and natural environments shape their development directly, by influencing their developing biological systems, and indirectly, by interacting with their environment of relationships.



Air quality and temperature



Clean water supply



Safe green space



Safe, healthy housing



Exposure to toxins and hazards



Economic opportunities



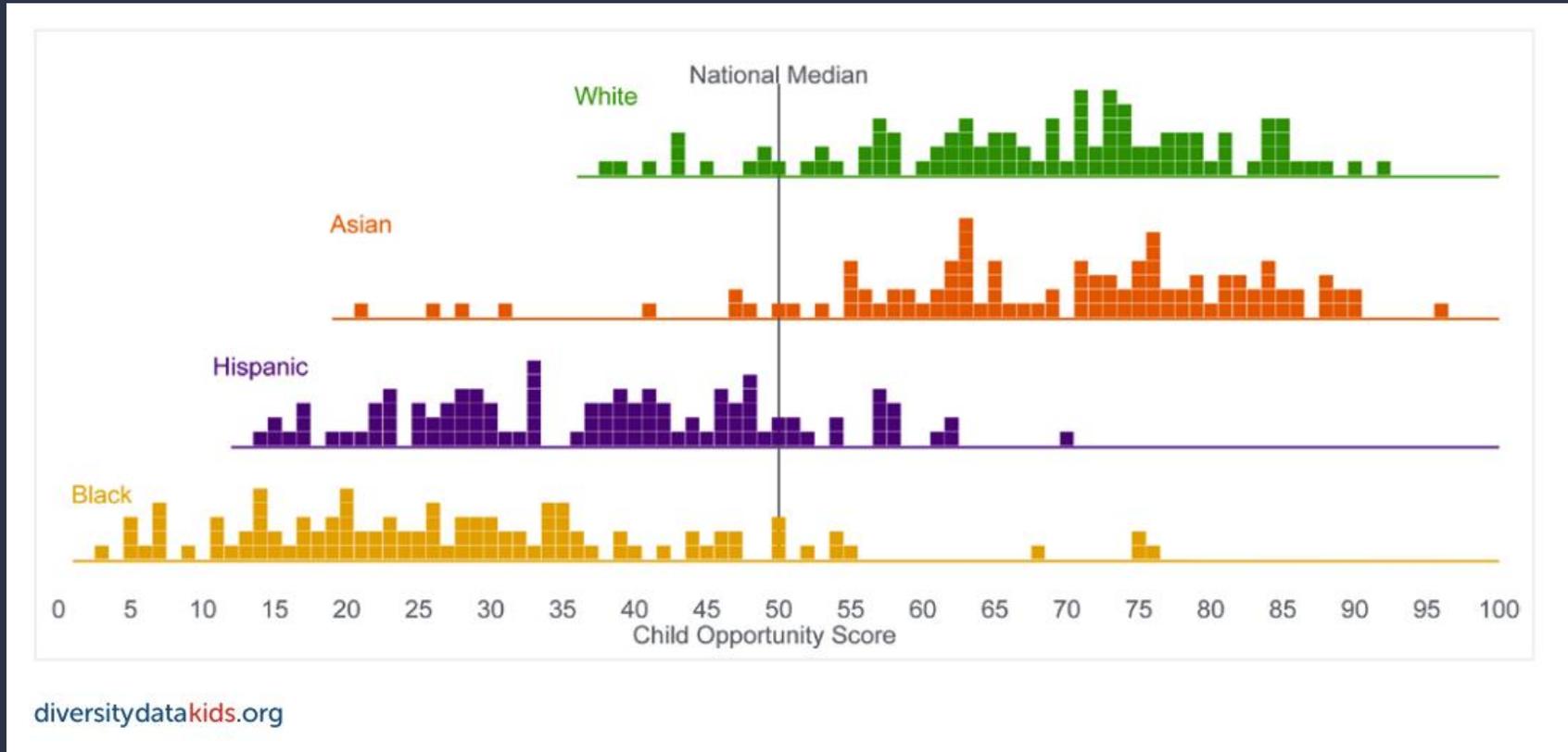
Nutritious food



Neighborhood infrastructure



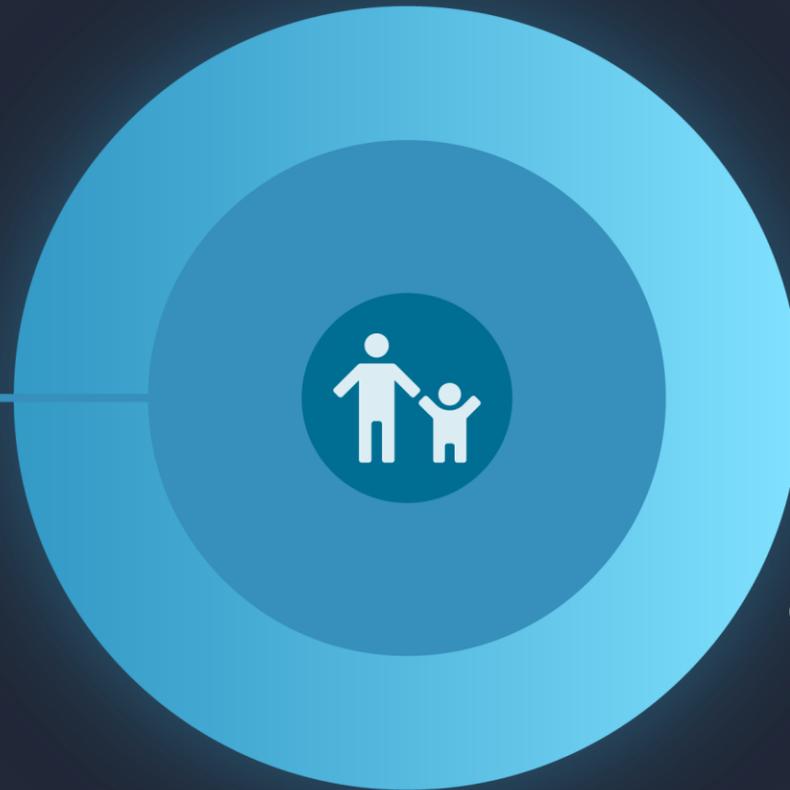
# There is an Unequal Distribution of Positive & Negative Influences



# Envisioning a Bold Early Childhood Agenda in a World of Inequality and Uncertainty

## ECD 1.0

IT'S STILL ABOUT  
Caregiver-child  
relationships



## ECD 2.0

AND IT'S ALSO ABOUT  
Communities, business, and  
government working together to  
assure a supportive and healthy  
environment for **all** families  
raising young children



# Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD

## Connecting the Brain to the Rest of the Body: Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Health Are Deeply Intertwined

WORKING PAPER 15

Center on the Developing Child HARVARD UNIVERSITY

## HOW RACE AFFECTS CHILDREN'S CHILD

Years of scientific study have shown us that, when children's stress response systems remain activated at high levels for long periods, it can have a significant wear-and-tear effect on their developing brains and other biological systems. This can have lifelong effects on learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.<sup>1</sup>

### CALL TO ACTION

## Re-Envisioning Early Childhood Policy and Practice in a World of Striking Inequality and Uncertainty

The early childhood field is at a critical inflection point in a changing world. The opportunity to align new science and the lived experiences of families and decision makers across a diversity of sectors, cultures, and political values offers a powerful pathway forward. The need for shared leadership along that path is urgent.

[Read the Call to Action](#)

[www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

