



## Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute and Institute of Gerontology Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

### Lifespan Alliance Overview

The new Lifespan Alliance between MPSI and IOG aims to enhance:

- Research and training on lifespan themes
- Inter-generational community engagement
- Administrative efficiencies, with reduced costs
- Research infrastructure and support services for faculty and students

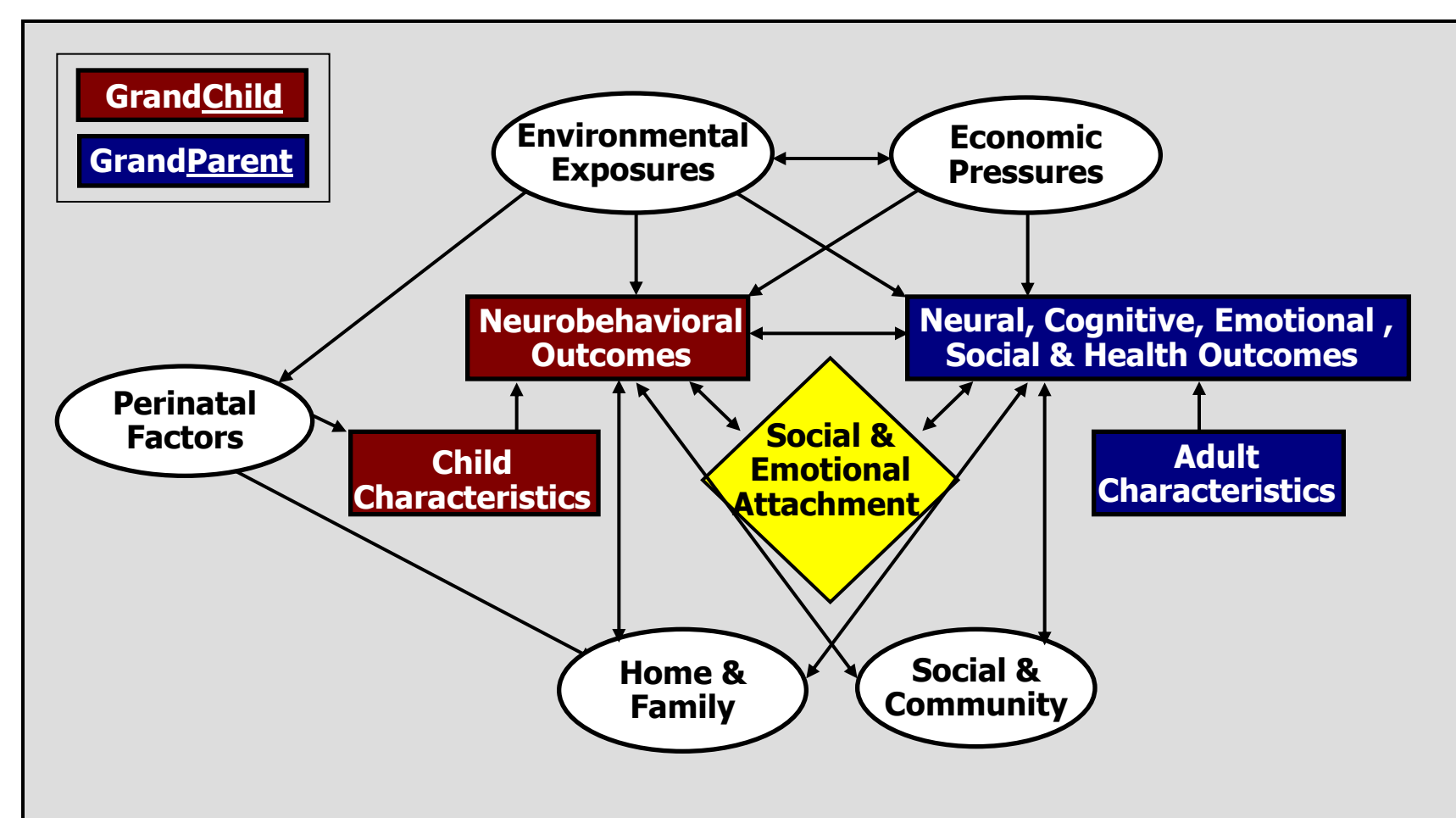
### Lifespan Investigation of Family, Health and Environment (LIFHE)

The first research by the Lifespan Alliance is the **LIFHE project** with an initial focus on the physical and emotional impact of grandparents raising grandchildren in an urban environment.

The LIFHE Core **Administrative Team** includes:

Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, Director of IOG/MPSI  
John Hannigan, PhD, Deputy Director, MPSI  
Cathy Lysack, PhD, Deputy Director, IOG  
Marc Kruman, PhD, Director, Center for the Study of Citizenship & Chair of History  
Lisa Ficker, MA, LIFHE Project Director  
Virginia Delaney-Black, MD, Associate Director, Children's Research Center of Michigan  
Bonnie Stanton, MD, Chair of Pediatrics  
Teri Albrecht, PhD, Karmanos Cancer Institute

### LIFHE: Conceptual Model

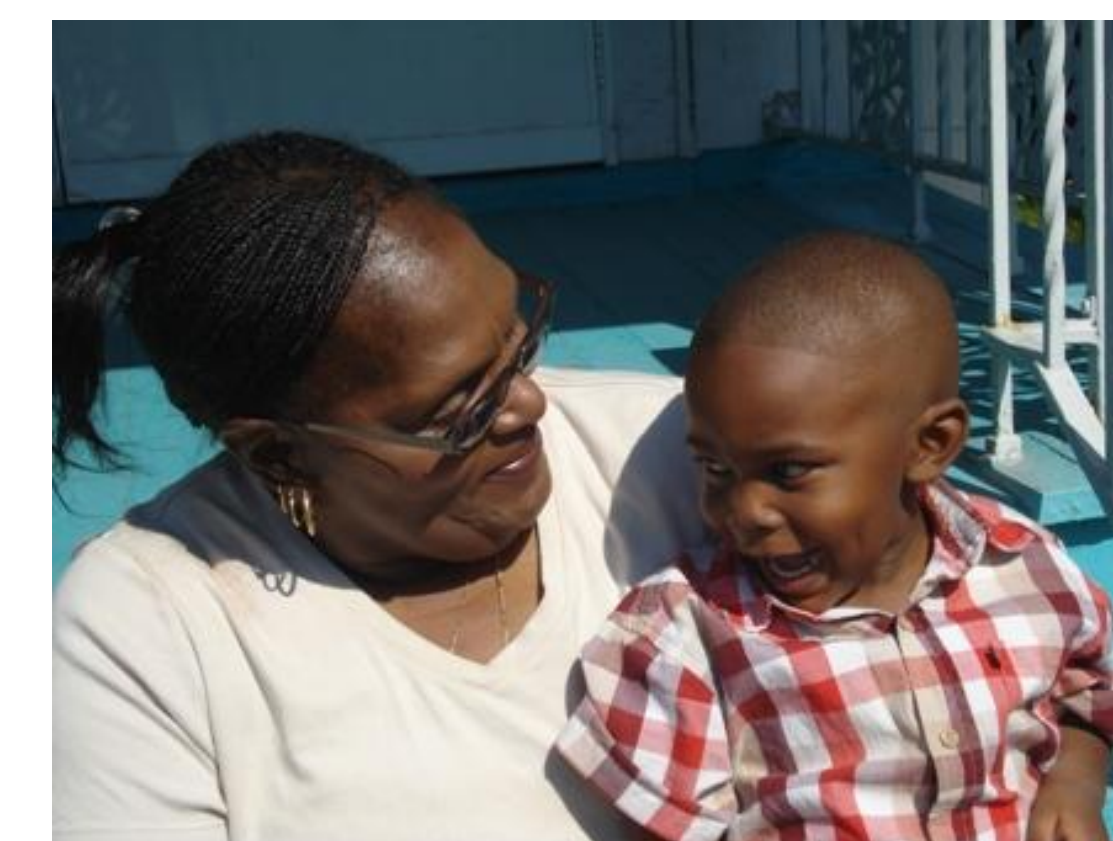


### Initial Questions: Developmental Phase

- What are the long-term behavioral, social and health outcomes for children raised by grandparents?
  - What are the features of their attachment?
- What is the impact of grand-parenting on the health and well-being of the care-giving grandparents?
  - How do racial disparities modify that impact?
- How do parenting styles differ between grandparents and a younger generation of parents?
- How might current large prospective cohorts of caregivers and children provide preliminary data and possible participants for future studies?
- How might the LIFHE project engage community partners in the IOG's Healthier Black Elders program and MPSI's Healthier Urban Families program in research and outreach?

### "Grand-Families" by the Numbers

- In 2000, 2.4 million self-defined "grandparent caregivers" were sole custodians of grandchildren <18 years old, up 30% since 1990.
- Eight times more children are being raised in grandparent-headed households than are in the foster care system
- Grandparent caregiver households are more common among African Americans than in other groups (Kelley & Whitley, 2003)
- Of 15,000 children in Michigan with court appointed guardians – mostly grandparents – 9,000 reside in Wayne County.



### Initial Funding

Wayne State University President's Urban  
Research Enhancement Program  
Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute  
Institute for Gerontology