



## Patrice Lee Engle

Leading researcher in early child development. Born in Philadelphia, PA, USA, on Dec 1, 1944, she died of cancer in New York, USA, on Sept 22, 2012, aged 67 years.

As a legacy to Pat Engle, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, along with her friends and colleagues, have established the Patrice L Engle Dissertation Award For Global Early Child Development to provide opportunities for junior scholars from or working in developing countries to conduct dissertation research in global early child development. The award includes US\$5000 to support dissertation research and a 2-year student membership to the Society for Research in Child Development. For more information about the award see <http://www.srccd.org> or request information from [Patrice.Engle.grant@srccd.org](mailto:Patrice.Engle.grant@srccd.org)

For 2007 and 2011 *Lancet Series on child development in developing countries* see <http://www.thelancet.com/series/child-development-in-developing-countries> and <http://www.thelancet.com/series/child-development-in-developing-countries-2>

From hands-on field work to scholarly analyses and advocacy with national policy makers, Patrice Engle did whatever it took to help children in developing countries receive the health care, nutrition, and opportunities they needed to be successful. A pioneer in the field of global early childhood development, she persistently built bridges—between academic disciplines and across countries—in the belief that all children deserve early childhood experiences that will enable them to fulfil their potential.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, USA, Engle studied psychology at Wellesley College and completed a PhD in child development and psychology at Stanford University. After 2 years at the University of Illinois in Chicago, she travelled to Guatemala where she worked for 4 years at the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama. “She went off to Guatemala, where she really got to start thinking about the interaction between children’s early nutrition and experiences that contribute to their development”, says her friend and colleague Maureen Black, Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Returning to the USA in 1980, Engle joined the faculty at California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo. Cal Poly would be Engle’s academic home for the rest of her career, aside from the time she spent as Chief of Early Child Development for UNICEF between 1999 and 2006 with postings in New Delhi and New York. Engle was Chair of the

Department of Psychology and Child Development at Cal Poly from 1992 to 1995. “Over the course of her career, Pat enriched the research in child development by stimulating an interest in early child development scholarship in a range of disciplines from around the world”, said Black. “Above all, Pat was a relentless proponent of early child development. She befriended many folks and was respectful of them and that served as an entree to their listening to what she had to say. She was very outreaching and welcoming, but very dogged and focused on nutrition and child development.”

By gathering evidence that successful human capital begins with strong early child development, Engle was a primary force in ensuring that indicators related to family life and early child development were included in UNICEF’s Multicountry Indicator Cluster Surveys. Her goals were to ensure that child development programmes were based on scientific evidence, were evaluated rigorously, and were a central component of efforts to ensure the health, development, and wellbeing of children. “Pat was an advocate-researcher who not only knew how to generate and recognise high-quality evidence but also masterfully knew how to apply it to create change”, said Pia Britto, an Assistant Professor in the Child Study Center at Yale University who worked with Engle from 2002. “She took her role of mentorship very seriously and gave generously of her time, expertise, and guidance”, Britto said.

In 2007 and 2011, Engle helped to spearhead two *Lancet Series* of on early child development. “Those two series really represent the integration of academics, people who work for UNICEF and WHO, and some direct service people who work for foundations, and Pat was a driving force in both of those series,” Black said. Susan Walker, Professor of Nutrition and Director of the Tropical Medicine Research Institute at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, also worked with Engle on those series. “Pat was one of the most positive persons I’ve ever known”, she said. “She was indefatigable. When others were saying something could not be achieved, she would never be dissuaded and would find a way.” After the first *Lancet series*, Engle was one of the founding members of the Global Child Development Group. “We very much wanted the structure of that group to be outside the US, so it was headquartered at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. It was an illustration that the work should be integrated across people from different disciplines but also should be very much in partnership with people from low and middle income countries”, notes Black.

Engle was the recipient of the 2011 Distinguished International Contributions To Child Development Award from the Society for Research in Child Development, and was also an honorary professor at the University of Hong Kong. She is survived by her son, Sawyer Fuller, her husband, Henry Hammer, her twin sister, Sally Engle Merry, and her brother, Robert Fry Engle III.

*Stephen Pincock*