

# **Examining Strengths of Black Families Reported to Child Welfare Systems: Implications for New Frames & Agendas in the Pursuit of Equity & Well-Being**

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# Agenda

## Research on Black Families in contact with CPS

- Strengths of Black Families Investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Conceptual Model and Framework
- Future Directions & Opportunities

# Strengths of Black Families Investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS)

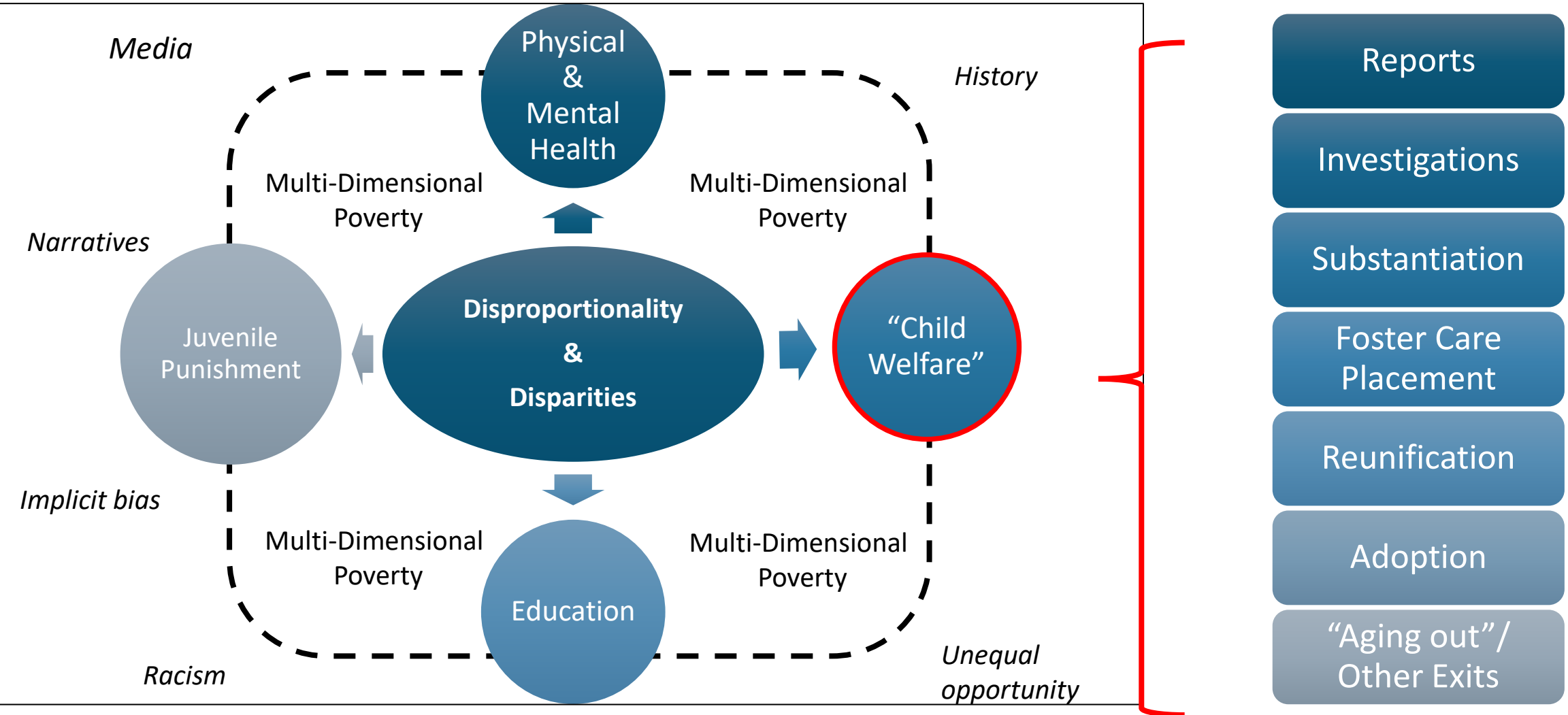
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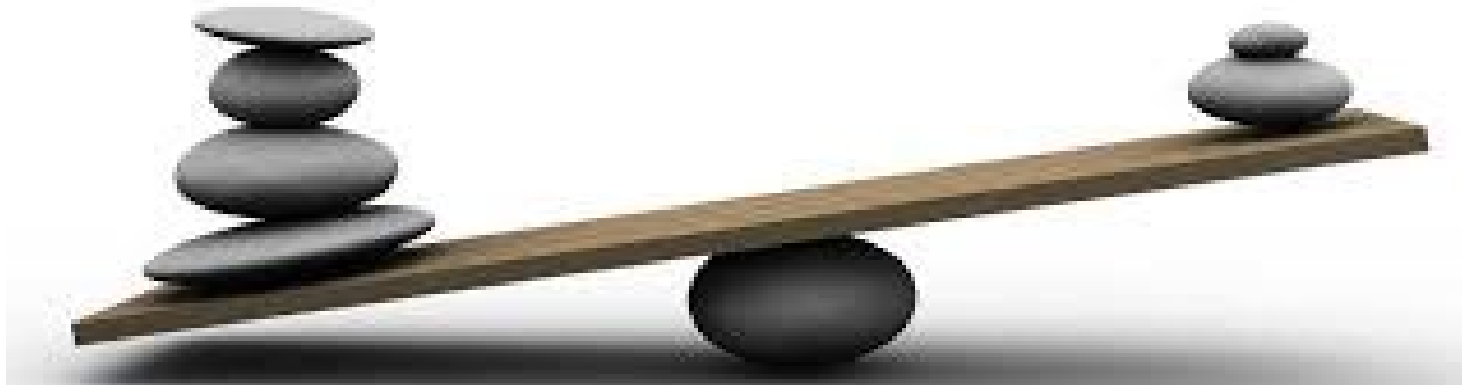
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# Background: Disproportionality and Disparities Experienced by Black Families



# Background: Research on predictors of CPS Contact

**Risk Factors  
&  
Deficits**



**Protective Factors  
&  
Strengths**

- Individual level-risk factors  $>$  Protective factors at the individual, family, or community levels
- Predominance of Black/White comparisons

# Current Study

Examines factors that may operate in a protective manner among Black families with respect to child maltreatment etiology.



Applies Robert Hill's Strengths of Black Families Solutions Framework:

- Examines intragroup differences in self-reported parenting behaviors
- Operationalizes several strengths to determine their relationship with parenting outcomes.

# The Solutions Framework: Robert Hill (1972; 1999)

Draws from an extensive body of interdisciplinary research to explicate a range of strengths within Black families and communities:

- **Family strengths:** operationally defined as “traits that facilitate the ability of the family to meet the needs of its members and the demands made upon it by systems outside of the family unit” (Hill, 1999, p. 42).
- **These strengths serve as protective influences in the face of structural barriers that present complex risks and challenges.**

# The Solutions Framework: Strengths of Black Families Robert Hill (1972; 1999)

## Strong Achievement Orientation

Parental education orientation

Youth education orientation

Peer approval of achievement; Self-esteem; Racial Identity; Locus of control

## Strong Work Orientation

Strong work ethic (historical legacy of working class, preference for work);

Strong commitment to work

## Flexible Family Roles

High role adaptability of family members; Egalitarian division of family tasks;

Shared family roles;

Resilience of single parent families

## Strong Kinship Bonds

Kinship values; Grandmothers as central figures: Three generational & extended family households; Fictive kin; Informal foster care/adoption; Mutual aid networks

## Strong Religious Orientation

Strong religious commitment and participation; Church as important social center with social welfare functions



# Methods

## Data & Study sample:

- Getting Access to Income Now (GAIN) study: RCT designed to evaluate a child maltreatment prevention program in Milwaukee County
- Families reported to and investigated by child protective services (CPS), whose cases closed at the investigation stage
- A two-wave interview was administered in January-December of 2016 and January-December of 2017. Our sample includes primary caregivers who identified as Black or African American, and who participated in both survey waves (N=385).

## Variables:

- Predictor variables were operationalized based on strengths identified in the Solutions Framework
- Key outcomes: self-reported child maltreatment, parental emotional competence, parental affection, and parental resilience

## Analysis:

- OLS regression and logistic regression used to predict parenting behaviors. Controlled for treatment status, range of demographic factors.

# Results

## Logistic regression models predicting self-reported parental maltreatment-related behaviors

Variable	Physical Aggression		Psychological Aggression		Neglectful Behaviors	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
<b>Intergenerational household</b>	0.88	(0.33)	0.48*	(0.15)	0.61	(0.20)
<b>\$100 Aid</b>	0.84	(0.09)	0.84	(0.09)	0.75**	(0.07)
<b>Aid with childcare</b>	1.08	(0.09)	0.73***	(0.06)	1.04	(0.08)
<b>Received Informal help</b>	0.47**	(0.12)	0.57*	(0.14)	0.90	(0.21)
<b>Willing to ask fam for help</b>	1.03	(0.11)	1.09	(0.11)	1.10	(0.10)
<b>Achievement Orientation</b>	1.16	(0.34)	0.65	(0.16)	0.78	(0.19)
<b>Informal work</b>	2.74***	(0.76)	1.28	(0.32)	1.41	(0.33)
<b>Formal work</b>	1.15	(0.34)	0.50**	(0.13)	0.78	(0.20)
<b>Worked multiple jobs</b>	1.34	(0.36)	0.94	(0.23)	1.01	(0.23)
<b>Religiosity</b>	1.09	(0.13)	0.74**	(0.08)	0.92	(0.09)
<b>Positive relationship</b>	0.50**	(0.12)	0.55*	(0.13)	0.64*	(0.14)

Models adjust for demographic characteristics and treatment

\* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001.

# Results

## OLS regression models predicting parental resilience, affection, and emotional competence

Variable	Resilience		Affection		Emotional Competence	
	Stand. Coeff.	SE	Stand. Coeff.	SE	Stand. Coeff.	SE
<b>Intergenerational household</b>	0.07	(0.16)	0.04	(0.13)	1.02*	(2.37)
<b>\$100 Aid</b>	0.17	(1.27)	0.15	(1.37)	0.40**	(2.97)
<b>Aid with childcare</b>	0.01	(0.07)	-0.02	(-0.23)	0.20	(1.91)
<b>Informal help</b>	-0.36	(-1.14)	-0.43	(-1.69)	-0.45	(-1.39)
<b>Will ask fam help</b>	0.29*	(2.27)	-0.05	(-0.51)	0.16	(1.23)
<b>Achievement Orient.</b>	3.57***	(11)	1.29***	(4.88)	2.03***	(6.16)
<b>Informal work</b>	-0.15	(-0.46)	-0.11	(-0.42)	0.00	(0.01)
<b>Formal work</b>	-0.05	(-0.14)	-0.07	(-0.26)	0.40	(1.16)
<b>Worked multiple jobs</b>	0.15	(0.48)	0.30	(1.18)	0.59	(1.86)
<b>Positive relationship</b>	0.38	(1.30)	-0.43	(-1.82)	0.13	(0.46)

Models adjust for demographic characteristics and treatment

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

# Discussion & Implications

- Several strengths were associated with decreased risk of self-reported parental maltreatment-related behaviors, and with positive or protective parenting behaviors.
- Demonstrates a strengths-based approach to research on Black families in contact with CPS
  - Application of the Solution Framework, centers Black families
  - Can a better understanding of strengths illuminate potential targets for both prevention and intervention across various non-stigmatized service delivery systems?
- Need for Strengths-based research to address racial disproportionality & disparity in child well-being and child welfare outcomes
  - Expand/alter motivation of studies
  - Generating evidence for action to reduce inequality

# Limitations

- Precision in application of the framework
  - Improvement in construct validity
  - Gaps in measures
- Prescriptive nature of framework, importance of updating
- Accounting for a family's perception of their own strengths
- Conceptual questions:
  - Is a strength a protective factor?
  - Structural applications
- Addressing the need for attention to contextual factors
  - Do certain strengths matter more in specific contexts?

# Research on Black Families in contact with CPS/Racial Disparities: Future Directions & Opportunities

## Conceptual Frameworks & Lenses

**Life-course and  
Intersectional**

**Black Family  
Well-being**

**Abolition**

**Reparations**

# Thank You!

Questions?  
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