

# Prosocial Behaviors as a Marker of Health and Enhancer of Well Being

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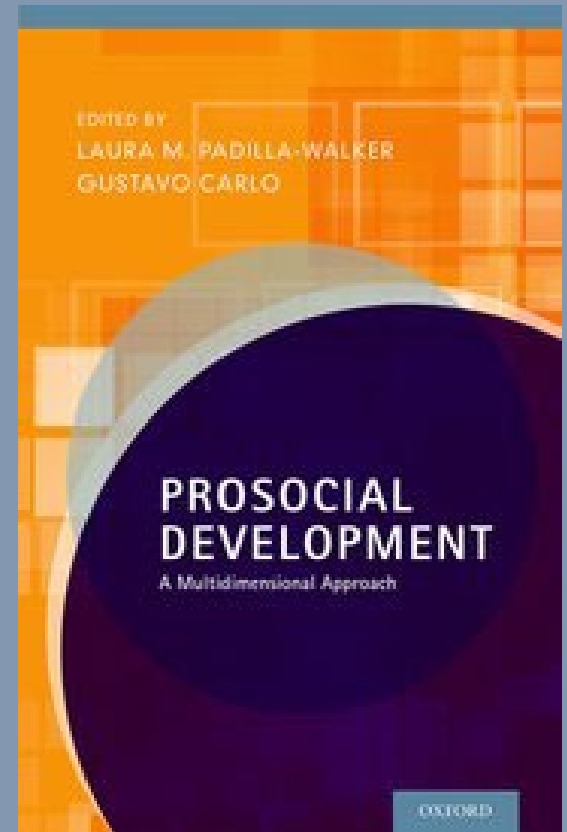
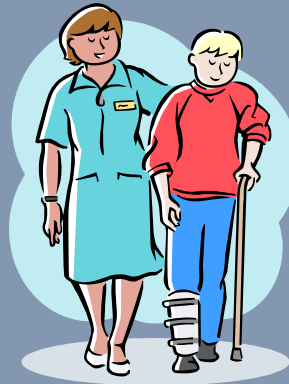
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# What are Prosocial Behaviors?

- Actions that benefit others
  - Sharing, kindness, helping, comforting, volunteerism, civic engagement



Carlo, G. (2014). The development and correlates of prosocial moral behaviors. In M. Killen & J. G. Smetana (Eds.), *Handbook of moral development (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)* (pp. 208-234). New York: Psychology Press.

# Typology of Prosocial Behaviors

## CULTURE

### Situation

- Dire v Non-Dire
- Spontaneous/Compliant
- Emotional/ Non-Emotional
- Public/Private

### Motive

- Selfless/Selfish
- Intrinsic/Extrinsic

### Target

- Kin/Non-Kin
- Strangers/Familiar Others (friends)
- Similar (in-group)/Dissimilar (out-group)

## DEVELOPMENT

- Six types:
  - Dire
  - Compliant
  - Emotional
  - Anonymous
  - Public
  - Altruistic
- Types vary across situations and motives
- Across adolescence and adulthood

# Why should we care? (pun intended)

- Marker of morality
  - Moral action
  - Reduces social injustices
  - Fosters intergroup harmony and social integration
- Parents, communities, societies care
  - Community cooperation and civic engagement
- Marker of health and well being
  - Negatively linked to risk and maladjustment (e.g., violence, drug use, mental illness)
  - Positively linked to self esteem, positive interpersonal relationships, physical health, academic outcomes
- Structured volunteerism
  - 22% of U.S. millennials
  - 1.6B hours of service
  - \$36.5B economic impact (**Independent Sector, 2015**)





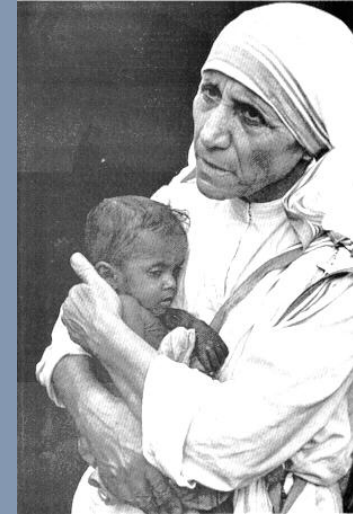
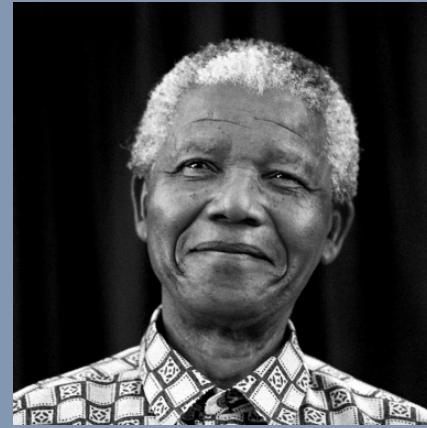
# Prosocial Behaviors as a Marker of Health

- Focus on positive well being and health outcomes
- Provides holistic, balanced perspective on ethnic/racial minorities
  - Redress negative stereotypes and stigma
  - Informs healthy development models rather than deficit and pathology models
- Importantly, provides guidance for development of interventions that do not solely focus on reducing maladaptation but rather focuses on enhancing well being and health
- In addition to markers of pathology and maladjustment (e.g., substance use, mental illness, violence), we need markers of true health and well being
  - Prosocial Behaviors



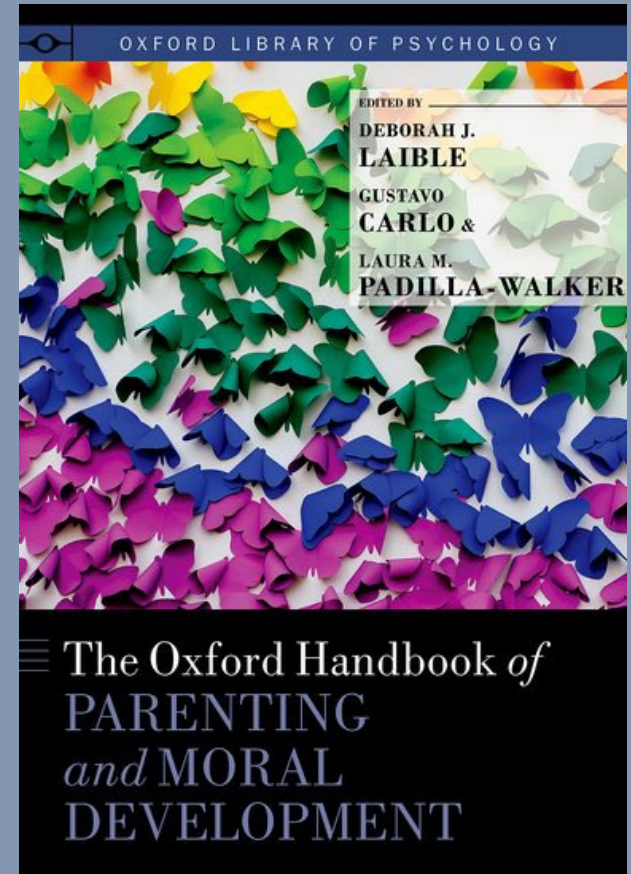
# What Predicts Prosocial Behaviors?

- Prosocial behaviors are linked to:
  - Sociocognitive Skills
    - Social Understanding
    - Moral Reasoning
    - Positive Self Concept and Self Efficacy
  - Socioemotional Skills
    - Easy temperament including positive emotions
    - Empathy, sympathy
    - Forgiveness, gratitude
    - Guilt, shame
  - Self Regulation



# Prosocial Behaviors Are Also Linked to:

- Positive Physical Environments
  - Low levels of conflict in the home
  - Adult-supervised community agencies
  - Structured activities (e.g., sports)
- Positive Socialization Agents
  - Positive media exposure
  - Caring teachers
  - Prosocial peers
- Supportive parenting and family relationships
  - Warmth, secure attachment
  - Inductive Disciplining Practices
  - Prosocial Parenting Practices
    - Social and material rewards, moral discourse, experiential learning





# Resiliency and Risk

- Factors that enhance well being and/or protect from adversity
- All children are at risk
- Poverty
- Discrimination
  - Systemic and institutionalized
  - Interpersonal and intergroup
- Minority children often have added risks
  - Low quality schools
  - Deviant peers and unsafe neighborhoods
  - Toxic environments (e.g., chemicals, pollution)
  - Family conflict, instability (mobility), and chaos
  - Immigration status



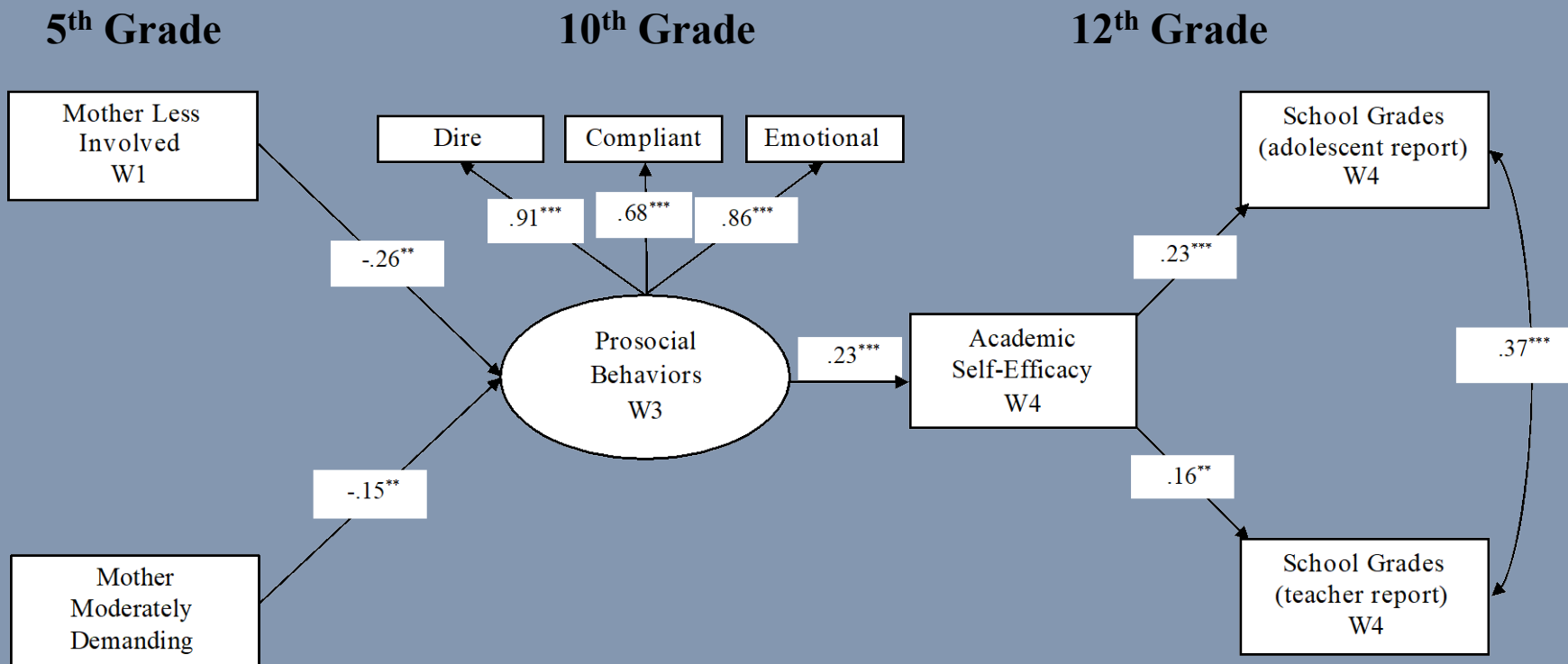


# Evidence for Prosocial Behaviors as Enhancers of Health and Well Being



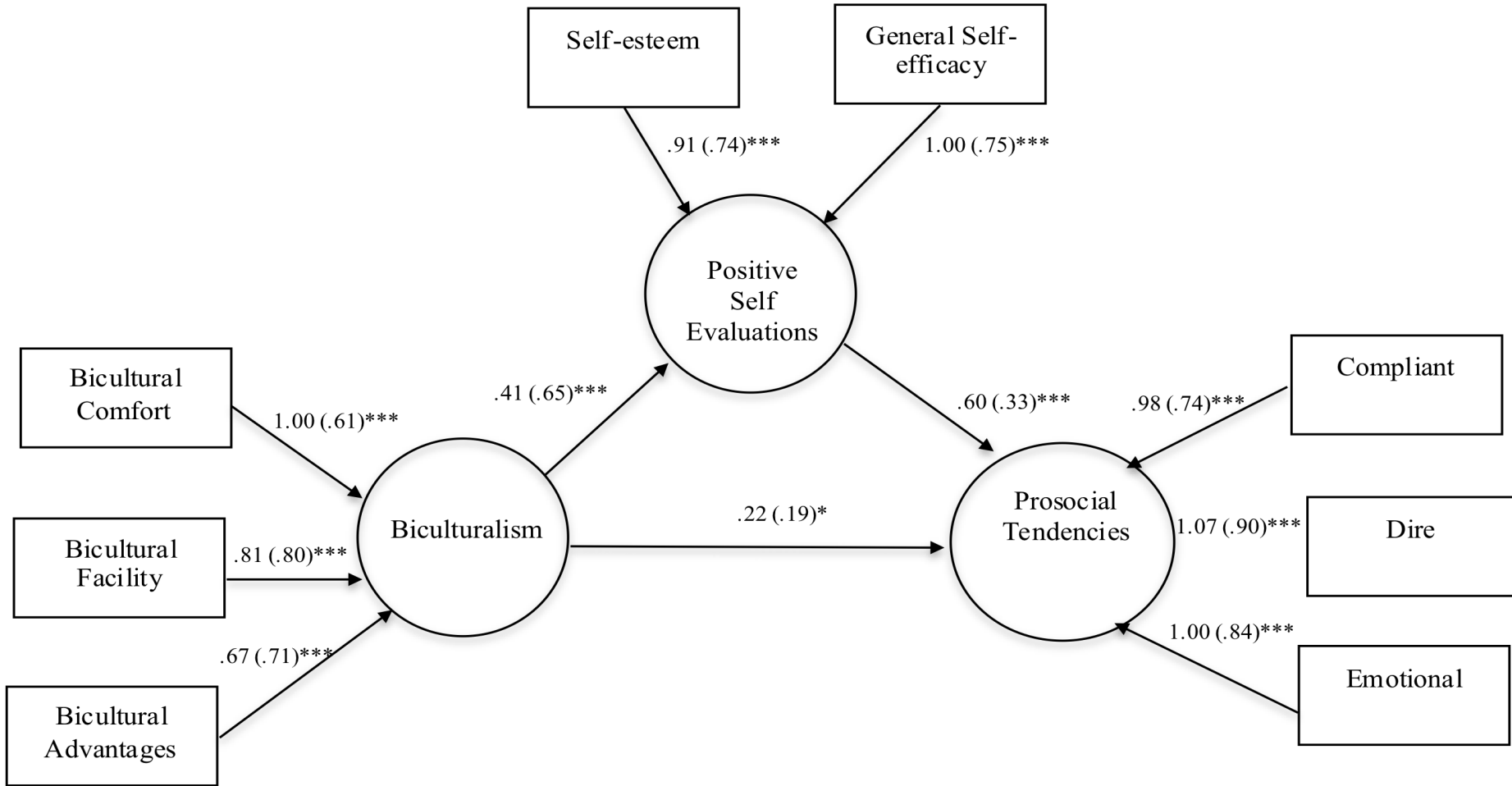
# Prosocial Behaviors Enhance Academic Outcomes

(Carlo et al., 2018)



# Prosocial Behaviors Enhance Positive Self View

(Carlo et al., 2016)



Bicultural Identity → + Prosocial Behaviors → + Positive Self Evaluations

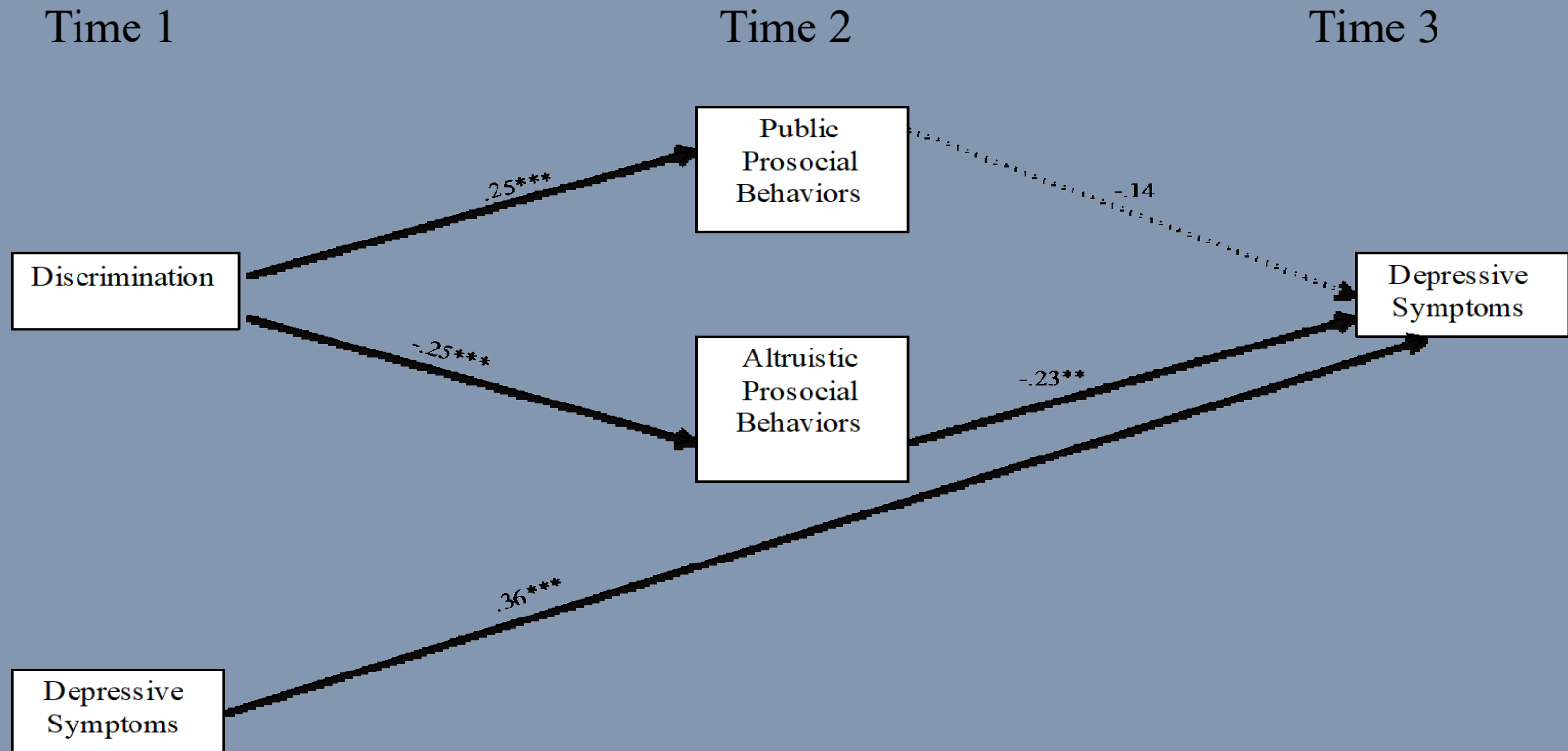
# Evidence for Prosocial Behaviors as Protection Against Risk





# Prosocial Behavior Protects Against Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms

(Davis et al., 2016)



\*Controlling for previous levels. Partial reverse causal model also supported such that discrimination predicted depression, which predicted altruistic behaviors.

# Protective Effects of Prosocial Behaviors on Aggression and Delinquency

(Carlo et al. (2014). The protective role of prosocial behaviors on antisocial behaviors: The mediating effects of deviant peer affiliation. *Journal of Adolescence*, 37, 359-366.)

				Delinquency
		n.s./-.10*		
			.47*/.47*	
Altruistic/Compliant Prosocial Behaviors	-12*/-.09*	Deviant Peer Affiliation	.40*/.39*	
				Aggression
		n.s./-.16*		

Note: Standardized coefficients for altruistic and compliant prosocial behaviors, respectively. Bold lines indicate significant indirect effects. Model fit was perfect because the model was saturated.

\*  $p < .05$ , n.s. = non significant.

# Ecological Stress-Based Model of Health Outcomes in U.S. Latino/as

(adapted from Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Carlo & Conejo, 2019)

## Historical and Contextual Influences

Receiving Community and School Context (systems, institutions)

History, Family Influences

Life Event Stressors

Peers and Media Influences

## Mediating/Moderating Influences

- Self Regulation
- Stress Appraisals
- Ethnic Identity
- Cultural Values
- Sympathy
- Moral Reasoning
- Perspective Taking

Direct Youth Stressors

- Ethnic/Race (e.g., discrimination, language)
- School/work/family-based demands

## Health & Well Being Markers

- Prosocial Behaviors
- Academic Achievement
- Self Esteem
- Subj. Well Being
- Health

# Conclusions

- Prosocial behaviors are indicators of healthy development and well being
- Several personal characteristics and environmental factors facilitate prosocial behaviors
  - Warm supportive parents and peers, prosocial parenting practices, inductive disciplining, moral reasoning, empathy, good self regulation, exposure to positive media and peers, ethnic socialization practices
- Prosocial behaviors enhances well being
  - Academic outcomes, positive self view, positive interpersonal and intergroup relationships
- Protects against risk factors and reduces risk and pathology
  - Discrimination, family conflict, deviant peer affiliation, illegal substance use, aggression, delinquency, mental health problems





# Implications for Prevention and Intervention Research and Programs

- Research
  - Adoption of strength-based, cultural sensitive theories and models
    - Identify culture-group specific protective and growth mechanisms
  - Inclusion of positive health and well being outcomes
  - Inclusion of protective and resiliency predictors
  - Examine and validate measures and evaluation instruments to use with specific culture groups
- Programs
  - Foster and promote culture-related strength mechanisms
  - Consider the inclusion of family into programs
    - Consider that ethnic socialization practices foster positive development
    - Provide warmth and strong support
  - Prepare children for prejudice
  - Foster strong ethnic/racial pride
    - Send positive/negative messages about ethnicity/race
  - Need for policies that provide systemic support
  - Education and training programs for practitioners, educators, agencies, and parents

# Acknowledgements

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Health research throughout the lifespan

