

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

## Equitable Family-Teacher Relationships for All Children

4Es of Exploration, Expectation, Education, and Equipment

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 Fellow, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute  
 Founding Director, Equity Research Action Coalition

Speaker for Early Childhood Investigators Webinar  
 June 16, 2022



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## Honoring Native Lands

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE, WORK, AND BUILD MY FAMILIES' ECONOMIC WEALTH ON THE LUMBEE TRIBE TAKEN THROUGH COLONIZATION AND ATTEMPTED ERADICATION BY SETTLERS.

LUMBEE TRIBE PROVIDES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ALL TRIBAL MEMBERS WITHIN THE AREAS OF CUMBERLAND, HOKE, ROBESON, AND SCOTLAND COUNTIES IN NC.



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## Honoring Black Bodies

- Many parts of the US was built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.
- Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy. The wealth of our nation is due to the forced free labor of these Africans.

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### About the Equity Research Action Coalition



Equity Research Action Coalition  
UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

- University **collaborative** at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill
- focuses on **co-constructing** actionable research and evaluation with practitioners and policymakers to support the optimal development of Black children prenatally through childhood.
- works at the intersection of research, practice, and policy through **anti-racist and cultural wealth frameworks**



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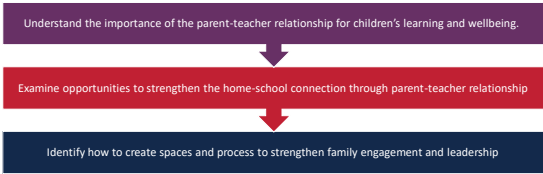
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### Learning Objectives



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### Take home message

Science is clear that families matter for children's development and learning.

Home-school connection reduce inequitable learning opportunities and experiences.

Authentic partnership with families should be viewed as a social justice strategy.

Partnering with families is the one strategy to ensure children are healthy and thrive.

The 4Es – Exploration, Expectation, Education, and Equipment – are foundational for partnership with families

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Family engagement and support is bidirectional.

Family engagement is about **building authentic relationships** with families that support **family well-being**, strong relationships between parents and their children, and **ongoing learning and development** for parents, children, educators, and systems.



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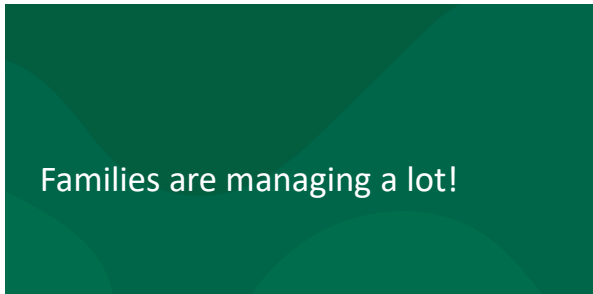
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# BLACK PARENT VOICES

*Resilience in the Face of the Two Pandemics— COVID-19 and Racism*



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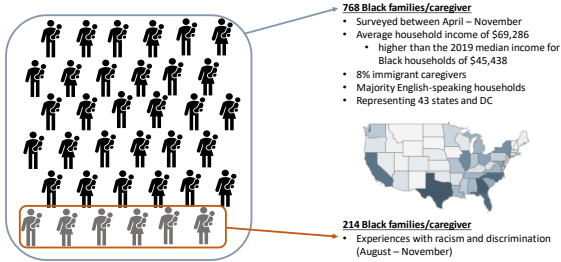
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### Black Parent Voices - Data



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### EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

- Parents' experience **prior to/since** pandemic:
  - Have you been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened, or abused by the police because of your race or ethnicity?
  - For unfair reasons, have you not been hired for a job because of your race or ethnicity?
- Frequency of concern for children **prior to/since** pandemic:
  - Getting stopped in a white neighborhood.
  - Being punished more harshly than others.

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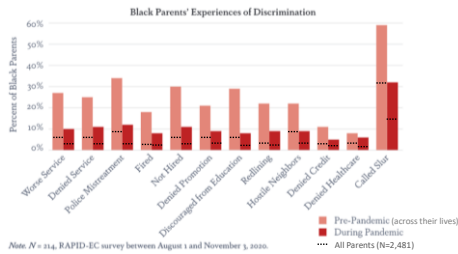
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### EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION



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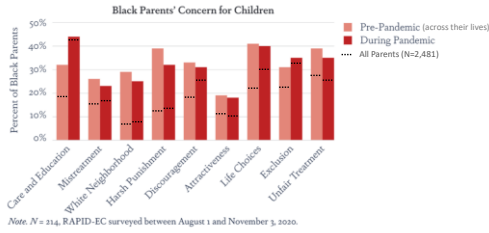
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### EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION



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"The additional trauma of watching Black people being killed and no justice being served is devastating. It is compounding trauma. Then the weight of having white folks want me to spend emotional labor to help them feel better about a racist system I did not make, I am exhausted, and what energy I have left, I want to spend on loving my family and keeping them safe from COVID-19 and racism."  
— BLACK PARENT



"Racism. The historical and contemporary trauma and grief that is occurring is overwhelming. Add that on top of a pandemic when I cannot use my regular outlets to center myself (gym, hang out with friends, etc.). It is exhausting."  
— BLACK PARENT

In their own words . . .

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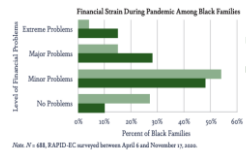
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### FINANCIAL SECURITY

- Black families are experiencing high levels of economic instability regardless of household income level, with half of all Black families reporting a decrease in income during the pandemic.
- Over 40% of Black families below/near poverty are feeling a financial strain even after receipt of stimulus checks.



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### MATERIAL HARDSHIP

Table 1. Percent of Black Families Having a Hard Time Paying for Basic Needs

	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Difficulties Paying for Basic Needs (Hard/Very Hard)	35%	17%
Difficulty Paying for:		
Utilities	48%	39%
Housing	39%	25%
Food	33%	24%
Early Care and Education	18%	15%
Health Care	13%	13%
Material Hardships (1 or More)	30%	25%
Receiving Public Benefits	54%	22%
Access to Free Food	67%	35%

Note: N = 688. RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 15, 2020.  
\*Based on those who reported having a hard time or very hard time paying for basic needs.

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**PARENTS' HEALTH CARE AND WELL-BEING**

Table 1. Reasons for Delaying Health Care Across all Black Families and by Income Levels

Reason for Delay*	All Black Families	Below/Near-Poverty	Middle-Income
Concern for COVID	94%	95%	95%
Inability to Find Early Care and Education	66%	64%	55%
Time Away from Work	40%	45%	37%
Cost	15%	20%	47%
Caring for Family	23%	36%	40%

Note: N = 714. RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 4, 2020.  
\*Numbers can add up to more than 100% because parents were asked to select all that applied.

**"The paranoia of us getting sick and ultimately dying from COVID or racism is [so] unreal that we have days where we disconnect from all news platforms and social media just to breathe."**  
— BLACK PARENT



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**"Stress and worry has been very debilitating and constant trauma from violence against Black people."**



Note: N = 714. RAPID-EC surveyed between April 6 and November 15, 2020. Even weeks are skipped beginning in September 2020 due to changes in sampling.

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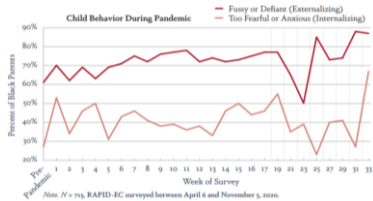
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**CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE AND WELL-BEING**

- Almost a third of Black parents reported their child missed a checkup during the pandemic.
- Concern over being exposed to the virus was the primary reason.



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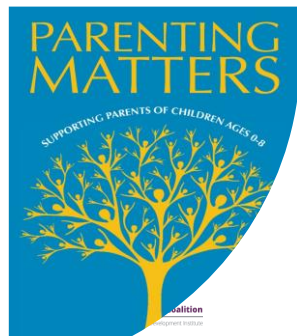
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**2016 NASEM Parenting Matters** report shows critical importance of supporting families to ensure children are healthy and thrive excellence.

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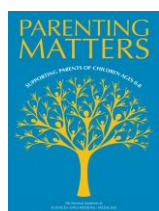
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Parental knowledge & attitudes matter for optimal child outcomes, but...

- Knowledge of child development and evidence-based parenting practices
- Attitudes about roles of parents in raising children and specific practices



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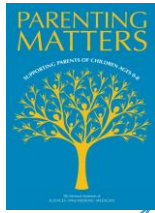
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### Parenting practices had consistent impacts on children's development and learning.

- contingent responsiveness ("serve and return");
- showing warmth and sensitivity;
- routines and reduced household chaos;
- shared book reading and talking to children;
- practices that promote children's health and safety (e.g., prenatal care, breastfeeding, vaccination, nutrition and physical activity); and
- use of appropriate (less harsh) discipline.



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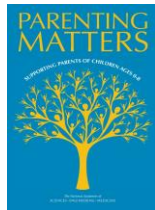
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### Research gaps still exist in...

- Interventions for **parents with special needs** (e.g., parents of children with developmental disabilities, parents with mental illness or substance abuse)
- Interventions that engage **fathers**
- Differences in parenting and engagement in interventions across **diverse populations and family forms**



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### Examining malleable factors that explain racial/ethnic gaps

- Based on an IES-funded preK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade project based at UNL
- Uncover **malleable factors** that reduce or eliminate end of kindergarten racial/ethnic gaps
- Affirmative and enriching** home and classroom environments and their connections have the potential to reduce achievement gaps

#### EXAMINING MALLEABLE FACTORS THAT EXPLAIN THE END-OF-KINDERGARTEN RACIAL/ETHNIC GAPS

**ABSTRACT**  
Using data from a 3-year project, this study examines malleable factors associated with the reduction of language, academic, and socio-emotional development gaps among Black, Latinx, and White children at the end of kindergarten. Changes in child and caregiver behavior and home and Latinx children's teacher-reported problem behaviors, measured after controlling for pre-kindergarten educational and skills and child and family characteristics. The associations between these factors and the end-of-kindergarten racial/ethnic gaps were not associated with reducing Latinx-White gaps in expressive language. Findings highlight the importance of assessing and strengthening the home-school connections for children from educational groups.

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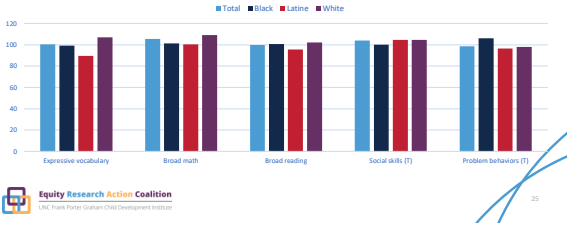
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**Kindergarten Outcomes:** White children score significantly higher on academic outcomes than other children. Black children rated by teachers with more problem behaviors than other children.



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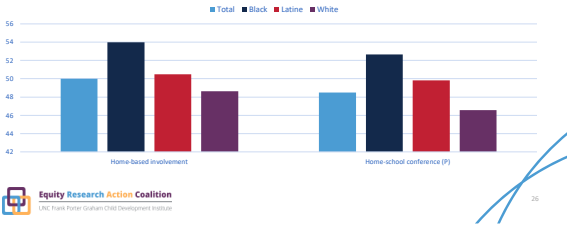
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**Family Involvement Questionnaire:** Black parents report more home-based involvement and home-school conferencing than other parents.



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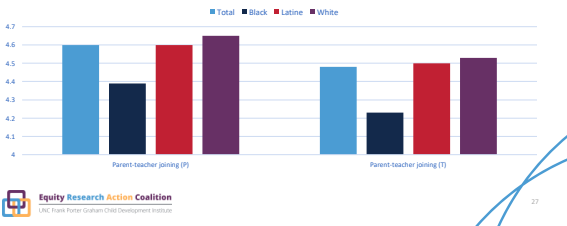
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**Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale:** Black parents and teachers of Black students report less joining with teachers than other parents.



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### Summary of Findings

- The end of Kindergarten **gaps exist** but not for every outcomes examined
- **Racial differences** found in parent- or teacher-reported malleable factors, but not classroom quality
- Black-White & Latino-White gaps in **expressive language** remain largely unchanged after covariates included
- **Home-school connections** reduce gaps between Black and White children in math and problem behavior
- **No malleable factors** significantly reduce Latino-White gaps in reading, language, & math



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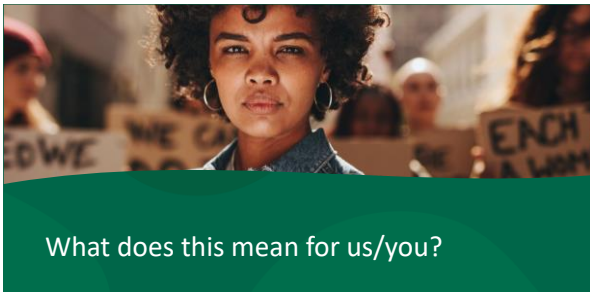
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### 4Es of Family Engagement



Culturally-Responsive, Anti-Racist Framework of Expectation, Education, Exploration, and Empowerment for Family Engagement



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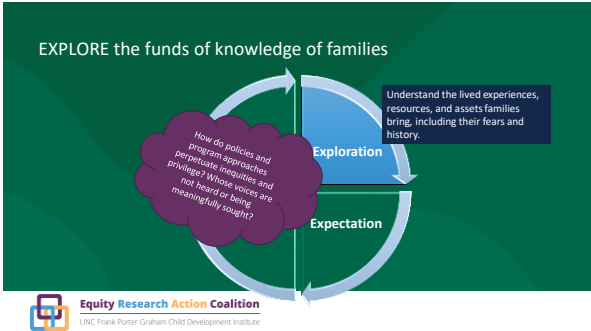
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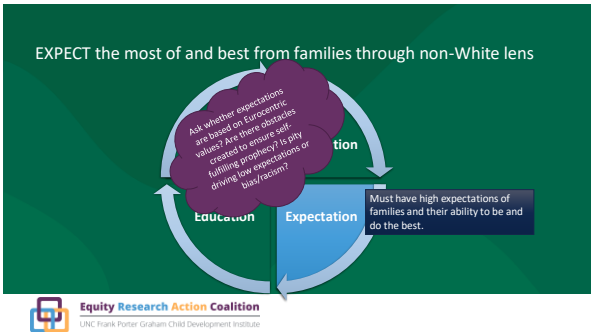
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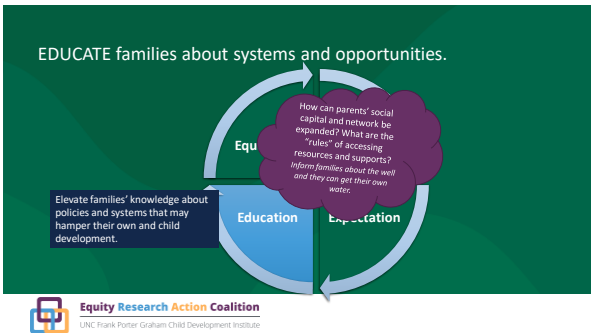
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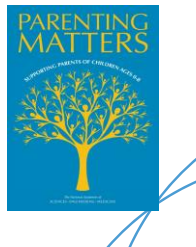
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### Reaching the 4Es

- Viewing parents as **equal partners** in determining the types of services that would be most beneficial
- **Tailoring** interventions to meet the specific needs of families
- **Integrating** services and collaborating to support families with multiple service needs
- Creating **opportunities** for parents to receive support from peers to increase engagement, reduce stigma, and increase sense of connection to other parents with similar circumstances



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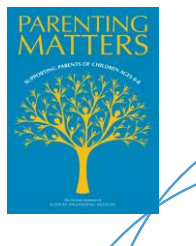
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### Reaching the 4Es CONT'D

- **Addressing trauma** which can interfere with parenting and healthy child development
- Making programs **culturally relevant** to improve program effectiveness and participation across diverse families
- Enhancing efforts to **involve fathers**, who are underrepresented in parenting research



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### Creating anti-racist/anti-bias family systems and strategies requires:



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### Take home message

- Science is clear that **families matter** for children's development and learning.
- **Home-school connection** reduce inequitable learning opportunities and experiences.
- **Authentic partnership** with families should be viewed as a social justice strategy.
- Partnering with families is the one strategy to ensure children are **healthy and thrive**.
- **The 4Es** – Exploration, Expectation, Education, and Equipment – are foundational for partnership with families

IT TAKES A VILLAGE!



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK!!

Thank you!

Questions?  
Comments?



Iheoma U. Iruka, PhD  
 @Iheomalruka



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