

Childhood Positive Experiences and Developmental Trajectories Throughout Childhood



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Background

- Negative effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on mental and physical health have been well documented¹
- Effects of childhood protective factors on healthy development are less understood
- Supportive relationships and enriching resources of Protective and Compensatory Experiences (PACEs) may promote healthy developmental trajectories²

Study Aim

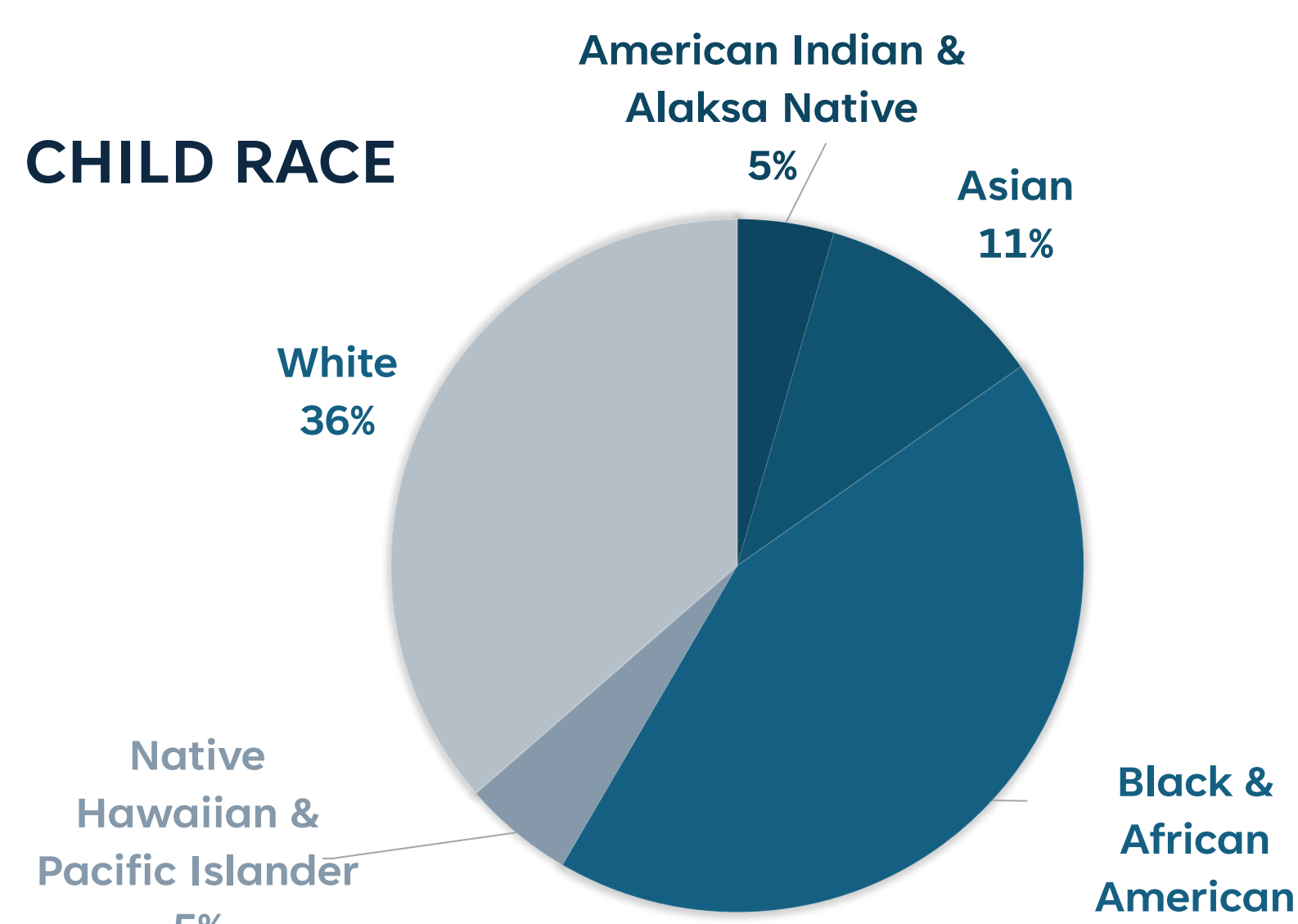
- This study aims to examine the complex relationship between childhood adversity and protective factors across three developmental stages of childhood and clarify patterns of effects in developing children

Method

- Participants (N= 438) completed online surveys on their own experiences and their child's experiences
- Parents self-reported on their childhood adversity and current protective experiences, and their child's protective factors
- Participants were recruited via ResearchMatch, offering a geographically diverse sample across the United States

Participant Characteristics

Most parents ($M_{age} = 35.95$; 53% female) were married (79.5%) and held a bachelor's degree (53.4%).



Early Childhood		Middle Childhood		Adolescence	
Sex		Sex		Sex	
Female	42.3%	Female	40.3%	Female	46%
Male	57.7%	Male	59.7%	Male	54%
Age		Age		Age	
2-4	$M = 3.20$	5-11	$M = 7.80$	12-18	$M = 14.84$

Measures

	Parent	Child
All measures reported by biological parent		
Adverse Childhood Experiences ¹ ACEs	Retrospective report of childhood adversity Prior to age 18 10 items; dichotomous	Current report of childhood adversity 10 items; dichotomous
Protective and Compensatory Experiences ^{2,3} PACEs	Retrospective report of childhood protective experiences (R-PACEs) Prior to age 18 30 items; 5-point Likert	Current report of protective experiences (Ch-PACEs) Based on child's current age 10 items; 5-point Likert
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire ⁴ SDQ		Internalizing behaviors 10 items; 3-point Likert Externalizing behaviors 10 items; 3-point Likert Prosocial Behavior 5 items; 3-point Likert
Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement System ⁵ PROMIS		Self-Regulation Frustration Tolerance subscale 6 items; 5-point Likert

PACEs

Protective and Compensatory Experiences²

Supportive Relationships	Enriching Environment
Love Friendship Community Mentor Volunteer	Routines Home Learning Activity Hobby

Results

- When including parent and child ACEs in the regression model, child PACEs were significantly associated with:
 - Lower levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors across all age groups
 - Higher levels of self-regulation and prosocial behaviors in middle childhood and adolescence

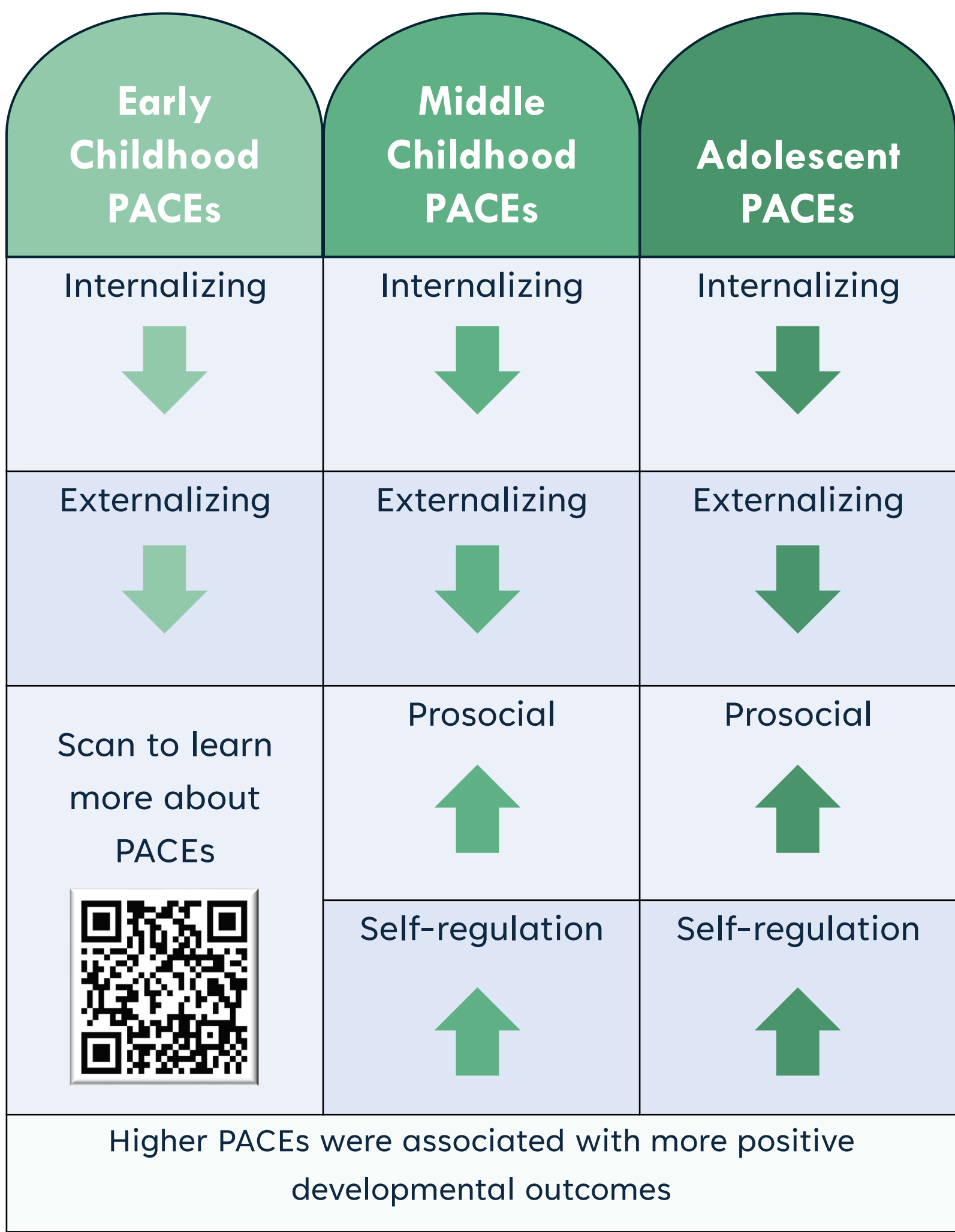
Outcomes Across Developmental Stages

Standardized Coefficients of Parent and Child ACEs and PACEs on Outcomes												
	Early Childhood Ages 2-4 $n = 71$				Middle Childhood Ages 5-11 $n = 243$				Adolescence Ages 12-18 $n = 124$			
	Int	Ext	Pro	Self-R	Int	Ext	Pro	Self-R	Int	Ext	Pro	Self-R
Parent ACEs	-.09	.12	-.09	-.36*	-.12	-.06	.21*	.21	.16	.02	.08	.08
Parent PACEs	-.06	-.07	.17	.29*	-.09	-.11*	.18**	.36***	.11	-.17*	.07	.13
Child ACEs	.46**	.16	.04	.51**	.67***	.55***	-.38***	-.15	.15	.26*	.01	-.22
Child PACEs	-.31*	-.44**	.30	.26	-.22***	-.21**	.30***	.25**	-.47***	-.31*	.53***	.45***
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ Controlled for child sex, child age, and parent education												
Int= Internalizing symptoms; Ext= Externalizing symptoms; Pro= Prosocial behavior; Self-R= Self-regulation												

Discussion

- Child PACEs were linked with positive outcomes across developmental periods, despite both child and parent ACEs
- Current child PACEs were more consistently linked to outcomes across developmental stages than parent retrospective PACEs
 - This highlights the importance of modifiable, present-day experiences
- Likert-scale PACEs measures capture variation across developmental stages, offering a more nuanced approach
- Findings reinforce a shift to strengths-based research actively building protective environments and potentially disrupting the intergenerational transmission of trauma
- Results support early screening, prevention, and intervention efforts
- Findings emphasize the importance of various supports for parents who have faced adversity

Observed Patterns



Limitations

- Cross-sectional design
- Self-report surveys

Future Directions

- Longitudinal research
- Examination of daily PACEs and cumulative effects
- Evaluation of PACEs prevention and intervention efforts in a variety of settings
 - PACEs plans, PACEs workshops

Selected References

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