

Multi- & Mixed-Method Approaches to Studying Family Contextual Factors and Child Competencies

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New Hope Program

“If you are working, you should not be poor”

HIGHER GROUND

New Hope for the Working Poor and Their Children
Greg J. Duncan | Aletha C. Huston | Thomas S. Weisner

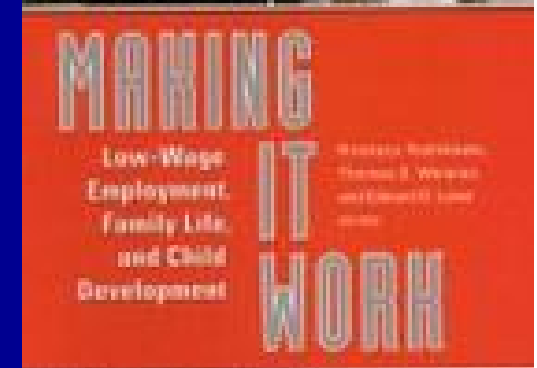
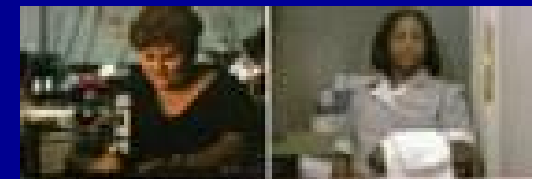


n Eligibility:

- Living in 1 of 2 low-income neighborhoods in Milwaukee
- Age 18 or older
- Income at or below 150% FPL
- Willing and able to work 30+ hours per week

n Services:

- Earnings supplements
- Health insurance
- Child care assistance & subsidies
- Community service job placement
- Program representatives assistance



New Hope Evaluation: Child & Family Study

n Origins

- Manpower Demonstration Research Corp.
- MacArthur Foundation's Research Network on Successful Pathways through Middle Childhood

n Interdisciplinary project team

- Robert Granger , Greg Duncan, Aletha Huston, Vonnie McLoyd, Thomas Weisner

n Experimental design

- Random assignment
 - n Baseline: 1994-95
 - n Intervention: 1994-97

Child & Family Study: Components

- n Administrative record data
 - Earnings (UI records)
 - Earnings supplements (EITC, New Hope)
 - Welfare (AFDC/TANF , food stamps)

- n Survey: 2-, 5- & 8-years post RA
 - Multiple respondents: parent, child, teacher
 - ~ 550 families, ~ 900 children
 - n Ethnically diverse & majority single-mother households
 - n Up to 2 focal children per family - ages 1-10 at baseline

- n Embedded qualitative sample
 - 40 randomly selected families
 - Longitudinal – 3 years
 - Participants interviewed multiple times a year

Current Project Aims

A **multi- and mixed-method approach** to studying economic hardship, family functioning, and child well-being

- Multi-method

- Using multiple sources of quantitative or qualitative data in a single study

- Mixed-method

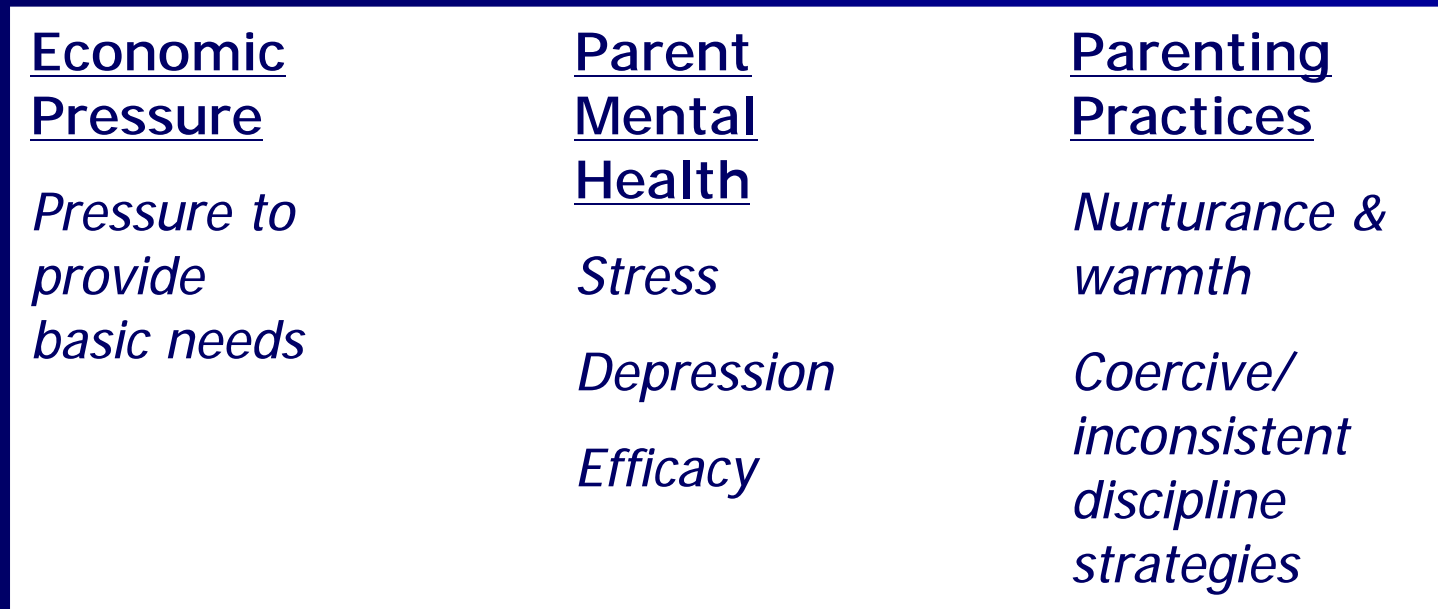
- Utilizing quantitative & qualitative data in a single study

Theoretical Framework

Family Economic Stress Model

(Conger & Elder, 1994; McLoyd, 1990)

Economic
Hardship

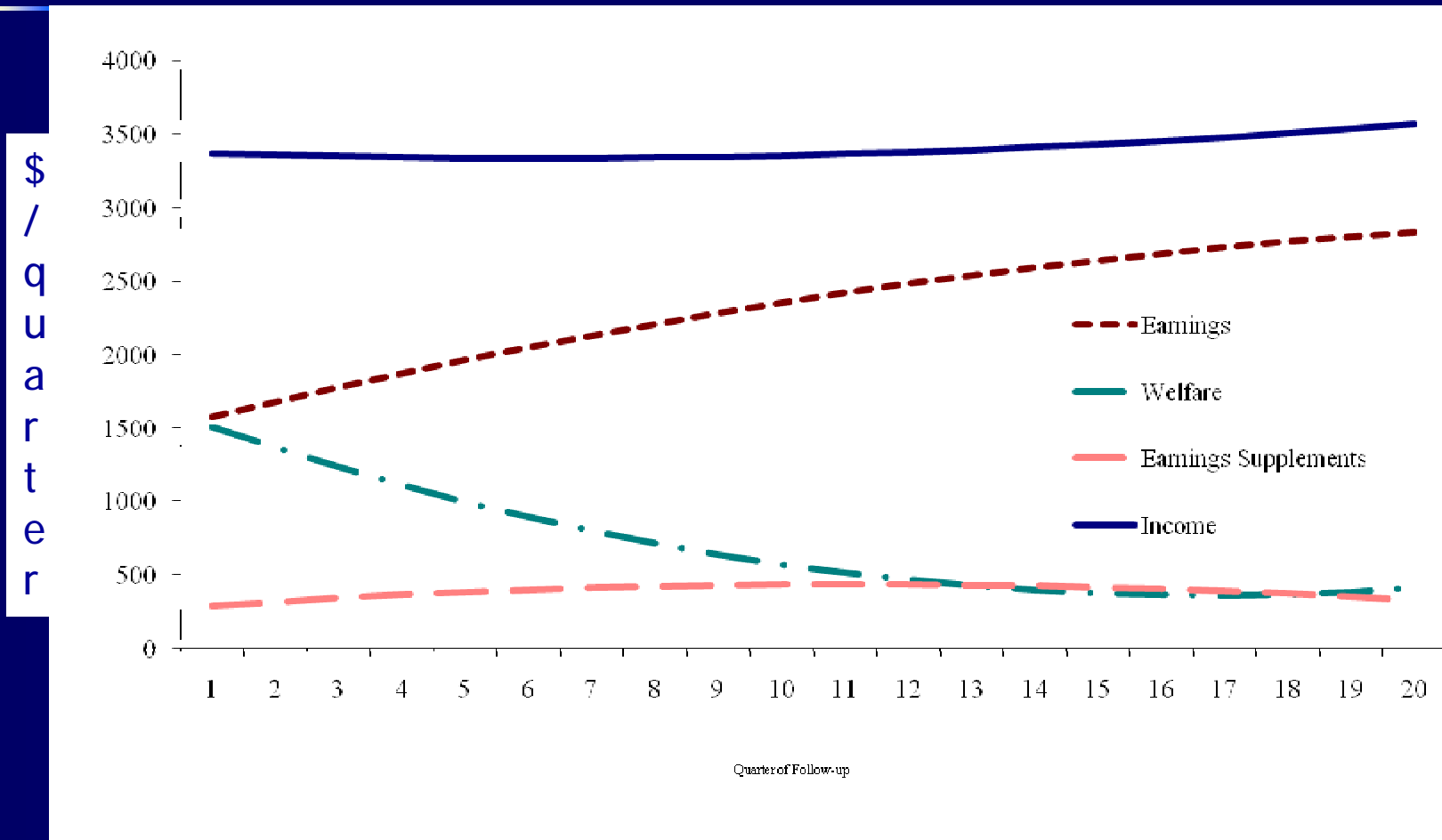


Child
Competencies

Study 1: Aims

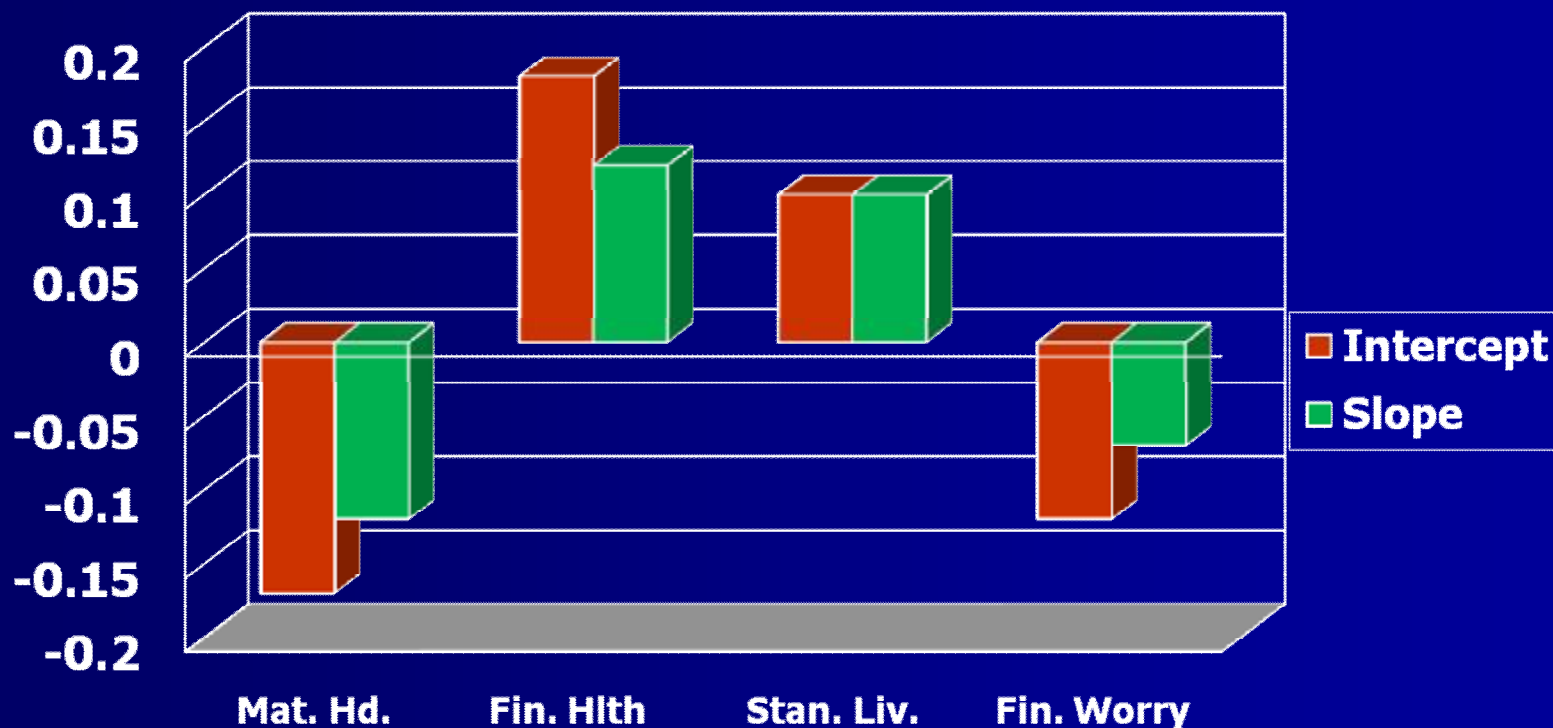
- n Assessing patterns of income change from 1995-2000 and relations between income trajectories, employment patterns, and material and psychological well-being
- n Data Sources (multi-method):
 - Administrative data for 20 quarters (5 years):
 - Survey data (5-year assessment)

Average Income Trends



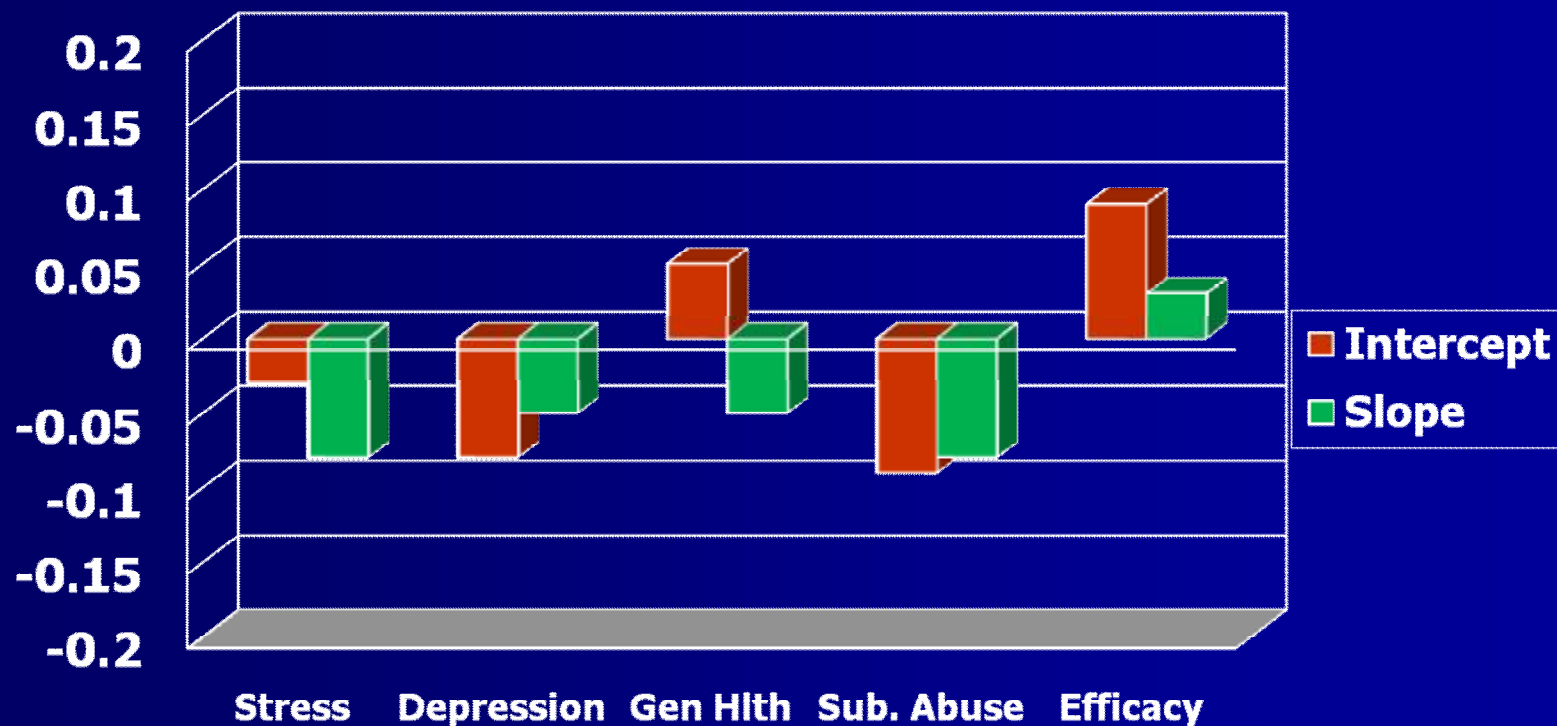
Significant individual variations in both *level* and *change*

Total Income: Impacts on Material Well-Being & Hardship



EFFECT SIZE = PARTIAL CORRELATIONS of the predictor with the outcome, adjusting for covariates

Total Income: Impacts on Psychological Well-Being



EFFECT SIZE = PARTIAL CORRELATIONS of the predictor with the outcome, adjusting for covariates

Study 2: Aims

- n Explore relations among low-income mothers' management of finances and expenditure demands, family processes, and child well-being
- n Data Source (mixed-method):
 - Administrative data for 20 quarters (5 years):
 - Survey data (5-year)
 - Embedded qualitative data (3 years)

Qualitative Analysis

- n How do low-income mothers meaningfully distinguish among categories of expenditures?
- n What are the consequences of managing expenditure demands for mothers' psychological well-being?

4 Major Themes

- n Experience of economic pressure
- n Distinction between meeting “basic” family needs and “extras”
- n Psychological significance of affording “extras” and being a good parent
- n Necessity for resource pooling & financial management strategies

Theme 3. Psychological Significance of Competing Demands

- n Meeting *basic* needs = feeling “Okay;” falling behind constant source of worry & anxiety

Faye said that she is feeling very stressed about being behind in her bills...She owes electricity (\$450) and is three months behind in rent (\$800)... the Gas Company - she owes them about \$250...she feels she needs to catch up and she will feel better.

- n Affording modest *extras* = sense of fulfillment & happiness; not *feeling* poor

“You can’t take the kids to no kind of enjoyment. You used to be able to take the kids to the zoo, now that isn’t even free anymore. School trips at school cost six or seven dollars now, so if I am on welfare, my child don’t get to go, which is not fair to my child...we just can’t do it ‘cause we are poor.” [Samantha]¹⁴

Theme 4. Financial Strategies & Pooled Resources

n Taking on additional work

Heather "said that for a while she tried to work only one job, and that was just not enough money to do everything that she wanted to do. She said doesn't consider herself poor and doesn't feel that she and her kids should live like they are, so she works the two jobs."

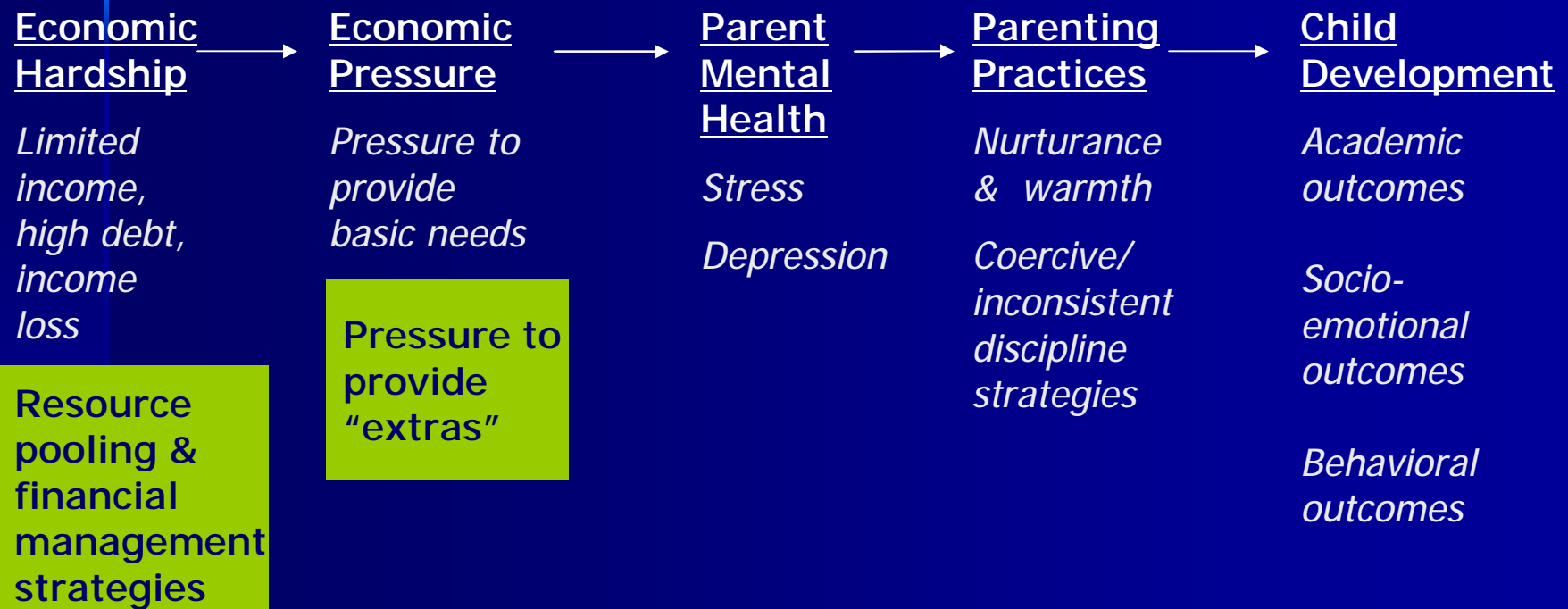
n Cutting back on expenditures

"Katie said that she needs to start planning for Christmas soon, and already has begun telling the kids that they have to slow down their spending in order to prepare for Christmas."

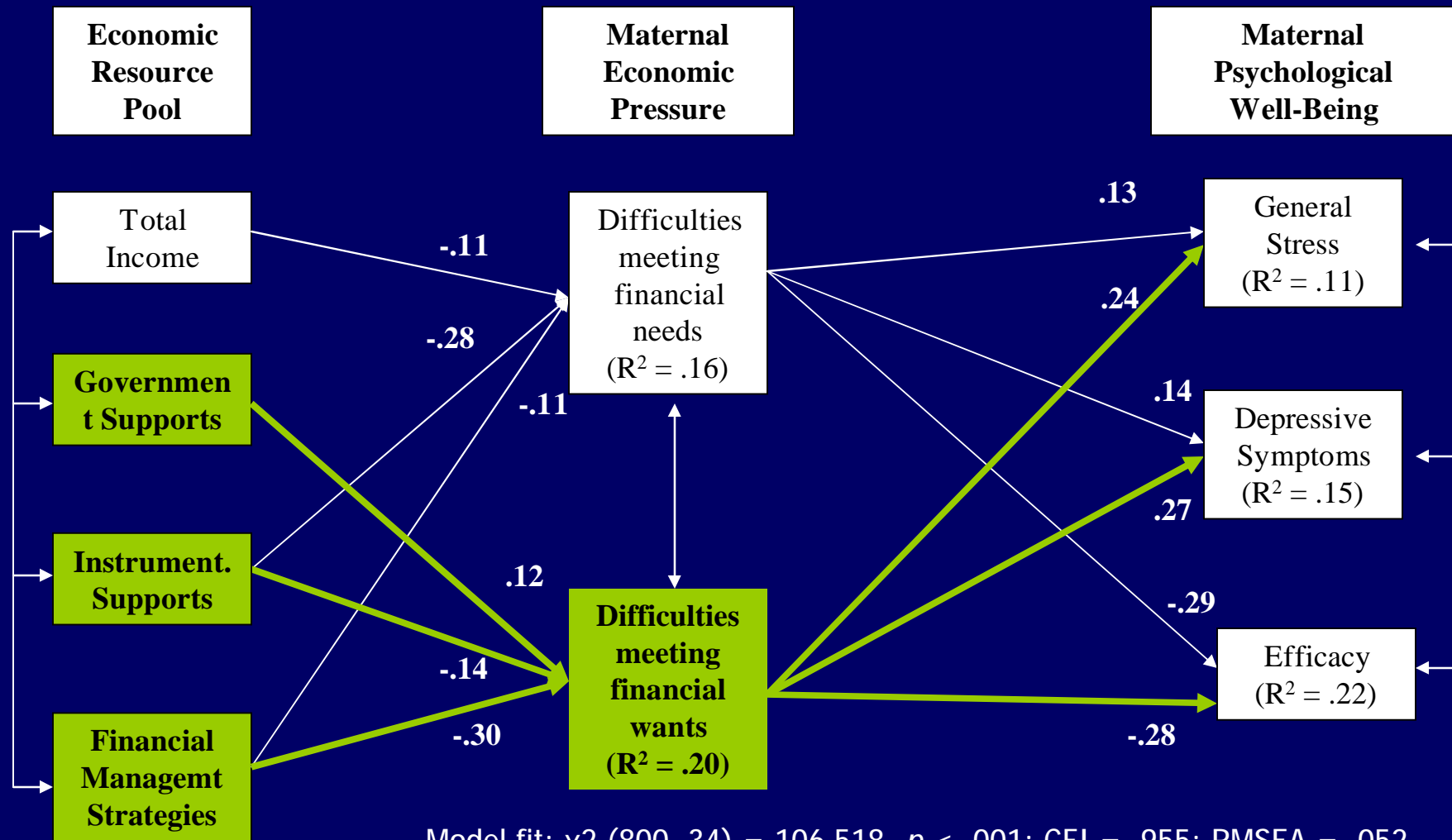
n Kinship & friendship networks

"When she needed to buy clothes for the children and didn't know where she would get the money, [her boyfriend] Robert stepped in and helped out and bought all the kids school clothes." [Karen]

Theoretical Framework: Revisiting an Established Relationship



Results: Replication of Qualitative Findings



Model fit: $\chi^2(800, 34) = 106.518, p < .001; CFI = .955; RMSEA = .052.$

Lessons Learned from Multi- & Mixed-Method Approaches to Studying Families

n Value-added:

- Advancing theory & informing policy
 - n Identify processes of transmission & link processes to outcomes
 - n Ability to generalize findings (“scale up”)
 - n Cross-validity and reduce bias (e.g., selfreport of income)

n Considerations

- Intentionality, purpose, and planning
 - n Timelines
 - n Communication across team members (separate vs. overlapping)
- Resource demands
 - n Respondent fatigue
 - n Developing methodological expertise
 - n Financial, time

Thank you!