

Elevating the Parenting Strengths of Black Mothers Receiving Child Welfare Services: Intersectionality Informed Research

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Agenda

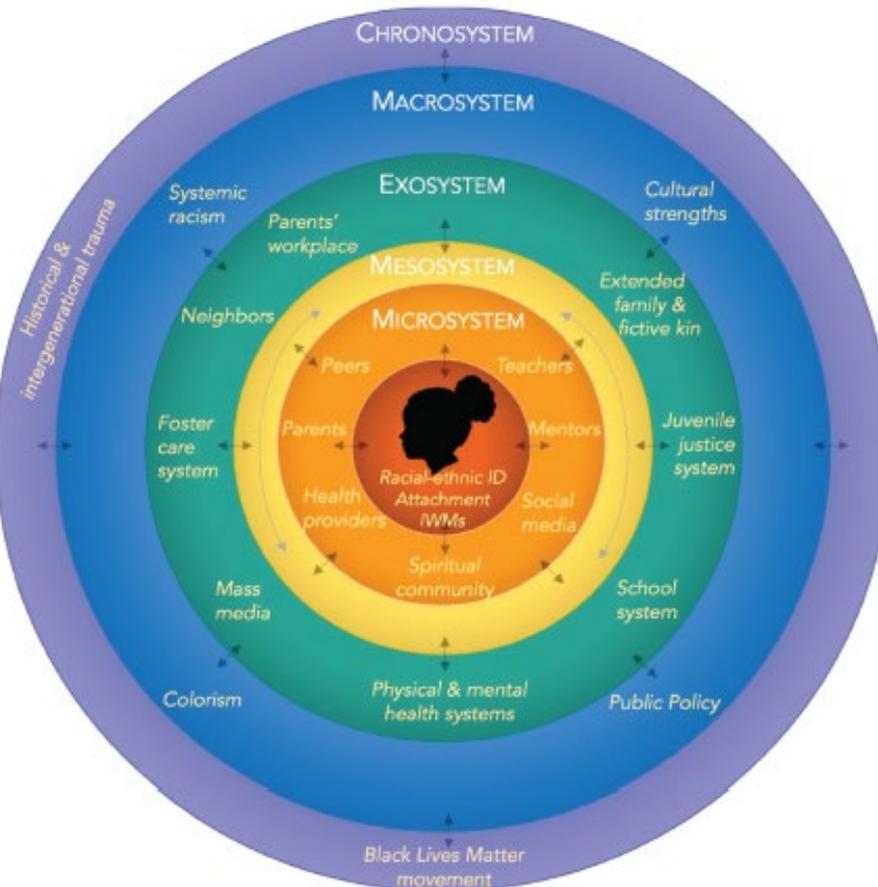
- Conceptual Models and Frameworks
- Parenting Strengths and Distress among Black Mothers Reported to the Child Welfare System: The Role of Social Network Quality
- Future Directions in Research
- Questions

Conceptual Models & Frameworks

- Strengths-Based
 - Multi-level protective factors
- Intersectionality-Informed
 - Relevant social positions
 - Race
 - Class
 - Gender
- Trauma-Informed
 - Historical and intergenerational trauma

Working toward anti-racist perspectives in attachment theory, research, and practice

(Stern et al., 2022)



Parenting Strengths and Distress among Black Mothers Reported to the Child Welfare System: The Role of Social Network Quality

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Introduction

- In the United States, 53 percent of Black children are the subject of child maltreatment reports compared to 37 percent of all children
- Disproportionality has often been attributed to
 - Bias in the form of racism and racial discrimination
 - Socioeconomic disadvantage
- The gendered dimension of child welfare involvement regarding Black mothers is often overlooked
- Using the framework of intersectionality, this paper examines the parenting context particularly for Black mothers reported to Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Explores the importance of social network quality on parenting outcomes which can inform culturally sensitive practices and programs to reduce CPS

Unique Parenting Context for Black Mothers

- Breger (2012) argues mothers are expected to be all-knowing, self-sacrificing, ever-protective, near perfect human beings
 - Ignores the true complexities of motherhood
- Black mothers have to deal with these gendered expectations while also working against racialized stereotypes and racism
 - Navigating a society that devalues and criminalizes their children
- When in need of support, these mothers often are viewed in light of the deserving/undeserving mother distinction

Intersectionality

- Oppression related to multiple identities such as race and gender is unique for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989)
- There are additional identities (such as class, sexual orientation, ability status, etc.) that play a role in relationships
- Power or marginalized status comes along with each identity and mutually impacts the others (Collins, 1998; Davis, 2008)
- Differential power relationship and cultural differences between the predominately White, middle-class CPS worker and the poor, Black mother reported to CPS
 - Noted as one contributing factor in current overrepresentation

Social Networks

- Social networks are important in building interventions that recognize the larger ecological context in which parents live (Merritt, 2009)
- Social relationships in the form of kin, fictive kin, and non-kin relationships are important in the parenting practices within the Black community
- However, there are both positive and negative aspects of social relationships

Complexity of Social Networks

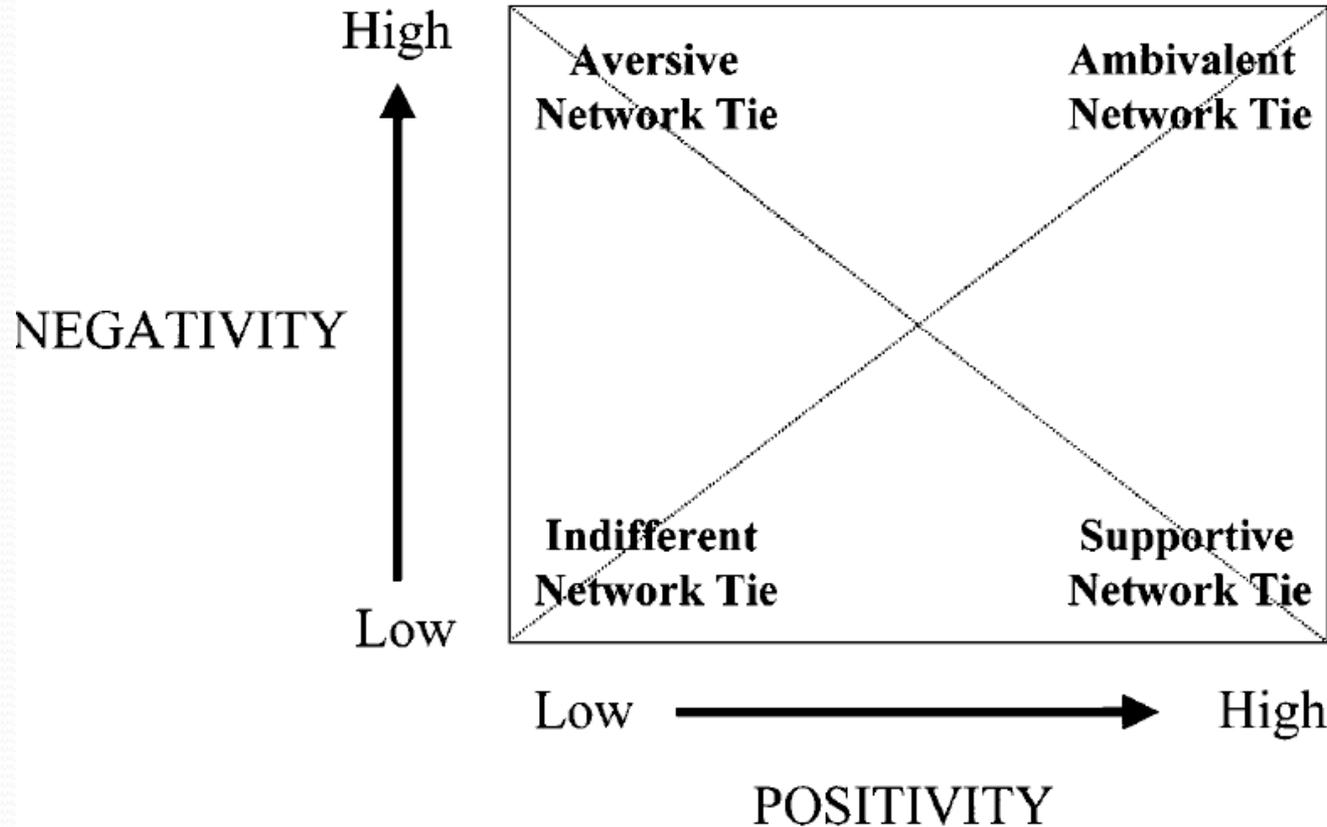


Figure 1. General conceptual framework incorporating the positive and negative aspects of relationships on mental health (Uchino et al., 2004)

Parenting Outcomes

- In this study we focus on both positive and negative aspects of parenting as it relates specifically to Black mothers reported to CPS, but whose cases are not substantiated
 - Parental resilience
 - Parental emotional competence
 - Parental distress

Current Study

- R1: Is the quality of the social networks of Black mothers reported to the child welfare system associated with parenting strengths and distress?
- R2: Do supportive or negative network ties have a stronger association with these parenting outcomes?
- R3: Does positivity in network ties moderate associations between negative social networks and parenting outcomes?

Methods

- Getting Access to Income Now (GAIN) study
 - A randomized control trial designed to evaluate a child maltreatment prevention program in Milwaukee County
 - Diverted from CPS into treatment or control condition from 2012-2016
 - 1,095 eligible families were administered a baseline survey prior to randomization
 - 727 families completed this survey (66.4% response rate)

Methods

- 402 Black mothers (596 weighted sample)

Table 1. Sample Descriptive Statistics (N=596)

Variable	N	%	Mean (SD)	Range
Respondent age	595	--	33.1 (10.2)	18 - 75
Respondent age at 1 st child's birth	596	--	19.44 (4.1)	10 - 46
Age of youngest child in home	593	--	8.8 (5.9)	0 - 18
Number of minor aged children	596	--	2.2 (1.3)	1 - 9
More than high school degree	596	41.3%	--	0, 1
Worked for pay (10+ hours) last week	596	56.5%	--	0, 1
Household income (10,000s)	596	--	1.68 (1.29)	0 - 8
Single status	596	47.4%	--	0, 1
Positive intimate partner relationship	596	--	4.12 (.55)	1 - 5
Negative intimate partner relationship	596	--	1.56 (.50)	1 - 5
ACE count	593	--	2.72 (2.19)	0 - 8

Results

Table 2. Outcome and Key Predictor Variables (N=596)

Variable	N	%	Mean (SD)	Range
Outcomes				
Parental resilience	594	--	4.52 (.43)	1 - 5
Parental emotional competence	596	--	4.40 (.49)	1 - 5
Parental distress	594	--	2.27 (.64)	1 - 5
Key Predictors				
Supportive social network	596	--	4.29 (.70)	1 - 5
Negative social network	596	--	2.44 (.94)	1 - 5
Social network subgroups				
Supportive Network Tie (High support/Low negativity)	596	35.5%	--	0, 1
Aversive Network Tie (Low support/High negativity)	596	28.3%	--	0, 1
Ambivalent Network Tie (High support/High negativity)	596	20.2%	--	0, 1
Indifferent Network Tie (Low support/Low negativity)	596	16.1%	--	0, 1

Table 4. Subgroup Moderation Tests Predicting Parenting Outcomes

	Parental Distress	Resilience	Emotional Competence
Covariates	Standardized Coeff. (SE)	Standardized Coeff. (SE)	Standardized Coeff. (SE)
Social network subgroups			
Aversive (Low support/High negativity)	--	--	--
Ambivalent (High support/High negativity)	-.05 (.07)	.11 (.05)*	.03 (.06)
Indifferent (Low support/Low negativity)	-.11 (.07)	-.10 (.05)*	-.21 (.06)***
Supportive (High support/Low negativity)	-.35 (.06)***	.26 (.04)***	.15 (.05)**
Respondent age	.002 (.003)	-.01 (.002)**	-.01 (.003)***
Respondent age at 1 st child's birth	-.003 (.006)	.01 (.004)	.001 (.005)
Age of youngest child in home	.001 (.006)	.003 (.004)	-.01 (.01)
Number of minor aged children	-.01 (.02)	-.009 (.01)	-.003 (.02)
More than high school degree	-.17 (.05)***	.11 (.03)**	.07 (.04)
Worked for pay (10+ hours) last week	-.08 (.05)	.10 (.04)**	.02 (.04)
Household income (10,000s)	-.04 (.02)	-.03 (.01)	-.02 (.02)
Single status	-.06 (.05)	.004 (.03)	-.02 (.04)
Positive intimate partner relationship	-.24 (.06)***	.11 (.05)**	.08 (.05)
Negative intimate partner relationship	.17 (.06)**	-.02 (.04)	.01 (.05)
ACE count	.04 (.01)***	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Constant	3.22 (.34)***	4.09 (.24)***	4.45 (.28)***
Adjusted R ²	.28	.20	.15
F-statistic	17.25***	11.26***	8.31***
N	586	586	587

***p<.001; **p<.01; *p<.05

Discussion

- Black Mothers reported to CPS
 - Relatively high levels of social support and low levels of negativity
 - Social networks were generally supportive similar to previous literature on CPS involved families (Lalayants et al., 2014)
 - Low levels network negativity and parental distress in general
- Consistent with past literature that positive ties are more common than negative ties (Offer, 2021; Rozin & Royzman, 2001)
- Perceptions of social support appear to be similar across racial-ethnic differences (Flores et al., 2020)

Discussion

- Positivity outweighs negativity to elevate parental resilience
- Highlights the importance and value of social relationships among Black mothers reported to the child welfare system
- Indifferent tie significantly associated with less parental resilience and emotional competence compared to an ambivalent tie
 - High value on positivity within social networks despite negativity
- Supportive social networks and relationships among Black families may hold a unique potency
 - In light of historical adverse events such as slavery and other forms of racial oppression

Implications for Culturally and Gender Responsive Interventions

- Recommend interventions are created and funded that center the relational well-being of Black mothers at-risk or currently involved within CPS
 - Positive aspects of social relationships can be a support to these mothers during times of stress and increase their likelihood of parental resilience
- Important to focus on cultural and gender-specific strengths
 - Africentric values found to be protective for young girls leading to later positive outcomes into adulthood (Belgrave et al, 2000; Whaley et al., 2017).
- Emphasizes the need to focus on interventions centering Black women and girls related to holistic well-being within relationships

Future Directions in Research

- Identifying parental strengths of Black mothers
 - Importance of social relationships
 - Parent-child relationship dynamics
 - Trauma-informed parenting practices
- Intervention development
 - Culture specific and gender specific interventions
 - Increasing positive social ties
 - Trauma-informed intervention development
- Trauma-informed care
 - Historical and intergenerational trauma
 - Barriers to mental health service use



Thank You

Questions?

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