



Mothering Profiles Observed in Low-Income Ethnic Minority Families: Relations to Maternal Depression and Family Risk Factors

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Introduction

Parents living in poverty face many risk factors that influence the ability to parent consistently and effectively. One risk factor linked with poverty and parenting difficulties is maternal depression. However, little is known about how depression relates to variations in observed parenting styles in the context of variations in additional risk factors.

In a longitudinal study of low-income African American and Latino preschool-aged children's development, we examined:

- 1) Empirically-derived parenting styles based on observational ratings of mother-child interactions when children were 3½ yrs.
- 2) Associations between maternal depressive symptoms and non-optimal parenting styles.
- 3) How cumulative risk factors within a low-income sample may moderate the association between maternal depressive symptoms and non-optimal parenting styles.

Method

Participants

- 343 mothers, from the Dallas Preschool Readiness Project
- 55% Boys, 45% Girls
- 43% (n = 149) African American, 57% (n = 194) Latina mothers
- 78% of African American and 67% of Latino families living below the Federal Poverty Level

Measuring Depression:

- Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale Revised (CESD-R) (Eaton, et al., 2004). 20 items: 5-point scale
- Collected when children were 2½ years old (Time 1) and 3½ years old (Time 2)

Measuring Risk Factors:

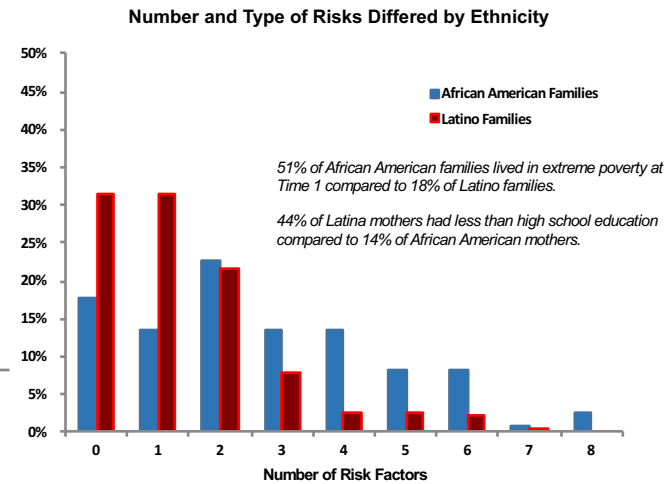
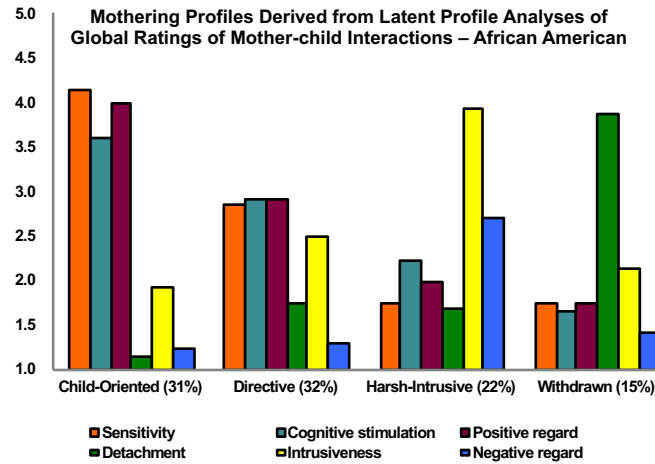
- A cumulative risk index was formed based on demographic indicators (e.g. single parent, residential move, extreme poverty).

Measuring Mothering Qualities:

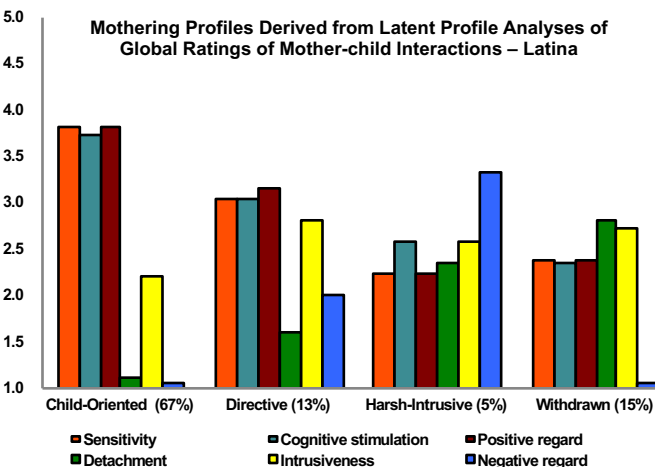
Videotaped mother-child interaction from 12-min play task with standard stimuli during the Time 2 home visit

Global ratings of parenting qualities (5-point scales): sensitivity, positive regard, cognitive stimulation, detachment, intrusiveness, negative regard

Results



51% of African American families lived in extreme poverty at Time 1 compared to 18% of Latino families.
 44% of Latina mothers had less than high school education compared to 14% of African American mothers.



Findings

- More depressive symptoms increased the likelihood of non-optimal parenting group classification (Harsh-intrusive or Withdrawn) 1 year later for both ethnic groups, but no association found for depressive symptoms measured concurrently with interaction observations.
- Number of additional risk factors did not moderate the association between maternal depression and non-optimal parenting.
- Examination of gender revealed African American mothers of girls and Latina mothers of boys were more likely to be classified in the non-optimal parenting group.

Discussion

- Is it all relative?** For families who have been living in poverty for generations, perhaps demographic risk factors are not related to negative outcomes. **Are we missing other important risk factors?**
- When risk factors were examined individually, only extreme poverty was related to withdrawn parenting among both ethnic groups.