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Children's Perceptions of Parent-Child Relationships:

A Narrative, Inductive Approach

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Background

- The three minute speech sample (TMSS) is a shorter version of the five minute speech sample (FMSS), meant for children or adolescents (Marshall et al., 1990; McKenna et al., 2020)
- Speech samples are used to understand the relationship between an individual and their family or family member (Marshall et al., 1990; McKenna et al., 2020; Van Humbeeck et al., 2002)
- The FMSS has primarily been coded quantitatively with focus on negative aspects of relationships such as critical statements about behavior, traits or personality (McKenna et al., 2020; Waller et al., 2012; Weston et al., 2017)
- Additionally, the FMSS and TMSS have focused on primarily white samples from middle class backgrounds (Kubicek, 2013; McKenna et al., 2020)
- Qualitative methods can increase understanding of interpersonal relationships, particularly as a means to amplify voices of marginalized communities (De Clercq et al., 2021; Manning & Kunkel, 2014)

Aim 1: Establish codes from child's perspective
Aim 2: Describe children's perceptions of dyadic relationships with their primary caregivers

Procedures

- Children asked to speak, uninterrupted, for three minutes about "what kind of a person your parent is and how the two of you get along together"
- Audio recordings transcribed verbatim
- Inductive approach to coding:
 - In-vivo methods to code 10 transcripts (two coders)
 - Discussed codes to develop codebook (team of five)
 - Thematic analysis to dually code all transcripts; discussion to consensus
- Coders diverse in race, ethnicity, & background

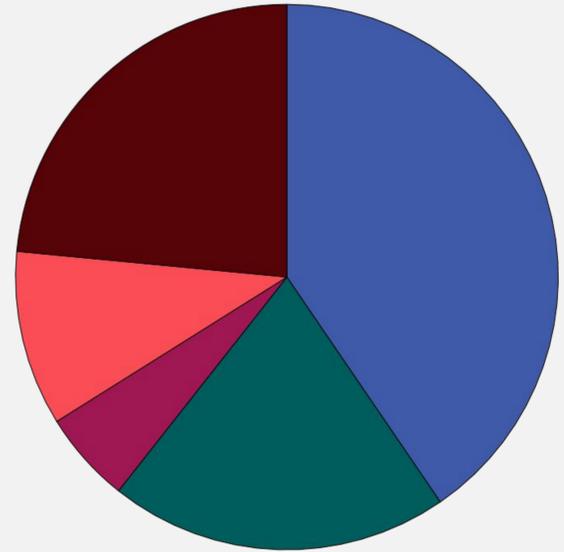
Results

- Fifty-one Black or African American children
- Ages 5-12 years ($M=8.82$); 48.9% female, 51.1% male
- Recruited from a high-poverty, urban US area (87.1% at or below poverty level)
- $N=671$ total codes of which 332 (49.5%) were unique codeable units
- Primary caregivers were biological mothers ($n=46$), biological fathers ($n=2$), and grandmothers ($n=3$)

Key Themes

				
Interactions	Feelings About Caregiver	Emotional Closeness	Reciprocity	Insight
Includes shared activities, time together, discipline, and physical affection	Includes feelings invoked by and towards the caregiver	Includes vulnerability, understanding, and friendship	Includes reflective interests, communication, behavior, and positive interests	Includes awareness of family dynamics, self and caregiver reasoning and motivations, and financial cognizance

Theme	Exemplar
Interactions	"We always solve things like if something was like missing.. we like to work together lot of things."
Feelings About Caregiver	"She makes sure no one hurt us, and I love her, and sometimes she can be frustrating sometimes."
Emotional Closeness	"And when I need to like tell her something or ask her can she do something for me, I think she understands what I'm going through sometimes."
Reciprocity	"[My dad] sticks up for me; he does a lot of things that I love and I do I stick up for my dad and that's one thing I love doing for my dad."
Insight	"Even though she struggles sometimes she can still try to go to work so that she can provide food and clothes for us so that we will be healthy and [...] so that we can live like a good life and stuff."



Discussion

- The use of open-ended speech sampling coupled with qualitative coding allowed cataloging of Black children's own perceptions of the parent-child relationship.
- Children depicted love as manifested in dyadic cohesion as well as in parents' provision of necessities (e.g., safety and food) & special treats/activities.
 - In turn, children helped parents and complied with parents' requests and rules.
- Children emphasized time spent together, mutual understanding, & reciprocity.
 - Dyadic reciprocity may be one way families protect themselves against the negative consequences of financial difficulties. (Wilhoit et al., 2021)
- Although young, many children showed insight into parents' perspectives & positive motivations.
- Financial awareness was central for some children in this low income sample.

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