Factors Associated with Youth’s Perceptions of Parenting: The Role of Social Ecological Assets

Anissa Garza

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Factors Associated with Youth’s Perceptions of Parenting:

The Role of Social Ecological Assets

by

Anissa Garza

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

Major: Psychology

The University of Memphis
May 2024
Abstract

Minimal research has examined factors that contribute to youth’s perceptions of maternal parenting practices. The current study included 263 mother-youth dyads. Mothers were aged 23-64 (M_{age}=36.42, SD=7.89, 82.9% Black) and youth were aged 8-17 (M_{age}=12.11, SD=2.77, 88.2% Black, 58.9% girls). A multivariate linear regression was used to examine how youth’s behavior problems and internal, peer, school, and community assets were related to their perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting, while accounting for youth age, gender, socioeconomic status, and maternal adversity exposure. The model was significant (F(9, 236)=7.24, p<.001, R^2=.22) for positive parenting perceptions and for negative parenting perceptions (F(9, 236)=6.76, p<.001, R^2=.21). Younger age, more internal assets, and more community assets were related to greater positive parenting perceptions, while more behavior problems and fewer community assets were related to more negative parenting perceptions. Findings could inform the development of family-focused, multisystemic interventions that enhance the mother-child relationship.

Keywords: mother-child relationship, resilience, behavior problems, children
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Factors Associated with Youth’s Perceptions of Parenting:

The Role of Social Ecological Assets

Existing literature has shown that youth’s perceptions of parenting are central to multiple domains of their psychosocial development, including their academic success, behavioral health, and resilience (Francis & Roehmild, 2022; Kritzas & Gobler, 2005; Mital, 2011); yet minimal research has examined factors that may contribute to youth’s perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting. Given that behavior problems are amenable to treatment and resilience-promoting assets are thought to be interrelated and capable of mutually influencing one another (Kaminski & Claussen, 2017; Masten, 2001; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011; Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012), a deeper exploration is necessary to determine whether these factors are related to perceptions of maternal parenting. The current study explored this topic by assessing how youth’s behavior problems and social ecological assets at the individual, relational, and contextual levels were associated with their positive and negative maternal parenting perceptions, while accounting for other potentially influential factors, such as youth age, youth gender, perceived family socioeconomic status (SES), and maternal substance abuse, violence, and AIDS/HIV (SAVA) exposure. This work expands on existing literature by centering the experiences of a sample of mostly Black youth. Understanding how ecological assets are related to perceptions of parenting is especially important for minoritized ethnic and racial groups who are at greater risk of being exposed to SAVA due to different forms of oppression (i.e., individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural; Marks et al., 2020; Singer et al., 2017).

Parenting Perceptions

Parenting is a broad construct that consists of parental attitudes, behaviors, styles, and practices (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting practices can be conceptualized as having two
dimensions: positive and negative (Hazzard et al., 1983). Positive parenting practices represent behaviors that demonstrate kindness, support, and warmth within the caregiver-youth relationship, such as allowing independence and using positive reinforcement (Hazzard et al., 1983). Negative parenting practices refer to parenting behaviors that are critical and harsh in nature, such as criticizing and threatening (Hazzard et al., 1983). Parenting practices within the mother-child relationship, specifically, are important to consider as parenting practices may uniquely influence the quality and rapport of these dyads (Bowlby, 1982).

Youth’s perceptions of maternal parenting practices, understood as their views of the parenting practices used by their mothers, are often underrepresented in the literature despite research showing that caregivers’ views may be inconsistent with those of youth (Sudarsan et al., 2022; Korelitz & Garber, 2016; Yadav et al., 2021). The present study centered youth’s perceptions of maternal parenting practices to acknowledge the potential implications their perceptions may have on developmentally relevant outcomes including, but not limited to, academic success (Korelitz, & Garber, 2016; Liu et al., 2020). Indeed, research evaluating the impact of positive and negative maternal parenting styles on academic outcomes found that adolescents’ perceptions of warmth and support were correlated with greater mastery and performance goals and interest in school ($M_{age} = 15.54, SD = .75$; Mital, 2011). Their perceptions of detachment and lack of control, on the other hand, were associated with lower grade point averages (Mital, 2011). Another study conducted with Romanian adolescents ($M_{age} = 15.67, SD = 1.22$) and their parents indicated that students with lower academic achievement perceived more parental rejection while students with higher academic achievement perceived more parental autonomy (i.e., parental control that does not involve inducing guilt, instilling anxiety, and/or withdrawing love; Diaconu-Gherasim & Măirean, 2016). Together, these findings point to
the importance of examining youth’s positive and negative maternal parenting perceptions, given their connection to academic outcomes that often predict success later in life (Creed et al., 2007).

Other factors associated with youth’s perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting practices include their own behavioral health (Kritzas & Gobler, 2005). Youth’s behavior problems, comprised of internalizing, externalizing, and other symptoms, may also be related to their positive and negative maternal parenting perceptions (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1978). For example, in one longitudinal study, Albrecht and colleagues (2007) found that more behavior problems at baseline, such as anxiety, depression, separation difficulties, and physical aggression, predicted more negative parenting practices (e.g., psychological control) two years later, as perceived by youth between the ages of 12 and 19 years. In another, Kaniušonytė and Žukauskienė (2016) showed that youth’s anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and worry at baseline (M_{age} = 15.63, SD = .74) predicted their perceptions of maternal psychological control (i.e., negative parenting behaviors) one year later.

**Social Ecological Framework**

Assets across the social ecology that facilitate resilience are one set of factors that may be associated with youth’s perceptions of maternal parenting practices. To the author’s knowledge, Chen and colleagues (2018) are among the only researchers who have assessed resilience as a predictor of positive and negative maternal parenting perceptions, finding that resilience was positively associated with perceptions of maternal communication in participants who ranged in age from 12 to 25 years. Ungar’s social ecological model, which is based in Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) work, accounts for a broad set of constructs by proposing that resilience is facilitated by the ability to navigate towards resources across the social ecology (Ungar et al., 2013). This framework for resilience is consistent with the Resilience and Youth Development Module
(RYDM; Constantine et al., 1999), which argues that internal, relational, and contextual resources, or assets, promote positive youth development. The current study aimed to build on previous work assessing the relation between resilience and parenting by using a social ecological framework to examine assets at the individual level (e.g., internal assets), relational level (e.g., peer assets), and contextual level (e.g., school and community assets). Such work is critical given that these assets are thought to facilitate wellbeing and are responsive to intervention (Liu et al., 2020).

**Individual Level**

**Internal assets.** Internal assets are constructs associated with positive development and resilience in youth, such as goals and aspirations, cooperation and communication, empathy, problem solving, self-awareness, and self-efficacy (Constantine et al., 1999). One study assessing the association between one internal construct, communication, and family satisfaction found that open communication was related to adolescents’ (aged 13 to 17) perceptions of constructive approaches to disagreements in the caregiver-youth dyad (Jackson et al., 1998). A separate study conducted with adolescents ($M_{age} = 15.64, SD = 0.34$) in Belgium found that more empathy, another internal asset, resulted in greater perceived maternal support, per adolescent report (Miklikowska & Duriez, 2011). Yet another study on empathy, done with families in the Netherlands, showed that low empathy in adolescents ($M_{age} = 13.03, SD = 0.46$) was linked to greater perceptions of conflict with caregivers as reported by the adolescents (Van Lissa et al., 2015). This body of work shows that specific internal assets are linked to youth’s perceptions of parenting, but further study is needed to determine if a more comprehensive conceptualization of internal assets is related to this parenting construct.
**Relational Level**

**Peer assets.** Peer assets are defined as constructs within the context of peer groups that promote wellbeing, including caring friendships, mutually high expectations, and meaningful opportunities for participation in peer activities (Constantine et al., 1999). Existing research has primarily focused on parenting behaviors as predictors of peer assets (e.g., Ladd & Pettit, 2002); however, one study from the early 1990s reported that more prosocial behaviors and less bullying by youth were related to better family functioning and closer relationships with their parents (Rigby, 1993). A more recent study, which assessed parenting practices specifically, found that prohibiting and guiding (i.e., peer management strategies that prohibit or establish expectations regarding peer relationships) were positively associated with perceptions of parental psychological control in adolescents and young adults with an age range of 15 to 21 years (Soenens et al., 2007). These studies show that peer assets related to caring friendships and mutually high expectations (e.g., more prosocial behaviors, less bullying, prohibiting and guiding of peer relationships) are related to youth’s parenting perceptions. Assessing peer assets more broadly would provide the opportunity to examine these constructs in tandem and include other aspects of peer assets (e.g., meaningful opportunities for participation).

**Context Level**

**School assets.** School assets are defined as constructs related to positive youth development and resilience within the school environment, including caring classroom relationships, high expectations from teachers, and meaningful opportunities for participation in school activities (Constantine et al., 1999). Similar to other social ecological assets, most research has examined perceptions of parenting as predictors of school-related constructs (e.g., Phillipson & McFarland, 2016). The work of Lehman and Repetti (2007) is a notable exception,
as they assessed how academic challenges related to parenting, with results showing that greater academic and peer-related problems in school were related to more aversive interactions with parents, as reported by youth in fifth and sixth grade. In an earlier study, Repetti (1996) found that youth who endorsed academic failure reported more disapproval and punishment from their parents. Researchers evaluating links between problems in school and youth’s perceptions of parenting in a more recent study found that youth between the ages of 8 and 13 who endorsed more problems within the context of school (e.g., missing class, trouble finishing homework, being teased or excluded by peers) reported less warmth and more conflict with their maternal caregivers that same day (Bai et al., 2016). While it is clear that school-based factors are related to youth’s perceptions of their relationship with their parents and their parents’ behaviors, the literature would benefit from an integrative assessment of these and other interdependent school assets, such as caring relationships with important others in the school (e.g., staff, teachers) and participation in school activities outside of the classroom.

**Community assets.** Community assets are understood as constructs related to positive youth development within the context of the youth’s community. Examples include caring relationships with adults other than parents or guardians, high expectations regarding their abilities and future success, and meaningful opportunities for participation in the arts, church, sports, and other communal activities (Constantine et al., 1999). To the author’s knowledge, existing research has taken a risk-based approach to examining the association between elements of community and parenting practices, focusing primarily on community violence. For example, in work examining the link between community-related constructs and the family system, Lynch and Cicchetti (2002) found that youth between the ages of 7 and 13 years exposed to greater community violence reported more negative maternal parenting behaviors. Additional research
supports these findings, noting that violence in the community (e.g., shooting incidents) may result in parental restrictions on behaviors in youth under the age of 18 years (e.g., social and athletic play; Luster & Okagaki, 2005). The present study builds upon this work by using a strengths-based approach, in which interrelated community strengths are assessed in relation to youth’s perceptions of positive and negative parenting.

**Other Influential Factors**

In addition to theoretically-driven variables, other influential factors may be related to youth’s perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting, such as youth age, youth gender, and perceived family SES. Regarding age, researchers assessing perceptions of parenting in gifted students between the ages of 9 and 17 years found that younger students were more likely to perceive their mothers as making few demands on them and engaging in minimal punishment compared to older students (Rudasill et al., 2013). In that same study, Rudasill and colleagues (2013) showed that girls were more likely to perceive their mothers’ parenting as controlling and punitive as compared to boys. Concerning SES, research conducted with high school seniors in China indicated that parental income significantly impacted perceived parental pressure, per adolescent report (Chen, 2012). These studies indicate that work examining youth’s perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting should account for youth age, youth gender, and family SES.

Another important factor that may be associated with youth’s perceptions of maternal parenting is maternal adversity in the form of SAVA. The SAVA syndemic, defined as exposure to the co-occurring epidemics of substance abuse, violence, and AIDS/HIV, disproportionately affects members of racial and ethnic minority groups and individuals experiencing economic hardship because of individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural oppression (Singer,
There is a dearth of research examining the association between SAVA and parenting perceptions, but some work has assessed each component of SAVA as it relates to parenting. For example, Solis and colleagues (2012) noted that youth entering adolescence, whose mothers engaged in potentially harmful substance use, perceived their mothers as more harsh, commanding, and punitive. Regarding intimate partner violence (IPV), one study examining warmth in family relationships showed that youth aged 5 to 19 years exposed to IPV were more sensitive to differential treatment from their caregivers (Piotrowski & Cameranesi, 2018). Finally, concerning AIDS/HIV, Murphy and colleagues (2009) found that mothers with HIV engaged in less parental monitoring, per adolescent report ($M_{age} = 12.70$, $SD = 1.45$). Given the impact of each component of maternal SAVA on parenting, it is important to consider how youth perceive parenting within the context of the SAVA syndemic.

**Limitations of Previous Research**

Although available literature has provided valuable information on youth’s perceptions of parenting, it is also limited in important ways. First, a majority of studies have included youth representing a narrow age range, which was most often adolescence (Albrecht et al., 2007). Second, existing studies have examined individual components of each asset rather than conceptualizing assets more broadly (Chen et al., 2018). Third, available research has typically conceptualized and measured assets solely within the family unit (e.g., family belief systems, family organization and resources, family communication), which neglects constructs at other levels of the social ecology (e.g., internal, peer, school; Chen et al., 2018). Fourth, studies have typically been conducted within primarily Caucasian, middle-class samples. In the internal assets studies, for instance, only six participants endorsed an ethnic or racial identity other than White European (e.g., Miklikowska & Duriez, 2011; Van Lissa et al., 2015). Examining perceptions of
positive and negative maternal parenting in non-White samples who have more variable SES is critical, as parenting practices may be appraised differently by youth of minoritized ethnic and racial identities or youth living with low income (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Lamborn et al., 1991).

**Current Study**

The positive and negative ways that youth perceive parenting have clear implications for their health and well-being, yet limited work has examined factors that contribute to youth’s parenting perceptions, particularly among racially minoritized youth. It is critical to understand how behavior problems and assets across the social ecology relate to youth’s maternal parenting perceptions. The current study aimed to examine how youth’s behavior problems and assets at the individual (e.g., internal), relational (e.g., peer), and contextual (e.g., school, community) levels were related to their perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting in a sample of primarily Black youth. Youth age, youth gender, perceived family SES, and maternal SAVA were included as covariates given past literature highlighting their associations with youth’s perceptions of parenting. It was hypothesized that fewer behavior problems, and more internal, peer, school, and community assets would be related to greater positive maternal parenting perceptions, and lower negative maternal parenting perceptions, as reported by youth.

**Method**

**Participants**

Participants included 263 maternal caregiver-youth dyads recruited from the MidSouth, United States. Youth ranged in age from 8 to 17 (M = 12.11, SD = 2.77) and more than half were female (58.9%). Maternal caregivers (henceforth referred to as mothers) of the participating youth were between the ages of 23 and 64 years (M = 36.42, SD = 7.89). Of the 263 youth, 88.2% identified as Black, 8.0% as White, 3.4% as Biracial or Multiracial, and 0.4% identified as
exclusively Hispanic or Latino (i.e., no racial category was selected). Of the 99.6% that selected a racial category, 1.9% identified as Hispanic or Latino. Of the 263 mothers, 82.9% identified as Black, 7.6% as White, 5.3% as Biracial or Multiracial, 3.0% as Asian, 0.4% as Native American, and 0.8% as exclusively Hispanic or Latina. Of the 99.2% that selected a racial category, 1.9% identified as Hispanic or Latina. Regarding the mothers’ relationship to the youth, biological mothers (93.9%) were the most frequently reported relation, followed by grandmother (3.0%), adoptive mother (1.1%), aunt (1.1%), “aunt and adoptive mom” (0.4%), and “caregiver” (0.4%). Concerning families’ perceived SES, 40.7% described living from paycheck to paycheck, followed by living comfortably (35.4%), not having a steady income (10.3%), living very well (8.0%), and having no current income (5.7%).

**Procedures**

Data for the study originated from a project known as PaTH Kids (Parenting Through Hardships - Kids; N = 263), which aimed to explore the relations between maternal SAVA and youth resilience. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Memphis, participants were recruited from a variety of local community organizations in the MidSouth, United States serving people exposed to violence, individuals living with HIV, and/or individuals who had engaged in substance use. Families were also recruited from organizations that provided general parenting services or community supports. Participants were connected to the study through direct invitation from staff at these community organizations or project staff. Other recruitment strategies included flyering across the community and attending community events. Mothers were eligible if they were English speaking, 18 years of age or older, and had a child between the ages of 8 and 17 of whom they were the primary legal guardian. Youth were eligible if they were 8 to 17 years old, English speaking, had no severe sensory or cognitive
impairments, and were not currently nor had ever been pregnant. If mothers had more than one child in the eligible age range, the oldest eligible child was included in the study. Data were not collected from multiple children within the same family.

Following screening for eligibility, mother-youth dyads who remained interested and eligible were scheduled for an in-person interview. Prior to beginning the interview, mothers gave informed consent and provided parental permission for their child to participate, and child participants gave assent. Mothers and youth were interviewed in separate private spaces by trained study staff. During the interviews, study staff recorded participants’ responses verbatim either by directly entering them into an online survey system or through use of a paper questionnaire to be entered into the online system at a later point. All survey questions were read aloud to participants in order to account for differences in literacy levels. Upon completion of the interview, mother and child each received a $20 gift card, as well as a list of local resources.

Measures

Demographics. Youth reported their age and gender. Mothers reported their family’s perceived SES, which was assessed using a single item ("Which of these phrases best describes your family’s socioeconomic status?"). The response options were (1) We live very well, (2) We live comfortably, (3) We live paycheck to paycheck, (4) We don’t have a steady income, and (5) We have no current income. This item has been used in previous studies (e.g., Rybak et al., 2017) and is similar to the assessment of SES in previous work with families (Evans et al., 2022). In this study, mother-reported SES and household income were significantly, positively correlated ($r(263) = .18, p = .004$).

Perceptions of Positive and Negative Parenting. The Parent Perception Inventory (PPI; Hazzard et al., 1983) is an 18-item measure assessing youth’s perceptions of positive and
negative parenting behaviors. A sample item of the Positive Parenting subscale includes, “How often does your mother play with you, spend time with you, do things with you which you like?” A sample item from the Negative Parenting subscale includes, “How often does your mother ignore you, not pay any attention to you, not talk to you or look at you?” Items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (“Never”) to 4 (“A lot”). The nine items that comprised each domain were summed to create Positive Parenting and Negative Parenting subscale scores, which ranged from 0 to 36, with higher scores indicating more positive or more negative parenting perceptions. Past studies indicate the measure has sound internal consistency (α = .74-.89) and predictive validity among racially diverse youth (Cole et al., 2018). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the Positive Parenting subscale was .82 and .72 for the Negative Parenting subscale.

**Youth Total Behavior Problems.** The Youth Self-Report (YSR) is a broadband measure of youth’s view of their behavioral, emotional, and social functioning over the past six months (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). It consists of 112 items rated on a 3-point Likert scale; response options are 0 (“Not true”), 1 (“Somewhat/Sometimes true”), and 2 (“Very true/Often true”). A sample item includes, “I have trouble concentrating or paying attention”. This study utilized a Total Problems score, which was generated from combining three syndrome scales measuring internalizing symptoms (i.e., Anxious/Depressed, Somatic Complaints, Withdrawn), two syndrome scales measuring externalizing symptoms (i.e., Aggressive Behavior, Rule Breaking Behavior), three other syndrome scales (i.e., Attention Problems, Social Problems and Thought Problems), and 10 additional items. All items were scored via computer-based scoring to generate T-scores adjusted for youth age and gender. Reliability coefficients for the YSR range from .67-.83 and previous studies have shown it has strong construct validity among diverse
samples (Achenbach et al., 1995; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha for Total Problems was .93.

**Youth Social Ecological Assets.** Youth completed the *Resilience and Youth Development Module* (RYDM; Constantine et al., 1999), a 56-item measure of social ecological assets associated with positive youth development. The current study used four subscales to assess social ecological assets: Internal Assets, Peer Assets, School Assets, and Community Assets. Internal assets include cooperation, communication, self-efficacy, empathy, problem solving, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations. A sample item is, “I stand up for myself without putting others down”. Peer assets include caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful opportunities for participation within the context of peer groups. A sample item is, “I have a friend about my own age who talks with me about my problems”. Similarly, school assets include caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful opportunities for participation at school. A sample item is, “At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who tells me when I do a good job”. Community assets refer to caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful opportunities for participation outside of environmental contexts of home and school. A sample item is, “Outside of my home and school, there is an adult who really cares about me”. Responses were recorded on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (“Not at All True”) to 4 (“Very Much True”). Regarding internal assets, 18 items were summed to create a total internal assets score, with scores ranging from 18 to 72. For peer assets, 6 items were summed to create a total peer assets score. Nine items were summed to create a total school assets score. Likewise, for community assets, 9 items were summed to create a total score. Scores for peer assets ranged from 6 to 24 whereas scores for school and community assets ranged from 9 to 36. Past work has demonstrated the strong reliability and validity of the RYDM measure, including among racially
and ethnically diverse youth (Furlong et al., 2009; Hanson & Kim, 2007). Here, Cronbach’s alpha values were: Internal Assets $\alpha = .85$; Peer Assets, $\alpha = .68$; School Assets, $\alpha = .85$; Community Assets, $\alpha = .85$.

**Maternal Substance Abuse, Violence, and AIDS/HIV (SAVA).** Mothers reported on each component of SAVA via different measures. Substance use over the past six months was assessed using 8 items from the *World Health Organization Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test* (WHO ASSIST; WHO ASSIST Working Group, 2002). Mothers who reported using alcohol, cannabis, or tobacco products daily or weekly, or who reported using any other illicit drug (e.g., amphetamine-type stimulants, cocaine, hallucinogens, inhalants, opioids, sedatives/sleeping pills, and “other” drugs) at least once or twice in the past six months were coded as 1 (i.e., potentially harmful substance use). All other mothers were coded as 0 (i.e., low to no substance use). Response categories were collapsed in this way to address concerns related to the limited distribution of substance use across the sample (Piovesana & Senior, 2018).

IPV was assessed using the *Revised Conflict Tactics Scale* (CTS2), which is a 39-item measure of violence in intimate relationships over the past six months (Straus et al., 1996). Consistent with the CTS2 manual, the presence of IPV was indicated by at least one event of injury, physical assault, or sexual coercion in the past 6 months. For psychological aggression, a “threshold criterion” of at least 11 was set to indicate the presence of this form of violence (Miller-Graff & Cheng, 2017; Straus, 2004). Mothers’ experiences across subscales (i.e., injury, physical assault, sexual coercion, psychological aggression) were dichotomized into one binary variable, indicating that mothers had experienced violence (“1”) or had not experienced violence (“0”) in the past 6 months. Mothers responded to a single item assessing AIDS/HIV status (“What was the result of your most recent HIV test?”) using the following response options:
“Negative,” “Positive (you have HIV),” or “Refuse to Answer.” No mothers refused to answer; mothers who were negative received a score of 0 and those who were positive received a score of 1. Finally, a SAVA score was created by summing the dichotomized substance use, IPV and AIDS/HIV variables, with scores ranging from 0 to 3. This approach allowed for equal weighting of each epidemic and is consistent with previous SAVA research (Howell et al., 2021; Illangasekare et al., 2013). Internal reliability was not calculated due to the independent nature of experiences.

Data Analytic Plan

Prior to running the primary analyses, data were screened to ensure assumptions were met for normality, outliers, multicollinearity, and missingness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Statistical significance was based on $p < .05$ for data screening purposes. Data screening indicated no concerns regarding normality, outliers, or multicollinearity. More specifically, skewness and kurtosis values fell within acceptable limits ($\leq 2$; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). No multivariate outliers were identified, and no evidence of multicollinearity was found ($\text{VIF} \leq 3$; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). Regarding missingness, less than 1.0% of data were missing across measures. Mean imputation at the item level was used to address this small amount of missingness, which allowed for maximum retention of participants (Parent, 2013).

To assess the hypotheses, a multivariate regression was run using SPSS version 28, which is a parsimonious approach that allowed for the simultaneous examination of how the independent variables related to the dependent variables (i.e., positive parenting perceptions, negative parenting perceptions). The multivariate model assessed how youth’s total behavior problems and social ecological assets at the individual (e.g., internal), relational (e.g., peer), and contextual (e.g., school, community) levels were related to their positive and negative maternal
parenting perceptions while accounting for youth age, gender, perceived family SES, and maternal SAVA. The Wilks’ Lambda test statistic was used to determine if, when collapsing across the dependent variables, there was a significant association as a function of the independent variables. The proportion of the variance in each of the dependent variables explained by the independent variables was evaluated using effect size. Finally, regression coefficients were used to determine the direction and strength of the associations between each independent variable and each dependent variable. A power analysis was conducted in G*Power 3.1 to calculate post-hoc power based on the sample size ($N = 263$) and 9 independent variables (Faul et al., 2007). This analysis indicated that the study was sufficiently powered to detect a large ($f^2 = 0.35$, $\alpha = .05$, $n = 263$, $1 - \beta = 1.00$) or medium ($f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = .05$, $n = 263$, $1 - \beta = .99$) effect, but not a small effect ($f^2 = 0.02$, $\alpha = .05$, $n = 263$, $1 - \beta = .28$).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Sample descriptives and correlations among continuous study variables are presented in Table 1. On average, youth’s positive parenting perception score ($M = 27.65, SD = 6.25$) was substantially higher than their negative parenting perception score ($M = 11.03, SD = 5.97$). The mean scores in this sample are in line with scores reported in previous work using the PPI (e.g., $M_{pos} = 25.95, SD = 6.63; M_{neg} = 14.45, SD = 6.79$; Hazzard et al., 1983). Youth’s mean score for total behavior problems ($M = 53.52, SD = 10.33$) was within the normal range (< 60; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Notably, 10.42% of youth were in the borderline clinical range (60-63) and 17.76% were at or above the clinical cutoff for behavioral problems (> 63; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Regarding internal assets, most of the youth (89.40%) reported a high level of this type of asset (average item response above 3 (i.e., high average) on the 1-4 scale;
Constantine et al., 1999). This was also the case for peer assets, in which 74.10% of youth reported a high level of this asset. Regarding contextual assets, 75.70% reported a high level of school assets and 78.30% reported a high level of community assets. For maternal SAVA, 20.90% of mothers reported no SAVA, 42.20% reported one, 33.50% reported two, and 3.4% reported three ($M = 1.19$, $SD = .80$). Finally, there was a moderate negative correlation between perceptions of positive and negative parenting perceptions ($r = -.33$, $p < .001$), with higher perceptions of positive parenting related to lower perceptions of negative parenting. This further justified the importance of examining the dependent variables in the same model.

**Primary Analysis**

See Table 2 for the results of the multivariate linear regression model. There was a statistically significant association for age, $F(2, 235) = 6.03$, $p = .003$, Wilks’ Lambda = .95, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, total behavior problems, $F(2, 235) = 13.76$, $p < .001$, Wilks’ Lambda = .90, partial $\eta^2 = .12$, internal assets, $F(2, 235) = 6.70$, $p = .001$, Wilks’ Lambda = .95, partial $\eta^2 = .05$, and community assets, $F(2, 235) = 3.67$, $p = .027$, Wilks’ Lambda = .97, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, on the combined dependent variables of positive and negative parenting perceptions.

Regarding positive parenting perceptions, the model was statistically significant, $F(9, 236) = 7.24$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 21.60% of the variance in this facet of parenting. The model was also significant for negative parenting perceptions, $F(9, 236) = 6.76$, $p < .001$, and it accounted for 20.50% of the variance in this dependent variable. As hypothesized, more internal assets ($F(1, 236) = 10.74$, $\beta = .24$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$) and more community assets ($F(1, 236) = 5.01$, $\beta = .16$, $p = .026$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$) were related to more positive maternal parenting perceptions as reported by youth. Also as expected, more behavior problems ($F(1, 236) = 26.30$, $\beta = .19$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$) and fewer community assets ($F(1, 236) = 4.42$, $\beta = -.15$, $p =
.037, partial $\eta^2 = .02$) were related to greater youth perception of negative parenting. Younger age was also associated with more positive parenting perceptions, $F(1, 236) = 7.47, \beta = -.37, p = .007$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. Contrary to what was hypothesized, peer and school assets were not significantly related to either aspect of parenting perceptions.

**Discussion**

This study examined how youth’s behavior problems and assets across social ecological levels (i.e., internal, relational, contextual) were related to their perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting. Regarding perceptions of parenting, youth’s average report of positive parenting perceptions was substantially higher than their average report of negative parenting perceptions. This difference may be representative of distinct parenting strengths within primarily Black families exposed to adversity, such as the expression of kindness and consistent parental involvement. This finding aligns with existing work on positive parenting practices within Black families, which suggests that the expression of warmth and fostering of youth’s character development are present in most families (McWayne et al., 2020; Oravec et al., 2008). In addition, these results emphasize the importance of considering and amplifying youth’s perspectives, as previous research suggests that youth and caregivers often report inconsistent information regarding parenting practices (Korelitz & Garber, 2016). Regarding their assets, the majority of youth reported a high level of each type of asset, which showcases the many strengths and resources evident in a sample of mostly Black youth experiencing lower income and adversity. Further, most youth in this study exhibited normative levels of behavior problems. Thus, these youth were functioning at a typical, expected level and had access to a variety of assets. Such findings align with recent movements in the field (Hamby et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022) to shift the narrative away from the deficits and hardships experienced by
minoritized youth and instead focus on their strengths and resources.

Findings from the multivariate regression indicated that the only type of asset significantly related to perceptions of both dimensions of parenting was community assets. Specifically, results showed that more community assets (e.g., caring relationships with adults other than parents or guardians, high expectations regarding abilities and future success, meaningful opportunities for participation in communal activities), were linked to greater perceptions of positive parenting and lower perceptions of negative parenting. While few studies have examined community assets, this finding aligns with existing empirical work showing that more exposure to community violence is associated with youth feeling less connected to caregivers and more critical of parenting behaviors (Lynch & Cicchetti, 2002). Study findings extend previous research by evaluating the association between community assets and youth’s view of parenting rather than focusing on the negative influence of community disorder or violence on marginalized youth. Perhaps meaningful opportunities for community participation allow caregivers to support youth’s autonomy and independence as they navigate situations outside of the home. In turn, youth may feel supported by their caregivers and view their parenting practices more favorably. Another explanation is that youth view community participation as a privilege, so having opportunities to meaningfully engage in the community may be reflective of less negative parenting behaviors, such as privilege removal and taking away independence. These results demonstrate the value of assessing multiple social ecological assets to allow for a comprehensive exploration of youth’s resources across the social ecology as different factors influence youth’s perceptions of positive and negative maternal parenting. Such an approach increases understanding of variables that contribute to interactions within the family system.
Unlike community assets, internal assets were only associated with perceptions of one dimension of parenting practices. Youth who endorsed having more internal assets reported more positive maternal parenting perceptions. Again, this partially aligns with previous research indicating that greater internal assets, such as empathy, are associated with less perceptions of conflict, per youth report (Van Lissa et al., 2015). It is possible that youth used their internal assets to be more understanding and sensitive to their mother’s feelings, thoughts, and experiences, which reduced disagreement and opposition in the dyad; this could have resulted in more optimistic views of parenting. Another possibility is that youth may view their traits such as cooperation, empathy, self-awareness, and self-efficacy as being fostered by caregivers’ kindness, support, and warmth rather than parenting behaviors that are critical and harsh in nature. These findings suggest that internal assets are not only promotive of positive functioning in youth themselves, but also positive functioning in their relationships with caregivers.

Notably, behavior problems were also only associated with perceptions of one dimension of parenting practices, such that more behavior problems were linked to more perceptions of negative parenting. This partially trends with previous work, which shows that increases in behavior problems, such as anxiety, depression, physical aggression, separation difficulties, and worry, predicted an increase in negative parenting practices years later (Albrecht et al., 2007; Kaniušonytė & Žukauskienė, 2016). In the context of the current study, it may be that behavior problems, such as aggression, difficulties concentrating, and rule breaking behaviors, are met with parenting behaviors viewed as critical or harsh as caregivers attempt to manage youth’s problem behaviors. The absence of these problems may be met with reductions in these practices rather than engagement in positive parenting, such as comforting or the use of positive reinforcement (McKee et al., 2008). Another explanation may be that behavior problems, such as
isolation and withdrawal, may make it difficult for caregivers to witness behaviors that lend themselves to the use of positive reinforcement. These findings suggest that behavior problems are not only indicative of emotional and behavioral strain in youth but strain within the caregiver-child relationship as well.

Contrary to what was expected, peer and school assets were not associated with perceptions of either dimension of parenting practices. This deviates from previous work, which has shown that youth’s prosocial behaviors towards their peers were predictive of their attitudes towards their parents (Rigby, 1993) and that youth with more problems in school reported less warmth and more conflict with their maternal caregivers (Bai et al., 2016). This is notable given that each asset was related to perceptions of both positive and negative parenting when assessed individually (see Table 1). However, when all assets were examined simultaneously, it appears that the other assets included in this study (i.e., internal and community) were more influential in youth’s parenting perceptions, which limited the role played by peer and school assets. An alternative explanation may be that youth view assets within the peer and school contexts as related solely to their peers and teachers’ behaviors and not their mother’s parenting, which illustrates some siloing in these relationships.

In addition to peer and school assets not being related to perceptions of parenting, it was also shown that gender, perceived family SES, and maternal SAVA were not associated with youth’s perceptions of either dimension of parenting. Even though gender was not a significant independent variable, there may be an interaction between youth gender and caregiver gender; future studies that include both mother and father figures should assess such an indirect effect. For perceived family SES, majority of families reported living from paycheck to paycheck (40.70%) or living comfortably (35.40%). This lack of variability may explain the lack of
association between perceived family SES and positive and negative parenting perceptions. As for maternal SAVA, it is possible that youth’s perceptions of these experiences were not accurately represented given that SAVA experiences were reported by maternal caregivers. Perhaps youth’s perceptions of maternal SAVA would have been associated with their perceptions of parenting. Alternatively, caregivers’ report of SAVA may have been related to their perceptions of their own parenting.

**Clinical Implications**

A number of clinical implications can be derived from the study findings. First, children and adolescents experiencing strain in the relationship with their caregivers may benefit from policies or programs intended to increase access to assets in the community. Inclusive extracurricular activities that promote meaningful participation and social skills that facilitate caring relationships with other adults are viable avenues to enhance community assets, which may lead to improvements in youth’s relationship with their caregiver. Culturally informed treatments should aim to bolster children’s goals and aspirations, self-awareness, and self-esteem, which could lead to a stronger mother-child relationship given the association between internal assets and perceptions of parenting. Providers should also focus on strengthening youth’s interpersonal skills (e.g., empathy, cooperation, communication) as these skills could translate to their relationships with their caregivers and strengthen perceptions of their caregivers’ parenting practices. Clinicians should also consider targeting youth’s behavior problems and involving caregivers in this process to decrease problematic behaviors and the use of negative parenting practices in response to such behaviors. This can be achieved through manualized behavior therapy, psychoeducational parenting classes, and skills-based services aimed to reduce behavior problems and strengthen positive behaviors in youth. Specific
behavioral management strategies, such as behavior tracking, active ignoring, and rewards and consequences, may help increase positive attention in the home and bolster youth’s views of themselves and their relationships with their caregivers.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions**

The current study adds to the nascent literature exploring parenting perceptions in youth. Regarding study strengths, rather than examining assets narrowly and in isolation, the present study used a broad and comprehensive conceptualization. Next, the voices of youth from primarily Black families who were affected by adversity were centered via a strengths-based approach, showcasing the resources and assets evident in the sample. Further, instead of relying solely on caregiver report and focusing primarily on adolescents, the current study examined maternal parenting from the perspective of youth representing a broad age range.

Despite study strengths, the results should be interpreted considering several limitations. The cross-sectional design, for example, precludes conclusions regarding temporality or directionality. Future research should employ a longitudinal design to explore how behavior problems and social ecological assets shift over time, as well as their degree of association to youth’s perceptions of positive and negative parenting during different developmental stages. The sample was also comprised solely of female caregivers, so findings may not generalize to male caregivers. Researchers should aim to recruit male caregivers in future studies to account for potential differences in youth’s perceptions of parenting based on caregiver’s gender. Third, the reliability of peer assets was somewhat lower than conventional standards, which may be due to the small number of items included in the scale. Fourth, while it is valuable to center youth’s perspectives of parenting, it is also important to acknowledge that youth and caregivers’ perspectives may vary. In the future, researchers could examine youth and caregiver perspectives
simultaneously to understand how factors differentially contribute to the perspectives of each member of the dyad.

**Conclusions**

The current study adds novel information to the literature regarding youth’s perceptions of positive and negative parenting, and how they are connected to youth’s behavior problems and social ecological assets. Guided by Ungar’s social ecological model (Ungar et al., 2013), this work expands on previous research by assessing a wide spectrum of internal, relational, and contextual assets and centering the voices of youth from primarily Black families, most of whom were affected by adversity and experiencing low income. Results showed that community assets were related to both dimensions of parenting while internal assets were only associated with youth’s perceptions of positive parenting, and peer and school assets were related to neither parenting dimension. Further, youth behavior problems were associated with perceptions of negative parenting. These findings demonstrate the value of comprehensively exploring youth’s resources across the social ecology to increase understanding of variables that contribute to interactions within the family system. Information gleaned from this study may inform the development of accessible, culturally-informed and family-focused interventions that could improve youths’ perceptions of parenting via the reduction of behavior problems or enhancement of social ecological assets.
References


Kritzas, N., & Grobler, A. A. (2005). The relationship between perceived parenting styles and


WHO ASSIST Working Group. (2002). The Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement


Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Continuous Variables

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Note. SES = socioeconomic status; SAVA = substance abuse, violence, AIDS/HIV; *p < .05, **p < .001.
Table 2
Multivariate Regression Model for Positive and Negative Parenting Perceptions

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*Note. CI = confidence interval; SES = socioeconomic status; SAVA = substance abuse, violence, AIDS/HIV; *Not interpreted as Wilks’ Lambda test statistic was not significant.