A Person-Oriented Approach to Understanding Dimensions of Parenting

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Parenting is a frequent target of early intervention efforts
- Parenting affects children’s early development (Brooks-Gunn & Markman, 2005)
- Many early intervention programs, such as Early Head Start, work directly and intensively with parents to improve parenting behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge.
- Improved parenting is related to children’s developmental outcomes (Bradley et al., 1994; Love et al., 2005; Sweet & Alappan, 2004).

Person-oriented approach
- A person-oriented approach takes a holistic and dynamic view of individuals, viewing individual functioning and development as an organized whole (Bergman & Trost, 2005; Bergman & Magnusson, 1997).
- For example, a person-oriented study of parenting among low-income African-American parents identified behavior patterns described as “Aggravated but Nurturant; Cognitive Stimulating; Patient and Nurturant; and Low Nurturance” (McGruder, 2000).
- Person-oriented approaches have also identified patterns that typify the kinds of resources and services parents seek or are referred to for their children (Greenberg et al., 2001; Leventhal et al., 2000).
- Latent Class Analysis (LCA) offers a statistical method for using a person-oriented approach to identifying classes of individuals who share common patterns of behavior or other characteristics.

Research Questions
- What parenting patterns typify distinct classes of parents?
- What predicts parenting-class membership?

Table 2: Measures

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting-behavior indicators</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory, positive regard, cognitive stimulation</td>
<td>Parenting Behavior Scales (Kaiser et al., 2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affection, responsiveness, encouragement, teaching</td>
<td>PEAR-C Heat-Rating Scale (Roggman et al., 2000)</td>
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<td>Emotional closeness and support (14- and 24-month visits)</td>
<td>Home Observation for the Measurement of the Environment (Caldwell &amp; Bradley, 1984)</td>
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Table 3: Odds ratios for 3-class latent models (Reference group: Developmental class)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother's education level</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American mother</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang violence</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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</tbody>
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Discussion
- Parents in 3 classes of parenting—Developmental, Unsupportive, and Dismissing—show distinct patterns of parenting behavior.
- These 3 patterns are evident at 14, 24, and 36 months of age.
- Demographic characteristics predict which class a parent is in, with known risk factors increasing the odds of being in the Unsupportive or Dismissing classes of parents.
- Psychological characteristics may also predict membership in these classes of parenting.
- Child outcomes may differ across these classes of parenting.
- The match of services to types of parents will provide particularly useful guidance for practitioners working directly with parents.