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ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional study used secondary data of urban youth to explore parental approaches as predictors of positive youth development among a group of 182 African American youth. This study aimed to examine how parental approaches (maternal and paternal encouragement and monitoring) predict prosocial behaviors (aspirations, self-efficacy, emotional restraint, and social responsibility) among a sample of African American youth residing in public housing. The regression analysis revealed three significant models. Overall, the results suggest that maternal monitoring and encouragement are essential for positive outcomes for African American youth in the context of urban public housing.

KEYWORDS

African American; parenting; youth outcomes; maternal monitoring; maternal encouragement; aspirations; self-efficacy

Introduction

Adolescents are among the healthiest of the U.S. population, but they are also among the highest as it relates to their involvement in risk and risk-related behaviors (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). Although much attention has been given to the process of youth development, the role of parents and the impact of their parenting on the lives of their children has been a constant variable under observation. In fact, the empirical literature is saturated with research that compares parents and peers, family composition, and socioeconomic status of parents as indicators and predictors of many outcomes for youth development (Estreet et al., 2018; Haynie & Osgood, 2005; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019; Nebbitt et al., 2007; Nebbitt, 2009; Paschall, 2003). There is an inevitable impact of parenting styles and approaches on youth development. However, exploring the healthy and positive effects of parenting on youth is an essential line of investigative research.

Literature review parenting styles

Parenting styles refer to the constellation of attitudes and behaviors communicated toward the child from the parent that reinforce expectations of behavior (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Baumrind (1991) conceptualized four distinct parenting styles termed the following: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. Parents adopting an authoritative style are emotionally connected and supportive of their children while communicating in

a clear and consistent manner. Authoritative parenting engenders both encouragement (affection) and monitoring (control). Authoritative parents operate from the attitude of being caring (encouragement) and strict (monitoring) in their interactions with their children. Parents high on affection aim to connect with their children through being responsive to their emotional needs (Checa & Abundis-Gutierrrez, 2018). This style thus engenders trust and emotional security in children due to high emotional involvement and clear role expectations of their children. Children of authoritative parents have been shown to be better adjusted in terms of prosocial and academic behavior (Baumrind, 1991; Masud et al., 2016; Sigelman & Rider, 2015) because of their ability to self-regulate and manage their emotions. Jabeen et al. (2013) found that mothers and fathers that endorsed an authoritative style supported emotional regulation in adolescent children. The ability of authoritative parents to model and express their affection can support children in better understanding their emotions rather than simply reacting to them.

Authoritarian parenting is characterized by high control and low affection (Baumrind, 1991; Teyber & Teyber, 2017). Parents adopting this style are very demanding of their children while offering minimal to little emotional support. The authoritarian parent operates from a belief in their supreme authority and leaves no room to compromise. The authoritarian parent provides rigid structure but at the cost of emotional nurturance. The inability of authoritarian parents to empathize with their children's emotional needs thwarts the child's emotional growth and may impact other areas of social and emotional development. This belief was corroborated by research by Rauf and Ahmed (2017), who found that authoritarian parenting styles had a negative impact on children's academic performance. They hypothesized that being overly demanding and monitoring children's compliance to their standards undermines their self-esteem and sense of agency (Rauf & Ahmed, 2017). Though students may achieve greatly in academic pursuits, they do so at the cost of personal satisfaction.

Whereas the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles are both high on control, permissive parenting is low on control and high on affection (Teyber & Teyber, 2017). A permissive parenting style is characterized as being indulgent in the needs and desires of the child at the expense of structure. Compared to the authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, permissive parents cede power in the relationship. However, there are benefits associated with permissive parenting styles. For example, (Garcia & Serra, 2019) showed that permissive parenting and emotional support are sometimes more valued compared to strict discipline. They hypothesized that their more group-oriented cultures value harmony and communion over domination and order. When comparing authoritative, permissive, authoritarian, and neglectful parenting styles on self-esteem and social values measures, permissive parenting styles yielded students with the highest reported self-esteem and social values (Garcia & Serra, 2019). Though permissive parenting styles are often viewed with a negative connotation, within the proper social context, they can support positive youth development.

Neglectful or dismissive parenting styles are characterized as being low on both affection and control (Baumrind, 1991; Teyber & Teyber, 2017). Dismissive parenting style is defined as emotionally unavailable, disinterested, or uninvolved in parenting children. Whereas the previous parenting styles offer children some level of parental involvement, dismissive parenting offers children no parental support or guidance. One negative effect of dismissive parenting is that youth often prematurely assume adult roles. When parents are unavailable

to nurture their children, the children must learn to respond to their own emotional needs (Briere et al., 2017). Further, dismissive parenting has been associated with at-risk youth behaviors such as substance abuse (Rothrauff et al., 2009). Children of dismissive parents often are victims of trauma and abuse as their parents are not able to protect them from adverse situations (San Cristobal et al., 2017).

The four parenting styles encompass various forms of affection and control and impact a child's development in different ways. Developmentally, children can either be helped or hindered based on the type of parenting style they experience. In assessing positive youth outcomes and parenting styles, support for authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles on academic outcomes has been observed (Masud et al., 2016; Mihret et al., 2019). Authoritative styles have been correlated with higher academic self-esteem in adolescents and adults (Garcia & Serra, 2019). The ability of authoritarian parents to deliver autonomy granting and emotional support facilitates self-efficacy and or beliefs in one's ability (Masud et al., 2016). These skills have been shown to be valuable even when youth must cope with more strict and rigid (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003). The adaptive skills of self-efficacy and internal emotion are nurtured by authoritarian styles that emphasize support and autonomy (Jabeen et al., 2013).

Parenting Black children

When viewed contextually, African American parents must employ methods to help their children survive in a threatening world. For Black children, living in low-income communities often means exposure to stressful life events such as unsafe neighborhoods, ethnic segregation, under-performing schools, and community violence (Bocknek et al., 2020). These culturally specific experiences often create the need for Black parents to employ nontraditional specific parenting strategies. For example, Simons and Sutton (2021) explored how the use of corporal punishment and demandingness moderated by parental warmth and encouragement and suggest that being vigilant and strict (monitoring) helps to curtail future antisocial behavior of African American youth. Corporal punishment, often seen as a deficit of African American parenting, when paired with warmth and responsiveness helps youth remain safe in the presence of community violence and other stressful life events.

Further, the literature on Black parenting often focuses on the presence or absence of fathers rather than the unique contribution fathers make to the parental unit. For example, Black fathers' monitoring and encouragement have been associated with positive outcomes in youth. Qualitatively Doyle et al. (2015) showed that Black fathers value monitoring, discipline, and encouragement as tools to support their children. In a subsequent study, Doyle et al. (2016) showed that Black fathers' support and encouragement were associated with a greater sense of self-efficacy and less depression. These two studies combined supported the importance of the role Black fathers play in supporting positive outcomes in Black youth.

Other studies argue the need for understanding parenting practices for Black youth within the context of their immediate environment (Bocknek et al., 2020; Jackson, 1998). Black mothers utilize social support and strict parenting practices to nurture and protect their children in hostile environments (Bocknek et al., 2020). What is often seen as a parental deficit can be reframed as culturally adaptive parenting. As noted in the research literature, Black parenting reflects the stark realities imposed by socioeconomic and

environmental stress. Black mothers employ tactics such as strict commands, and rigid rules out of concern and fear (Dormire et al., 2021), for their children. We will continue to explore the indelible mark of Black parenting styles in shaping the trajectory of Black youth while reinforcing the inherent strength and merit of Black parents

Conceptual framework

The empirical literature provides overwhelming evidence of the impact parents have on child development, and such evidence is used to guide this study. This body of research suggests among the many social connections to which youth are exposed that parents are a constant. The impact of parenting styles can be seen as "dynamic processes in which adolescents and parents are mutually influenced" (Boele et al., 2020). The style to which parents subscribe is not always an intentional or conscious decision. Nevertheless, it has a lasting impact on youth development. We are interested in exploring the impact parenting styles (monitoring and encouragement) have on positive youth outcomes. We identify positive youth outcomes (future aspirations, social responsibility, self-efficacy, and emotional restraint) as prosocial skills that facilitate successful participation in major areas of the youths' social environment. These areas include school, work, and primary social and community settings.

We assert that parental influence in the form of monitoring and encouragement is essential to youths' successful acquisition of these prosocial skills. For this paper, we build on the work of (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019) and (Axpe et al., 2019) on parental styles and youth outcomes. We advance this work by looking at the impact monitoring and encouragement of parents separately. Specifically, we seek to explore how parental monitoring and encouragement impact development of positive outcomes on a sample of African American youth residing in public housing. African American communities have typically held African American mothers in high esteem in fiction depicted in written or televised formats or biological figures in the form of grandmothers, aunts, and other extended relatives (Wilson & McCoy, 2009). From an Afronormative perspective, African American women are thought to be culture bearers, nurturers, and the epitome of resiliency (Collins, 1990; Sudarkasa, 2007; Wilson & McCoy, 2009). Given the ponderance of Black families led by matriarchal figures and the sanctity and influence that they have in Black culture, we elected to enter maternal encouragement and monitoring shortly after demographics, followed by paternal monitoring and encouragement.

We suspected that parents who are more encouraging and closely supervise their children correct youth in ways that promote prosocial behavior. When youth engage in responsible behavior, they are likely to be successful in achieving the desired goals. Specifically, we hypothesized that maternal variables (monitoring and encouragement) would be most predictive of positive youth outcomes (future aspirations, social responsibility, self-efficacy, and emotional self-restraint).

The following research questions are advanced.

(1) Which parental approaches (paternal monitoring and encouragement and maternal monitoring and encouragement) are most predictive of self-efficacy?
(2) Which parental approaches (paternal monitoring and encouragement and maternal monitoring and encouragement) are most predictive of emotional restraint?

(3) Which parental approaches (paternal monitoring and encouragement and maternal monitoring and encouragement) are most predictive of social responsibility?

(4) Which parental approaches (paternal monitoring and encouragement and maternal monitoring and encouragement) are most predictive of aspirations?

Method

Design

This cross-sectional study used secondary data to explore the parental approaches as predictors of positive youth development among a group of African American youth in public housing developments.

The data source for this analysis is the Context Matters study conducted by Nebbitt. Context Matters (CTM) is a cross-sectional research study of 401 urban youth in public housing developments of two major cities in the United States- New York City and Washington DC. The two cities were selected as they have a high concentration of urban public housing. The aim of the CTM study was to explore how the ecological context of urban youth affects their psychological and emotional behaviors and attitudes.

Participants

This current study explored the impact of parental monitoring and encouragement on positive youth development among 182 African American youth from the New York City sample of the CTM study. The choice to exclude Washington DC residents was made because the New York City sample completed measures of protective factors such as future aspirations, social responsibility, and emotional restraint, and the Washington DC sample did not. The final sample for the current study consisted of 182 African American youth. Fifty-one percent were female (n = 93), and 49% were male (n = 87). The age ranged from 12 to 21 years, with a mean of 15 (*SD* = 2.6).

Measurements

The CTM study utilized several standardized instruments from the National Youth Survey. The variables for this study were constructed from those measures. Those variables are described in the following subsections.

Socio-Demographic variables

Age was measured by asking youth how old they were. The actual age is a continuous variable. In terms of gender, youth were asked to identify their gender, with a choice of either male or female.

Dependent variables. Positive youth development

Future aspirations scale

Future aspirations were measured using Elliot's 1987 future aspiration success scale (Elliott, 1996). The scale asks youth about a variety of family, social, occupational, and educational

goals. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). Scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating greater importance (Elliott, 1996).

General self-efficacy

The General Self-Efficacy is a self-administered 10-item scale created by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy in the adolescent population. The questions are intended to assess one's belief in his or her abilities to perform certain tasks, cope with adversity, and persist in the face of obstacles. A sample question asks, "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough." The responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1(not true at all) to 5 (true all the time). Total scores range from 10 to 50, and higher scores indicate a greater belief in one's abilities (high self-efficacy). Cronbach's alpha scores range from .76 to .90, which are acceptable levels of reliability.

The Weinberger Adjustment Inventory Emotional-Restraint subscale

This scale was developed in 1990 by Daniel Weinberger. It is a 30-item, five-point Likert-scale (1= false, 2 = somewhat false, 3 = not sure, 4 = somewhat true, and 5 = true) that assesses four dimensions of restraint: impulse control ("I stop and think before I act"), suppression of anger ("I lose my temper and let people have it when I am angry"- reverse coded), consideration of others ("I often go out of my way to do things for other people"), and responsibility ("I will cheat on something if I know no one will find out"). The total score ranges from 30 to 150. The measure for the entire scale is used in this study. Higher scores indicate higher levels of emotional restraint. Weinberger (1997) reports an alpha coefficient of .89. Feldman and Weinberger (1994) and Jensen et al. (2004) report an acceptable level of internal reliability (α = .87). They also indicate that the emotional restraint scale has good psychometric properties and displays convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity. Emotional restraint is operationally defined as a score on the Weinberger Adjustment Inventory Emotional-Restraint total scale.

The social responsibility scale

The scale was developed in 1987 by Nedwek and revised in 1993 by Flewelling, Paschall, and Ringwalt. The instrument is a six-item, four-point partial reverse coded scale that measures civic responsibility and awareness. The survey is designed for African American males ages 12 to 16 and has an internal consistency of .52. There are two limitations to this measurement instrument. First, it was designed for males, and the current study included both male and female participants. Second, the alpha coefficient of .52 is an unacceptable level of reliability. An item analysis procedure was conducted with the current sample, and the results revealed an acceptable alpha coefficient of .79.

Independent variables

Parental Attitude Measure (PAM)

Parental monitoring and encouragement were measured using a modified version of the Parental Attitude Measure developed by Lamborn et al. (1991). The current version is divided into two separate scales: paternal and maternal. Each scale is a 12-item scale that

measures youths' perceptions of parental monitoring and encouragement. The first seven questions address parental encouragement. For example, "I can count on her/him to help me out if I have some sort of problem." The responses are rated on a four-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always), with total scores ranging from 7 to 28. Higher scores indicate greater perceived encouragement.

The second set of questions (five questions) addresses monitoring. A sample question is, "Let us know how much your mother/father really knows who your friends are." Responses are rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (don't know) to 4 (know exactly), with a total score ranging from 5 to 20. Higher scores indicate greater monitoring. The original encouragement scale demonstrated good reliability (α = .88), and the monitoring scale had (α = .79), which are acceptable levels of reliability (Abu-Bader, 2021).

Results

Preliminary analysis

The data were assessed for the assumption of linearity, normally distributed errors, and uncorrelated errors were checked and met. Descriptive statistics were also conducted to assess the prevalence of the levels of maternal and paternal encouragement and monitoring and prosocial behaviors (aspirations, self-efficacy, emotional restraint, and social responsibility) among the youth in the study. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

To investigate how well maternal encouragement, maternal monitoring, paternal encouragement, and paternal monitoring predict self-efficacy, after controlling for age and gender, a hierarchical linear regression was computed. When gender and age were entered alone, gender significantly predicted self-efficacy, with females having higher scores than males, $F_{(2, 174)} = 6.345$, $p = .002$, adjusted $R^2 = .068$. However, as indicated by the R^2, only 6% of the variance in self-efficacy could be predicted by knowing the participants' gender. When the maternal variables were added, they significantly improved the prediction, R^2 change $= .102$, $F_{(4, 172)} = 8.835$, $p = .000$, and gender remained a significant

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for parental variables, self-efficacy, emotional restraint, social responsibility, new social responsibility, and aspirations.

		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Median	Mode
Maternal Encouragement	82	7.00	28.00	22.38	5.00	24.00	26.00
Maternal Monitoring	82	5.00	20.00	15.21	3.68	16.00	20.00
Paternal Encouragement	80	6.00	28.00	18.98	6.77	20.00	28.00
Paternal Monitoring	80	5.00	20.00	11.54	5.14	11.00	5.00
Self-Efficacy	81	6.00	40.00	24.51	8.30	25.00	20.00
Emotional Restraint	82	30.00	123.00	75.65	17.53	77.00	77.00
Social Responsibility	82	4.00	16.00	10.38	2.92	10.50	10.00
Aspirations	82	23.00	50.00	40.63	5.98	41.50	46.00

For all scales, higher mean scores are indicative of more extreme responding in the direction of the constructed assessment.

predictor. Upon entering the final couple of paternal variables, they did not significantly improve the model, R^2 change =.004, F (6, 170) = 5.988, p = .000.The beta weights and significance values, presented in Table 2, indicate which variables contribute the most to predicting self-efficacy when age, gender, maternal and paternal encouragement and monitoring are entered together as predictors. Model 2 suggests that from the combination of predictors, maternal encouragement has the highest beta (.336), followed by the beta coefficient for gender (−.182).

To investigate how well maternal encouragement, maternal monitoring, paternal encouragement, and paternal monitoring predict emotional self-restraint, after controlling for age and gender, a hierarchical linear regression was computed. When gender and age were entered alone it significantly predicted self-restraint, F(2, 175) = 4.520, p = .012, adjusted R^2 = .049. However, as indicated by the R^2, only 4% of the variance in self-restraint could be predicted by knowing the participants' gender. When the maternal variables were added, they significantly improved the prediction, R^2 change =.062, F (4, 173) = 5.392, p = .000, and gender remained a significant predictor in addition to maternal encouragement and maternal monitoring. Upon entering the final couple of paternal variables, they did not significantly improve the model, R^2 change =.009, F (6, 171) = 3.885, p = .001.The beta weights and significance values, presented in Table 3, indicate which variables contribute the most to predicting self-restraint when age, gender, maternal and paternal encouragement and monitoring are entered together as predictors. Model 2 seems to be the best model and indicates that

Table 2. Hierarchical multiple regression summary predicting self-efficacy from parental variables when controlling for gender and age.

Variable	B	SEB	B	R^2	Δ R^2
Step 1				.068**	.068**
Constant	21.724	3.562			
Age	0.315	0.234	0.099		
Gender	−4.061	1.205	−.247**		
Step 2				.170**	.102**
Constant	8.062	5.253			
Age	0.389	0.227	0.122		
Gender	−2.99	1.181	−.182**		
Maternal Encouragement	0.572	0.128	.336**		
Maternal Monitoring	−0.054	0.174	−0.024		
Step 3				.174**	0.004
Constant	8.813	5.396			
Age	0.373	0.23	0.117		
Gender	−2.875	1.204	−.175*		
Maternal Encouragement	0.547	0.141	.321**		
Maternal Monitoring	0.017	0.192	0.007		
Paternal Encouragement	0.021	0.118	0.017		
Paternal Monitoring	−0.129	0.159	−0.08		

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

Table 3. Hierarchical multiple regression summary predicting emotional restraint from parental variables, when controlling for gender and age.

Variable	B	SEB	B	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.049**	.049**
Constant	79.925	7.584			
Age	−.009	.497	−.001		
Gender	−7.674	2.558	−.222**		
Step 2				.111**	.062**
Constant	75.518	11.316			
Age	−.145	.496	−.022		
Gender	−7.138	2.576	−.206**		
Maternal Encouragement	.882	.277	.249**		
Maternal Monitoring	−.896	.378	−.190**		
Step 3				.120**	.009
Constant	72.390	11.576			
Age	−.057	.500	−.009		
Gender	−7.749	2.618	−.224**		
Maternal Encouragement	.800	.305	.226**		
Maternal Monitoring	−.974	.417	−.206*		
Paternal Encouragement	.244	.257	.094		
Paternal Monitoring	.043	.346	.013		

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

gender (−.206), maternal encouragement (.249), and maternal monitoring (−.190) seem to be the best predictors based on the beta coefficients.

To investigate how well maternal encouragement, maternal monitoring, paternal encouragement, and paternal monitoring predict social responsibility, after controlling for age and gender, a hierarchical linear regression was computed. When gender and age were entered alone, it did not significantly predict social responsibility, F(2, 175) = 2.852, p = .060.When the maternal variables were added, they did not significantly improve the prediction, R^2 change =.013, F (4, 173) = 2.018, p = .094, and none of the variables were significant. Upon entering the final couple of paternal variables, they did not significantly improve the model, R^2 change =.012, F (6, 171) = 1.701, p = .123.None of the models were significant in predicting social responsibility (see Table 4).

To investigate how well maternal encouragement, maternal monitoring, paternal encouragement, and paternal monitoring predict aspirations, after controlling for age and gender, a hierarchical linear regression was computed. When gender and age were entered alone it did not significantly predict aspirations, F(2, 175) = .845, p = .432. When the maternal variables were added, they did not significantly improve the prediction, R^2 change =.073, F (4, 173) = 3.876, p = .005 though the model was significant. When the paternal variables were added, they did not significantly improve the model, R^2 change =.005, F(6, 171) = 2.708, p = .015.The third model seems to be the best fit model in predicting aspirations with maternal encouragement (.259) having the highest and only significant beta coefficient (see Table 5).

Table 4. Hierarchical multiple regression summary predicting social responsibility from parental variables when controlling for gender and age.

Variable	B	SEB	B	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.032	.032
Constant	8.067	1.288			
Age	.176	.084	.155*		
Gender	−.562	4.34	−.096		
Step 2				.045	.013
Constant	7.661	1.974			
Age	.194	.086	.171*		
Gender	−.546	.449	−.094		
Maternal Encouragement	−.055	.048	−.093		
Maternal Monitoring	.089	.066	.112		
Step 3				.056	.012
Constant	7.920	2.018			
Age	.184	.087	.163*		
Gender	−.480	.456	−.082		
Maternal Encouragement	−.024	.053	−.039		
Maternal Monitoring	.065	.073	.082		
Paternal Encouragement	−.065	.045	−.148		
Paternal Monitoring	.065	.060	.113		

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

Table 5. Hierarchical multiple regression summary predicting aspirations from parental variables when controlling for gender and age.

Variable	B	SEB	B	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1				.010	.010
Constant	41.855	2.666			
Age	−.047	.175	−.020		
Gender	−1.128	.899	−.095		
Step 2				.082**	.073**
Constant	31.688	3.960			
Age	.038	.174	.016		
Gender	−.308	.902	−.026		
Maternal Encouragement	.297	.097	.244**		
Maternal Monitoring	.122	.132	.075		
Step 3				.087**	.005
Constant	31.118	4.063			
Age	.050	.176	.022		
Gender	−.400	.919	−.033		
Maternal Encouragement	.315	.107	.259**		
Maternal Monitoring	.067	.146	.041		
Paternal Encouragement	−.014	.090	−.016		
Paternal Monitoring	.097	.122	.083		

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

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how parental approaches (maternal and paternal encouragement and monitoring) predict prosocial behaviors (aspirations, self-efficacy, emotional restraint, and social responsibility) among a sample of African American youth residing in public housing. Specifically, we hypothesized that maternal variables (monitoring and encouragement) would be most predictive of prosocial behaviors (future aspirations, social responsibility, self-efficacy, and emotional self-restraint) given the shadowboxing and motherwork that is very distinct to these parental figures (Cooper, 2007; James, 1999).

Overall, the youth reported moderate to high levels of maternal monitoring and encouragement and low to moderate levels of paternal monitoring and encouragement. This could be expected as research has concluded that differences in parenting exist. Mothers are more likely to provide support through their "day-to-day childcare tasks," and fathers are likely to participate in recreational activities. Zahran (2011) also identifies differences in parent between mothers and fathers. Zahran asserts mothers manage children's behaviors and activities, and time spent by fathers with children is less frequent and is more related to play (Zahran, 2011).

This primary analysis was guided by four research questions for which a stepwise regression analysis was conducted. Results from the analysis showed support for the hypothesis. The first question sought to identify which parental variables would be best predictive of the outcome variable self-efficacy. Among the combinations of predictors for self-efficacy, maternal encouragement was most predictive, followed by gender, with females having higher scores. We also assessed the parental variables on emotional self-restraint. Among the combinations of predictors, maternal encouragement was most predictive of emotional restraint (positively), followed by females having higher scores than males on emotional restraint and a negative relationship between maternal monitoring and emotional self-restraint. A third question assessed which among the parental variables would be best predictive of social responsibility. However, among the combinations of predictors, none of the variables were significant predictors of youths' level of social responsibility. The final question assessed which among the parental variables would be best predictive of aspirations. Among the combinations of predictors of aspirations, maternal encouragement was the only significant predictor.

When assessed collectively, these results suggest that maternal monitoring and encouragement are essential for African American youth in the context of public housing. As youth are encouraged by their mothers specifically, they become more self-efficacious and have higher aspirations (hopes, dreams, and desires for their future). The positive association of maternal encouragement in this study was consistent with other studies that identify the positive effects of maternal encouragement on prosocial behaviors. For example, (Sorkhabi & Middaugh, 2019) concluded that maternal encouragement in the form of positive reinforcement was related to prosocial behaviors such as academic achievement and self-esteem. Further, Khaleque and Rohner (2002) and Ahmad et al. (2015) concluded maternal warmth and responsiveness are related to long-term positive development in youth. Finally, Wang and Kenny (2014) report that encouragement of youth through warm parenting is associated with fewer problems and more positive adjustment. However, Niditch and Varela (2012) did not find evidence that maternal encouragement

predicted self-efficacy. They found that maternal rejection, paternal and maternal control were significant predictors of self-efficacy.

The positive association of maternal encouragement and aspirations is consistent with studies that indicate that parental influence significantly impacts career goals and aspirations of adolescents (Otani, 2019; Spencer et al., 1996). This suggests that adolescents' family, social, educational, and occupational aspirations are influenced by the level of encouragement they receive from their mothers. An alternative explanation is that when African American adolescents present their aspirations to their mothers, this causes an increase in the encouragement they receive. The findings of this study highlight the importance of maternal encouragement, given that research has shown it to be a key predictor in achievement outcomes, with aspirations serving as a mediator (Otani, 2019). Research highlights that some youth may perceive parental encouragement and monitoring as a hassle but still benefit regarding prosocial outcomes (Spencer et al., 1996).

Maternal encouragement also positively impacted youths' level of emotional self-restraint. This was consistent with the literature on maternal support of children. Laursen and Collins (2009) suggests that maternal encouragement through responsiveness is a resource for adolescents in stressful situations (Laursen & Collins, 2009). Similarly, Williams et al. (2012) concluded that mothers' responsiveness was positively correlated with self-regulation, and controlling mothers predicted poor emotional regulations. Telzer et al. (2016) report mothers' encouragement of positive emotions predicted fewer externalizing behaviors, and mothers' dismissal of youth emotions predicted more internalizing behaviors.

On the other hand, in this study, youth are more likely to manage their emotions with lower levels of monitoring by their mothers. This finding was consistent with (Azman et al., 2021), who reported significant associations between demanding-controlling parenting style and strength and difficulty characterized as conduct disorders, inattention, emotional problems, and peer relationship problems. This finding seems to make sense given the developmental stage of adolescence and young adulthood. As youth struggle to find their own identity and transition to adulthood, they are often in conflict with needing the emotional encouragement and support from their parents to meet their basic needs. While developmental theories support the role of parents in helping children to regulate their emotions (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Baumrind, 1991; Bowlby, 1969; Erikson, 1959, 1994), others suggest that children learn to navigate different emotions through other social relationships such as their relationships with peers (Salisch, 2001). The youth in this study may be in conflict with struggling to be a part of their peer group, creating their own identity, and being under the direct supervision of their parents, particularly their mothers. These results suggest that over-monitoring African American youth by mothers, even under the extreme hostile urban environments, perhaps may exacerbate the child's struggle to navigate their emotions.

Paternal monitoring and encouragement were not significant predictors of positive youth outcomes. This was contrary to Doyle et al. (2015), who reported that Black fathers' support and encouragement was associated with a greater sense of self-efficacy and less depression in youth. Youth in this study reported low levels of paternal monitoring and encouragement in comparison to the reported levels of mothers' monitoring and encouragement. For example, youth were asked how often their mother and father encourage them when they get bad grades. Eighty-two percent of youth reported that their mothers usually

or always encourage them compared to 67% of youth who said that their fathers usually or always encouraged them. This was consistent with Simons and Conger (2007), who found that mothers were more likely than fathers to parent in an authoritative manner. An explanation for this finding can be that many youths appear to perceive their fathers as less encouraging. Another alternative explanation is perhaps fathers are absent from the home, and therefore youth are more influenced by the present parent, in this case, their mother.

While not a focus of this study, the finding that gender is associated with self-efficacy and emotional restraint in that females had higher scores than males may be related to trends in previous research that highlight African American males lagging behind their counterparts regarding education, labor market participation, and career development (Nebbitt, 2009). It may be pertinent for parents to develop gender-specific parenting beyond monitoring and encouragement, particularly for male children.

Strengths and limitations

This study has several identifiable strengths. One hundred percent of the sample identified as African American, and it is critical to have African American youth represented in social science research. The topic of positive youth outcomes is a second strength. In instances where African American youth are included in the empirical literature, the strengths and capacities of this population are omitted, and their deficits are emphasized. Another strength is this study includes measures of parental approaches (Nebbitt et al., 2007). The results provide empirical support for the impact parental approaches have on psychological protective factors of African American youth. Further, the results contribute to the limited body of literature that seeks to isolate the positive and negative aspects of parenting and their impact on youth development.

A limitation of the research is its small sample size and the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population of youth in other geographical locations. A study with a larger sample size using a random sampling technique could allow for a greater assessment of youth experience and generalizability of findings. In addition, the data is self-report and includes only youth perceptions of parenting. Perhaps including parents in future studies may help to validate parenting approaches perceived by youth and can add to the analysis of positive outcomes for youth.

Conclusion and implications

These findings are interesting and essential to the study of positive youth development of African American youth. Despite that there are improvements in outcomes for African American youth, little is focused on what is essential for youth of color to become more confident in their ability to achieve or to accomplish basic life tasks.

Because it is unlikely that we will be able to move youth of color out of urban communities, further research should aim to explore African American positive youth outcomes within the cultural milieu of urban settings. Through these explorations, we can further understand the ecological context of African American youth and what factors will influence positive outcomes for youth despite living in urban settings. In addition, we can identify practice priorities for human service professionals working with African

American youth with an emphasis on enhancing inherent strengths and capacity factors rather than focusing on the context in which youth live. This can result in culturally relevant interventions for African American youth irrespective of their living environment.

Relational cultural theory (Comstock et al., 2008) offers a viable framework for supporting youth and parents of color. The emphasis on enhancing relationships through mutuality and empowerment can strengthen therapeutic rapport, which reinforces a sense of connection to helpers and society at large. Within this framework, helpers can conceptualize parenting practices in a non-pathological manner to attenuate feelings of shame and mistrust related to challenges in parenting.

Though maternal support was found to contribute to positive outcomes for youth, further research is needed that identifies the unique contribution of black fathers. As examined by Doyle et al. (2015), black fathers emphasize emotional restraint, persistence, and high vigilance in their parenting practices. These roles further allow Black fathers to operate within masculine norms while reinforcing their status as protectors and providers. By critically examining Black fathers in isolation and in conjunction with Black mothers, we can advocate for the importance and relevance of Black fathers while advocating for their primacy as single parents and viable co-parents. We can also more directly address several fundamental questions related to African American parenting, such as what the role of fathers is in supporting mothers, particularly for African American children.

Disclosure statement

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