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Residential Instability, Family Support, and Parent–Child Relationships Among Ethnically Diverse Urban Families

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Abstract

From a social disorganization standpoint, neighborhood residential instability potentially brings negative consequences to parent–child relationship qualities, but family social support and racial/ethnic identity may modify this association. Using data ($n = 3,116$) from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, this study examines associations between neighborhood residential instability and parent–child warmth and conflict, whether family social support moderates associations between residential instability and parent–child relationships, and variation by race/ethnicity. Multilevel models reveal that residential instability undermines parent–child relationship qualities, particularly for non-White individuals. Family support is a protective factor for families in less stable neighborhoods, and specifically buffers the association between neighborhood residential instability and reduced parent–child warmth. Among Hispanics, family support mitigates the association between residential instability and heightened parent–child conflict. Findings highlight residential instability as a detriment to parent–child relationships; families in unstable neighborhoods may benefit from family social support.

Parent–child relationships are fundamental for healthy child development. Relationships characterized by high warmth and low conflict foster better school performance, higher self-esteem, lower depression, and fewer behavior problems among children of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Cleveland, Gibbons, Gerrard, Pomeroy, & Brody, 2005; Mogro-Wilson, 2008; Stanik, Riina, & McHale, 2013; Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon, & Lengua, 2000). Parenting is determined by multiple contexts (Belsky, 1984; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster, & Jones, 2001); however, extrafamilial factors that exist in settings such as neighborhoods have been examined less often. Further, the different risks and resources that contribute to parent–child relationships are typically studied in isolation (Simons, Johnson, Conger, & Lorenz, 1997), but their effects may be modified by the presence or absence of factors at the family and neighborhood levels. Previous research also suggests that neighborhoods confer different risks and resources to families on the basis of race/ethnicity (Zambrana, 2011), but few studies have examined the intersection of neighborhood and family contexts for parenting in different racial/ethnic groups.

Residential instability is a structural feature of neighborhoods marked by high rates of residential turnover and low percentages of family-owned homes (Sampson, Morenoff, & Earls, 1999). We expect that families living in neighborhoods characterized by a high rate of residential instability will have lower levels of parent–child warmth and higher levels of parent–child conflict than families living in more stable areas. This is because residential instability can cause concern among parents over unknown individuals in the neighborhood (Timperio, Crawford, Telford, & Salmon, 2004; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997), hamper social capital and informal social control of unwanted behaviors in the community (Sampson et al., 1999; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997), and limit parents’ abilities to form supportive relationships with neighbors unrelated to them (Sampson, 2003).

As a result of the limited social resources in unstable neighborhoods, support from family members could take on special salience to the lives of parents. Accordingly, we further expect that the relationship between residential instability and parent–child relationship quality will be less pronounced for families with high levels of family-based social support. Ample research shows that social support is associated with positive parent–child relationship qualities (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Crnic, Greenberg, Robinson, & Ragozin, 1984; Green, Furrer, & McAllister, 2007; Izzo, Weiss, Shanahan, & Rodriguez-Brown, 2000; Kotchick, Dorsey, & Heller, 2005; Taylor & Roberts, 1995), especially support provided by family members (e.g., Kotchick et al., 2005; Taylor & Roberts, 1995). According to what we term a *compensatory model*, we expect that family-provided social support may buffer parent–child relationships against the negative effects of residential instability. Drawing upon past research showing stronger associations between social support and parent–child relationship quality among Black and Hispanic families, we also expect race/ethnicity to modify the mutual links among residential instability, social support, and parent–child relationship quality.

Using data from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), we address three main research questions: Do families living in neighborhoods marked by high residential turnover present lower parent–child warmth and higher parent–child conflict than families in more stable neighborhoods? Do high levels of familial social support moderate these associations? Are these patterns different for Hispanic or Black families as compared to non-Hispanic White families? By addressing these questions, this study sheds light on how residential instability and social support are implicated in parent–child relationships among a diverse group of urban families.

Background

Residential Instability and Parent–Child Relationships

Consistent declines in the rate of home ownership have occurred since the Great Recession, falling 5% between 2005 and 2014 (Callis & Kresin, 2015). As a consequence, increasing shares of households—both with and without children—are turning to renting instead of owning their homes (Kingsley, Jordan, & Traynor 2012). Because renter-dominated neighborhoods tend to experience greater residential turnover than owner-dominated neighborhoods, the growing ratio of renters to homeowners suggests that residential instability may become more normative across American neighborhoods.

Residential instability has long been identified as a generally undesirable neighborhood characteristic (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Sampson & Groves, 1989; Shaw & McKay, 1942). With respect to family outcomes, residential instability has been implicated in past research that examines the community-level correlates of parent–child relationship quality. For instance, Coulton, Korbin, Su, and Chow (1995) found that the prevalence of child maltreatment is higher with increasing levels of residential instability. Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the possible links between residential instability and poor parent–child relationship quality, which we describe in this section.

Residential instability is thought to operate on family-level outcomes through pathways involving the community, parental well-being, and personal social networks. At the community level, highly unstable neighborhoods face difficulty in fostering mutual trust, shared goals, and community attachment among residents (Sampson, 1991; Sampson et al., 1997). In turn, it has been argued that the absence of these social resources engenders undue stress to parents and negatively affects their mental health (Ross, Reynolds, & Geis, 2000; Schulz et al., 2008), which is linked to harsh and reactive parenting styles (Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002). Moreover, high residential turnover can further aggravate parent–child relations by creating collectives of neighbors who are unfamiliar to one another. Parents who live in neighborhoods with a constant churning of old and new residents may have greater concerns over their children’s safety from neighborhood-based threats and limit their time in outdoor activities accordingly (Timperio et al., 2004; Valentine & McKendrick, 1997). Parent–child conflicts can arise as a result of tensions between parents’ interests in protecting their child from strangers in the neighborhood and their child’s desire for unsupervised time outdoors.

Associational forms also vary as a function of residential instability, which has implications for parents’ social network qualities. Residential instability is linked to fewer numbers of neighborhood-based civic groups and less frequent informal neighboring activities, like watching one’s property while one is away or asking for personal advice (Swaroop & Morenoff, 2006). This disadvantage is reflected in the greater social isolation and deficient interpersonal resources available to parents in unstable neighborhoods (Sampson, 1988, 1991), which in turn is linked to poor parental mental health and family dysfunction (Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten, & McIntosh, 2008).

Past research has suggested that when families live in areas with high residential instability, the burden of socializing youth and parenting falls directly on the parents, which can strain their relationships with offspring. However, some factors can help offset these effects and promote positive parent–child relationships. We argue that kin-based social support is a particularly important buffer against the negative effects of residential instability because of its proximity to family and parenting behaviors.

Family Social Support as a Moderator

Despite the wide acceptance of an ecological framework, surprisingly little research has examined the interplay between supports in different contexts and how they are related to parent–child relationships (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, Chase-Lansdale, & Gordon, 1997). Social support from family members has been shown to directly affect parenting

relationships by reducing parental stress (Bonds, Gondoli, Sturge-Apple, & Salem, 2002; Cohen & Willis, 1985; McLoyd, 1998) and providing emotional and instrumental assistance (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Raikes & Thompson, 2005). Expanding on what is known about the direct effects of family support for parent–child warmth and conflict, this study examines whether support from family modifies the role of a broader contextual risk factor, that is, residential instability, for parent–child relationships.

According to a compensatory model, the availability of a supportive resource (i.e., family social support) counteracts less available forms of support from other sources (i.e., residential instability). This model was first developed to describe the role of relationships as sources of support when supports from primary social networks were unavailable (Cantor, 1979). Research that applies this framework has typically focused on compensatory effects of interpersonal relationships. For example, in a study of sibling and peer relationships, East and Rook (1992) found that supportive sibling relationships compensated for social isolation from peers. Extending this work to the interaction between family and neighborhood social networks, we explored whether family social support is especially beneficial for families in which parents may experience isolation, stress, interpersonal conflict, or limited resources resulting from residential instability. We hypothesize that, relative to families who lack access to family social support, the association between residential instability and parent–child relationship qualities will be weaker for families who have greater access to family social support. To our knowledge, this study is among the first to apply a compensatory model to the study of risks and supports in different social contexts.

The Role of Race/Ethnicity

Neighborhood and family experiences often differ according to race/ethnicity (e.g., Byrnes & Miller, 2012; Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996). However, in light of what is known about within-group variation in neighborhood and family processes, relatively few studies have considered racial/ethnic differences in the connections between neighborhood factors and parent–child relationships (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005; Kotchick et al., 2005). Some scholars have suggested that members of racial/ethnic minority groups rely on family support and neighborhoods to a greater extent than nonminorities, perhaps as a result of socioeconomic inequalities (Sarkisian & Gerstel 2004) or to compensate for isolation from mainstream organizations (Keith, Kim, & Schafer, 2000).

Reliance on neighbors is often a necessity rather than a choice for Blacks and Hispanics if they have access to fewer social resources than Whites (Martineau, 1977). Further, Whites are more likely than other groups to receive large sums of cash assistance from family members (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004), a form of support that may be provided irrespective of physical proximity to the recipient. Conversely, Black and Hispanic families are more likely to live in extended, multigenerational households (Sarkisian, Gerena, & Gerstel, 2007), which implies a greater propensity to share neighborhoods and a higher likelihood of nonmonetary support such as child-care assistance and other “in-kind” forms of support (Hofferth, 1984; Hogan, Hao, & Parish, 1990; Parish, Hao, & Hogan, 1991; Sarkisian & Gerstel 2004; Sarkisian et al., 2007; Uttal, 1999). To the extent that non-Whites are more

likely to receive these forms of support, living in an unstable neighborhood likely has special implications for parents.

Research also shows that Black families and individuals in urban neighborhoods tend to interact with their neighbors more often than members of other groups, which leads to longer-standing and close, supportive relationships among community members (Campbell & Lee, 1992; Jarrett, 1997). Hispanic families, too, often place a strong value on interdependence in the community, which is evident in their extensive and close-knit social networks (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). However, when neighborhood-based relationships are lacking, evidence suggests that positive parenting practices are diminished for both Black and Hispanic families (Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002; Mason, Cauce, Gonzalez, Hiraga, & Grove, 1994; Roche, Ensminger, & Cherlin, 2007). For instance, African American mothers who lived in neighborhoods characterized by low social involvement displayed less warmth toward their child, but this association was not observed for White mothers (Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002). Ultimately, the pathway linking neighborhood-based exposures to parenting practices has been shown to negatively affect child behavioral problems among Black families (Pachter, Auinger, Palmer, & Weitzman, 2006). In addition, past studies show that close ties between Hispanic families and their social networks manifest in child-rearing practices that emphasize cooperation and compliance (Pong, Hao, & Gardner, 2005). Similarly, qualitative evidence suggests that Latina mothers in disadvantaged communities employ a variety of strategies to keep children safe, including strict monitoring and distancing their families from neighborhood activities (Ceballo, Kennedy, Bregman, & Epstein-Ngo, 2012). Thus, the absence of neighborhood ties may undermine parent–child relationships, particularly for Black and Hispanic families. Given these findings, we hypothesize that residential instability and family support will be stronger for Black and Hispanic parents than for White parents.

The Present Study

This study addresses three aims. The first is to examine associations between neighborhood residential instability and parent–child warmth and conflict. We expect that parents living in more unstable neighborhoods will have less warmth and greater conflict in their parent–child relationships relative to parents in stable neighborhoods. Second, we examine whether family support moderates the association between residential instability and parent–child relationship qualities. Here, we test a compensatory model, which suggests that family social support will counteract high levels of instability and buffer parent–child relationship qualities. Third, we test whether associations differ on the basis of race/ethnicity. Given past research, we expect that the potential direct and interactive roles of residential instability will be more prominent for Black and Hispanic families than for White families.

Method

Study Design

This study uses two independent sources of data gathered by the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), a study investigating the development of youth and families in the context of urban neighborhoods. Data at the family level are

drawn from the third wave of the Longitudinal Cohort Study (PHDCN-LCS). Neighborhood-level data are drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census.

Participants were sampled by neighborhood using a multistage sampling strategy (for details on study design, see Sampson et al., 1997). First, the city of Chicago was divided into 847 census tracts using 1990 U.S. Census data, and these tracts were assigned to one of 343 neighborhood clusters (NCs) that were ecologically meaningful and geographically compact. The NCs were then stratified into seven levels of race/ethnicity and three levels of socioeconomic status (high, medium, and low), resulting in 21 strata. Three strata did not contain any NCs (i.e., NCs classified as low socioeconomic status, or SES, primarily White; high SES, primarily Hispanic; and high SES, primarily Black and Hispanic). This stratification process resulted in a final representative sample of 80 NCs. Households within these NCs were randomly selected and screened for eligibility; those with children within 6 months of the target age or “cohort” (0, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 years) were selected to participate, as were their primary caregivers. Of 8,034 eligible caregivers and offspring, a final sample of 6,228 participated in the first wave of data collection.

There were three waves of data collection (1994–1997, 1997–1999, and 2000–2001). At each wave, a trained data collector visited the family at home to interview the primary caregiver and observe the home environment. Informed consent was obtained from caregivers and youth before each interview. Questions covered child development and family life. For older cohorts, a separate interview was also conducted with the child. Interpreters were provided for non-English speakers. Participants received \$5–\$20 per interview depending on age and wave of data collection.

This study draws on the 6-, 9-, 12-, and 15-year-old cohorts (mean age at Wave 1 = 10.27, $SD = 3.36$), as they were the only cohorts with relevant data on parent–child relationships. Of the 3,116 participants in these cohorts, 2,689 (86%) had complete data on variables of interest.

Measures

All youth and family characteristics were drawn from Wave 1 of the LCS. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the full sample, and on the basis of residential instability.

Individual and Family Characteristics—Parent–child conflict was measured using the parent–child version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), a well-validated measure of parent–child conflict (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998). On each of five items, primary caregivers reported on the frequency of emotional or verbal conflict (see Appendix A) using a 6-point scale where 0 = *never* and 6 = *more than 20*. Items were summed so that higher scores indicated more conflict ($= .72$).

Parent–child warmth was assessed using the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME) (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984). The HOME measure includes nine observational items that assessed caregiver’s warmth toward their child (for more details, see Leventhal, Selner-O’Hagan, Brooks-Gunn, Bingenheimer, & Earls, 2004). Interviewers rated

caregivers using a binary scale where 1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*, on each of nine items (see Appendix A). Items were summed such that higher scores indicated more warmth ($\alpha = .79$).

Family social support was measured using the Provision of Social Relations Scale (Turner, Frankel, & Levin, 1983). On each of six items, primary caregivers described their perceived social support from family members (see Appendix A). The scale ranged from 1 = *very true* to 3 = *not true*. Responses were reverse scored so that higher scores indicate greater support ($\alpha = .82$).

All analyses controlled for the following individual and family characteristics, measured at Wave 1: Youth gender (1 = *male*), youth age, primary caregiver (1 = *biological mother*), primary caregiver age, household income (1 = *less than \$5,000*, 5 = *\$30,000–\$39,000 per year*, 11 = *more than \$90,000*), primary caregiver education (1 = *high school education or higher*) family size, marital status (1 = *married*), parent nativity status (1 = *foreign born*), and years of residence in the neighborhood. Given the salience of parents' mental health for family relationships, we use one item ("Have you ever suffered from depression, that is, felt so low for a period of at least two weeks that you hardly ate or slept, or couldn't work or do whatever you usually do") to adjust for parental depression in the previous year (1 = *yes*).

Neighborhood Characteristics

Residential instability: Sociodemographic characteristics of neighborhoods were drawn from the 1990 U.S. Census. Using principal components analysis, previous analysis of NC-level data identified three key dimensions of neighborhood level structure (Sampson et al., 1997). See Sampson and Grove (1989) for more details regarding weighting by factor loadings and creation of composites. Residential instability is measured by the average residential tenure among residents in the participant's current neighborhood and the percentage of owner-occupied households. These measures are commonly used in studies on neighborhood composition (Byrnes & Miller, 2012; Browning & Olinger-Wilbon, 2003).

Neighborhood control variables: Analyses controlled for two additional measures of neighborhood structure originating from the 1990 U.S. Census. Concentrated poverty is defined by the percentage of families living below the poverty line, the percentage of families receiving public assistance, the percentage of female-headed households, and the percentage of unemployed residents, all weighted by factor loading. Immigrant concentration combines the percentage of Hispanic residents and percentage of foreign-born residents. We also included a separate control for the percentage of Black residents, given our interest in racial/ethnic differences.

Results

Analytic Strategy

We tested six two-level multilevel models (MLMs) to examine the associations between social support, residential instability, and parent–child warmth and conflict. This approach extends multiple regression to account for dependencies in the data (i.e., correlations among families in the same neighborhood) (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Family-level data (parent–child warmth, parent–child conflict, social support, race/ethnicity, and parent and child

controls) were modeled at Level 1, which captures differences between families. Neighborhood-level data (residential instability and neighborhood controls) were modeled at Level 2, which captures differences among neighborhoods. All continuous predictor and control variables were centered at their grand means.

MLMs were estimated using the Proc Mixed statement in SAS 9.2. Akaike and Bayesian information criteria fit statistics determined that random intercept models provided the best fit to the data. As a first step, we tested two-level unconditional models to obtain estimates of neighborhood level variance in parent–child relationship qualities. Unconditional models showed significant variation between neighborhood clusters in parent–child warmth ($\gamma = 6.59$, $SE = .07$, $p < .01$) and conflict ($\gamma = 5.31$, $SE = .13$, $p < .01$). Intraclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) were computed using estimates from the unconditional models to determine the percentage of variance in parent–child relationships that was shared within neighborhoods. ICCs revealed that 2% of the variance in parent–child conflict, and 6% of the variance in parent–child warmth, was similar for families living in the same neighborhood. These findings are consistent with prior findings that neighborhood factors typically account for only 5%–10% of the variance in family- and child-level outcomes (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000).

To test the first aim, we estimated the main effect for residential instability for parent–child warmth and parent–child conflict. For the second aim, we tested two-way interactions between residential instability and social support for each parent–child relationship indicator. For the third aim, we added an interaction with race to each term. Race was coded as a three-level categorical variable for which White was the omitted reference group (unless otherwise noted). Significant interactions involving race were probed by examining contrasts to determine differences between racial/ethnic groups. To further understand within-race variability, we also tested the effects of residential instability and/or social support separately by race group when there were significant interaction terms. Table 2 presents MLM results. Aims 1 and 2 were tested in Model 1; Aim 3 was tested in Models 2 and 3.

Given that prior research shows differences between boys and girls in parent–child relationship qualities (Kerig, Cowan, & Cowan, 1993), we tested child gender as a potential moderator of all patterns of association. These findings yielded no significant effects, so we dropped interactions with child gender from final models.

Residential Instability and Parent–Child Relationship Qualities

To address our first aim, we tested the main effect of residential instability for parent–child warmth and conflict (Table 2, Model 1). The link between residential instability and parent–child warmth was nonsignificant. There was a significant, positive association between residential instability and parent–child conflict, signifying that parents in unstable neighborhoods experienced greater conflict with offspring.

The Moderating Role of Family Social Support

For the second aim, we tested two-way interactions between residential instability and family social support for warmth and conflict (Table 2, Model 1). Findings revealed a significant interaction between residential instability and family social support for parent–

child warmth. To understand whether family support compensated for instability, the interaction was probed using simple slopes procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991). Specifically, we examined the role of social support at high (1 *SD* above the mean) versus low (1 *SD* below the mean) levels of residential instability. As Figure 1 shows, the effect of social support was significant and positive for warmth for families in highly unstable neighborhoods ($\gamma = .59, SE = .15, p < .01$). For families in more stable neighborhoods, the association between social support and parent-child warmth was nonsignificant ($\gamma = -.07, SE = .15, n.s.$). Thus, findings supported a compensatory model in that receiving social support from family somewhat offset the negative association between residential instability and parent-child warmth. The interaction between residential instability and support for parent-child conflict was nonsignificant.

Variation by Race/Ethnicity

To address the third aim, we tested whether associations between residential instability, social support, and parent-child relationships varied according to race/ethnicity (Table 2, Model 2). We first examined racial/ethnic variation in the main effect of residential instability for parent-child relationship qualities by testing two-way interactions of residential instability and race. There was significant between-race variation for Hispanic compared to White parents, such that Hispanic parents experienced a significant reduction in warmth in unstable neighborhoods, compared to White parents living in similar neighborhoods. There were no significant differences between Black and White families. Alternating the dummy coding so the reference group was Black families showed no significant difference between Black and Hispanic families, ($\gamma = -.22, SE = .14, n.s.$). Within race groups, residential instability was marginal for warmth for Hispanic families ($\gamma = -.20, SE = .12, p < .10$), but not for Blacks ($\gamma = .07, SE = .12, n.s.$) or Whites ($\gamma = .12, SE = .12, n.s.$). Therefore, residing in an unstable neighborhood was associated with somewhat reduced parent-child warmth for Hispanics (full results for within-group analysis are shown in Appendix B).

The association between residential instability and parent-child conflict also varied according to race. Between races, residential instability differed significantly for Hispanic families as compared White families, and for Black families as compared to White families; there was no significant difference between Hispanics and Blacks (reference group) ($\gamma = -.05, SE = .28, n.s.$). Specifically, compared to Whites in similar neighborhoods, residential instability was significant and positively linked to parent-child conflict in Hispanic and Black families, such that living in unstable neighborhoods was related to heightened levels of parent-child conflict. Within-group, residential instability was marginally related to heightened conflict for Hispanic ($\gamma = .39, SE = .23, p < .10$) and for Black ($\gamma = .39, SE = .21, p < .10$) families, but not for White families ($\gamma = -.47, SE = .30, n.s.$). Thus, it appears that the detriments of residential instability for parenting were limited to non-Whites.

In the final model, we examined whether the moderating role of social support on links between instability and relationship qualities varied by race. As shown in Model 3 of Table 2, the three-way interaction involving residential instability, social support, and each racial/ethnic group was nonsignificant for parent-child warmth, meaning that the compensatory

role of family social support was similar for parent–child warmth in families of all racial/ethnic backgrounds. The three-way interaction involving residential instability, social support, and Hispanic (vs. White) was significant for parent–child conflict, and for Hispanic versus Black parents (reference group) ($\gamma = -1.86$, $SE = .73$, $p < .05$); there was no significant difference for Black versus White parents. Within-group residential instability was moderated by social support for Hispanic families only ($\gamma = -2.16$, $SE = .61$, $p < .01$). The interaction between residential instability and social support was nonsignificant for conflict in Black ($\gamma = -.31$, $SE = .38$, *n.s.*) and White ($\gamma = .87$, $SE = .65$, *n.s.*) families.

We used procedures outlined earlier (Aiken & West, 1991) to probe the interaction for Hispanics. As Figure 2 shows, for Hispanic families in more unstable neighborhoods, the effect of social support for conflict was significant and negative ($\gamma = -3.21$, $SE = .55$, $p < .01$); for Hispanic families in more stable neighborhoods, the association between social support and conflict was nonsignificant ($\gamma = -1.02$, $SE = .86$, *n.s.*). Thus, for Hispanic families only, social support played a compensatory role in its association with reduced parent–child conflict who lacked residential stability.

Discussion

Guided by a social disorganization framework, this study has examined associations among neighborhood residential instability, family social support, and parent–child relationship qualities in a diverse urban sample. This research is among the first to our knowledge to investigate the direct and interactive roles of residential instability as a feature of neighborhoods that can undermine parent–child relationships. Further, this work extends what is known about racial/ethnic variation in family- and community-level risks and resources. In general, findings supported our hypotheses in that residential instability was related to lower parent–child warmth and heightened conflict, and findings varied according to racial/ethnic identity. Our findings also have extended research on the connections between neighborhoods and families by showing that family-level support modified the association between residential instability and parent–child relationship qualities, and these associations, too, differed somewhat by families' race/ethnicity. In the following, we review findings in detail, directing attention to the ways this study advances knowledge of the associations among residential instability, family social support, racial/ethnic identity, and parent–child warmth and conflict for families living in urban neighborhoods.

Residential Instability and Parent–Child Relationship Qualities

In keeping with the understanding that extrafamilial contexts can play a role in parenting behaviors, there were several significant associations between residential instability and parent–child warmth and conflict. Expanding the scope of research that identifies residential instability as a factor that disrupts social harmony and mutual trust, and can undermine individual well-being (Ross et al., 2000; Sampson, 1991), living in a neighborhood with high residential turnover was related to more negative parent–child relationship qualities. Consistent with our expectation that the patterns of association would vary by race/ethnicity, the risks of living in an unstable neighborhood were most evident for non-White groups as compared to Whites and also within race/ethnicity; in contrast, there were no significant

effects of residential instability for warmth or conflict within White families. Specifically, residential instability emerged as negatively associated with parent–child warmth for Hispanic families and was related to heightened conflict within Hispanic and Black families. These patterns of ethnic variation appear to suggest that non-White families rely more heavily on neighborhood resources for parenting support, and when those resources are unavailable, relationship qualities suffer to a greater extent.

Also of note, findings suggest that living in an unstable neighborhood was a detriment to multiple dimensions of parenting and relationship dynamics for Hispanic families, while the role of residential instability was limited to increased conflict for Blacks. Thus, it appears that residential instability is a more pervasive risk factor for Hispanic families than for other groups. Several questions arise that warrant further empirical inquiry: Are Hispanic parents relying on neighborhood social resources to a greater extent because they lack proximal ties with extended family? Could this be a reflection of immigrant standing, whereby Hispanic families have fewer social resources and are more vulnerable to instability in the neighborhood? Our models accounted for neighborhood-level immigrant concentration; however, a further examination of the racial/ethnic makeup of one’s neighborhood as a moderating factor is certainly warranted as a future direction of research.

Taken together, these findings provide initial evidence that neighborhood characteristics are linked with family relationship qualities in a greater and more influential manner for parenting behaviors among non-White ethnic minorities. Moreover, results extend the scope of research on neighborhoods and individual adjustment, and they advance what is known about neighborhood social structures for parent–child relationships.

The Moderating Role of Family Social Support

Family social support was a significant moderator for the links between residential instability and each relationship outcome. In line with expectations, findings supported a compensatory model. Specifically, for associations between residential instability and warmth, social support offset or compensated for the negative link between high instability and warmth among families who lived in less stable neighborhoods; this finding was evident regardless of racial/ethnic identity.

Along the same lines, findings supported a compensatory model for parent–child conflict; however, this effect was evident only within Hispanic families and for Hispanics relative to other groups. Specifically, for Hispanics, receiving high levels of family support counteracted the negative relationship between residential instability and conflict; instead, parent–child conflict was lower for those who lived in unstable neighborhoods but received higher-than-average social support from family, compared to families in unstable neighborhoods who lacked social support. Given other demographic processes of chain migration and ethnic-enclave settlement, it is possible that, on average, kin are less spatially dispersed within Hispanic families than non-Hispanic White or Black families are. Thus, for Hispanic families, residential instability may signify both the presence of unfamiliar neighbors and the lack of nearby family-based ties. More research is needed to understand how family-based ties are spatially distributed for families of different racial/ethnic backgrounds living in more and less stable neighborhoods. Although very few data sets

include information about the geographical distribution of family-based resources, this is a worthy direction for future research to consider.

Given these possibilities, an important next step is to identify the mechanisms through which social support from family confers benefits to parents who lack other forms of social resources. More generally, these findings advance the literature on family and neighborhood dynamics by showing that social resources can be a positive force for families living in unstable neighborhoods.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

This study expanded what is known about neighborhood and family contexts for parent–child relationships for families of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. We overcame several limitations of prior work. First, research on the links between neighborhood processes and family relationships is limited; we examined both direct associations and cross-level interactions between neighborhood and more proximal forms of social support for parent–child relationship qualities. Findings demonstrate that demographic neighborhood characteristics like residential instability are associated with family-level dynamics. Unlike other studies that examine neighborhood processes (Byrnes & Miller, 2012), our data on family relationships and neighborhood residential instability came from separate sources, which helps to reduce reporter bias. In addition, the sample reflects the experiences of a diverse urban sample who varied in background characteristics such as race/ethnicity, SES, and family structure.

The patterns of racial/ethnic variation illuminate between-group differences in the role of family and neighborhood processes that warrant further attention. For one, both residential instability and family support were related to parent–child conflict for Hispanic families, and family support appeared to compensate for living in an unstable neighborhood among Hispanics only. Together, these findings suggest that Hispanic parents may be especially susceptible to these outside factors. Further research should consider the mechanisms by which different risks and resources are related to parenting in Hispanic families and how they vary within group. In addition, residential instability was significantly linked to conflict only for non-White minority families. This finding is in line with prior research that minorities may rely more heavily on community supports as a result of social isolation from other resources (Keith et al., 2000). An important next step is to examine the composition of neighborhoods and the processes that transmit residential instability effects to parenting behaviors.

Despite these advances, this study is not without limitations. First, our use of cross-sectional data precludes an understanding of how changes in neighborhood composition are related to changes in parent–child relationships. In addition, given how the measure of residential instability was constructed, we do not know the full extent to which families are engaged versus disengaged with their neighbors. Further, our measures of parent–child relationship quality are based on different data collection methods, which may contribute to some differences in the pattern of findings. Although this article has provided an important first look into neighborhood residential instability and family social support as factors that work together in association with parenting behaviors, much work remains to be done on

understanding the mechanisms by which these and other extrafamilial factors are related to parenting in urban contexts.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study applies a novel approach to understanding how residential instability is associated with parent–child relationships and for whom. In an era marked by increasing residential turnover (Callis & Kresin, 2015; Kingsley et al., 2012), the findings presented here may have increasing relevance for families in the United States. As described in the previous pages, future research should examine the processes linking residential instability, social support, and parent–child relationships. These include the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses of both parents and children to residential instability and (in)adequate social support, and ecological processes at the neighborhood level that are mutually linked to both residential turnover and parent–child relationships.

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Appendix A. Measurement Items for Parent–Child Warmth, Parent–Child Conflict, and Social Support

	Range	
	Min.	Max.
<i>Parent–Child Warmth (HOME Scale)^a</i>		
During your visit, did your parent or primary caregiver...		
...talk with you at least twice (beyond introduction and correction)?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...answer your questions or requests verbally?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...encourage you to contribute to the conversation?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...mention a particular skill, strength, or accomplishment of yours?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...praise your qualities or behavior at least twice?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...address you using a diminutive?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...convey positive feelings in his/her voice?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...caress, kiss, cuddle, or hug you at least once?	No (0)	Yes (1)
...show a positive emotional response to praise of you offer by the interviewer?	No (0)	Yes (1)
<i>Parent–Child Conflict (Parent–Child Version of Conflict Tactics Scale)^b</i>		
In the past year, how many times have you had a problem with your parent/primary caregiver and you...		
...insulted or swore at him/her?	Never (0)	More than 20 (6)
...sulked or refused to talk about an issue?	Never (0)	More than 20 (6)
...stomped out of the room, house, or yard?	Never (0)	More than 20 (6)
...do or say something to spite him/her?	Never (0)	More than 20 (6)
...threatened to hit or throw something at him/her?	Never (0)	More than 20 (6)
<i>Social Support (Provision of Social Relations)^c</i>		

	Range	
	Min.	Max.
How much do you agree with the following statement?		
My family will always be there for me. ^d	Very true (1)	Not true (3)
Sometimes, I'm not sure I can rely on my family.	Very true (1)	Not true (3)
My family tells me they think I'm valuable. ^d	Very true (1)	Not true (3)
My family has confidence in me. ^d	Very true (1)	Not true (3)
My family helps me find solutions to problems. ^d	Very true (1)	Not true (3)
I know my family will always stand by me. ^d	Very true (1)	Not true (3)

^aScale was created by summing items (scored 0–1).

^bScale was created by summing items (scored 0–6).

^cScale was created by taking the mean of items.

^dQuestion was reverse scored.

Appendix B. Within-Group MLM Coefficients Predicting Parent–Child Warmth and Conflict

	Hispanic		Black		White	
	Warmth	Conflict	Warmth	Conflict	Warmth	Conflict
	γ (SE)	γ (SE)	γ (SE)	γ (SE)	γ (SE)	γ (SE)
Intercept	5.89 (.31) **	3.85 (.65) **	5.82 (.28) **	5.77 (.65) **	5.68 (.40) **	5.99 (.70) **
Family Characteristics						
Child age	–.10 (.02) **	.06 (.04)	–.08 (.02) **	.17 (.05) **	–.10 (.03) **	.17 (.08) *
Child sex (male)	–.19 (.12)	.62 (.27) *	–.23 (.13) †	.60 (.32) †	–.26 (.16)	.37 (.47)
Primary caregiver (PC)	.63 (.20) **	1.04 (.43) *	–.07 (.19)	.40 (.48)	.57 (.25) *	.78 (.74)
PC age	.01 (.01)	–.06 (.02) *	–.00 (.01)	–.04 (.02) †	–.01 (.02)	.01 (.04)
Household income	.09 (.04) *	–.09 (.10)	.14 (.04) **	–.07 (.10)	.15 (.06) **	.06 (.16)
Marital status (married)	.31 (.14) *	–.08 (.32)	.37 (.16) *	–1.27 (.40) **	.10 (.22)	–2.49 (.63) **
Education (high school)	.07 (.15)	.31 (.31)	.12 (.16)	–.11 (.39)	.14 (.23)	.61 (.65)
Family size	–.10 (.03) **	–.10 (.08)	–.08 (.03) **	.06 (.07)	–.20 (.06) **	.10 (.16)
Foreign born	–.09 (.15)	–.59 (.34) †	–.08 (.43)	–2.18 (1.12) *	–.15 (.25)	–.03 (.70)
PC depression	.22 (.21)	1.78 (.46) **	.49 (.20) *	1.18 (.50) *	.06 (.24)	.57 (.71)
Neighborhood mobility	.00 (.01)	–.01 (.03)	.00 (.01)	–.01 (.02)	–.01 (.01)	–.03 (.04)
Social support	.13 (.20)	–1.08 (.43) **	.34 (.17) *	–1.93 (.42) **	.22 (.22)	–2.43 (.63) **
Neighborhood Characteristics						
Residential instability	–.21 (.13) †	.39 (.23) †	.07 (.12)	.39 (.21) †	.12 (.12)	–.47 (.30)
Concentrated disadvantage	.22 (.19)	–.36 (.33)	–.16 (.18)	.30 (.31)	.39 (.27)	.49 (.67)
Immigrant concentration	–.02 (.13)	.02 (.22)	.03 (.14)	–.21 (.25)	–.59 (.23) *	–.46 (.58)
Cross-Level Interaction						
Residential instability × Social support	.50 (.29) †	–2.16 (.61) **	.46 (.15) **	–.31 (.37)	.00 (.22)	.87 (.65)

Note. All continuous variables centered at the grand mean. Reference group is married, biological mothers, who have a high school degree or higher.

[†]
*
**

 $p < .10$.
 $p < .05$.
 $p < .01$.

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Figure 1.
Moderating Role of Family Social Support on Residential Instability for Parent–Child Warmth.

Note. Bars reflect fitted predicted values. Controls include child age, child sex, PC, PC age, household income, marital status, education, family size, foreign-born status, race, PC depression, neighborhood mobility, concentrated poverty, immigrant concentration.

Figure 2.
Moderating Role of Family Social Support on Residential Instability for Parent–Child Conflict in Hispanic Families.

Note. Bars reflect fitted predicted values. Controls include child age, child sex, PC, PC age, household income, marital status, education, family size, foreign-born status, race, PC depression, neighborhood mobility, concentrated poverty, immigrant concentration.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations (SDs), and Frequencies for Study Variables

	Mean (SD)	Percentage
Family-Level Variables		
Parent–child warmth	6.58 (2.14)	
Parent–child conflict	5.24 (5.09)	
Social support	2.69 (.38)	
PC age	37.19 (8.07)	
Biological mother PC		85%
HS education or higher		55%
Child age	10.28 (3.36)	
Child sex (male)		50%
Household income	4.02 (1.90)	
Family size	5.36 (1.99)	
Married		55%
PC depression		11%
Family residential tenure	5.99 (6.69)	
Race/ethnicity		
Foreign born		38%
Race/ethnicity ^a		
Hispanic		47%
Black		36%
White		17%
Neighborhood-Level Variables		
Residential instability	.02 (.96)	
Concentrated disadvantage	–.01 (.72)	
Immigrant concentration	.42 (1.05)	

Note. PC = primary caregiver.

^aPC and child shared the same race/ethnicity in 98% of cases.

Table 2
MLM Coefficients for Residential Instability and Social Support Predicting Parent–Child Warmth and Conflict

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Warmth	Conflict	$\gamma(SE)$	Warmth	Conflict	$\gamma(SE)$	Warmth	Conflict	$\gamma(SE)$
Intercept	5.58 (.22)**	5.69 (.50)**		5.81 (.22)**	5.68 (.49)**		5.58 (.22)**	5.69 (.49)**	
Family Characteristics									
Child age	-.10 (.01)**	.12 (.03)**		-.10 (.01)**	.12 (.03)**		-.10 (.01)**	.12 (.03)**	
Child sex (male)	-.22 (.08)**	.56 (.19)**		-.22 (.08)**	.55 (.19)**		-.22 (.08)**	.55 (.19)**	
PC	.32 (.12)**	.66 (.29)*		.35 (.12)**	.63 (.29)*		.34 (.12)**	.63 (.29)*	
PC age	.00 (.01)	-.04 (.01)**		.00 (.01)	-.04 (.01)**		.00 (.01)	-.04 (.01)**	
Household income	.13 (.03)**	-.09 (.06)		.13 (.03)**	-.08 (.06)		.13 (.03)**	-.07 (.06)	
Marital status (married)	.30 (.09)**	-.84 (.23)**		.30 (.10)**	-.84 (.23)**		.30 (.10)**	-.85 (.23)**	
Education (high school)	.08 (.10)	.20 (.23)		.08 (.10)	.20 (.23)		.08 (.10)	.19 (.23)	
Family size	-.10 (.02)**	-.01 (.05)		-.10 (.02)**	-.01 (.05)		-.10 (.02)**	-.00 (.05)	
Foreign born	-.08 (.12)	-.71 (.29)*		-.06 (.12)	-.70 (.29)*		-.06 (.12)	-.67 (.29)*	
Hispanic	.28 (.14)*	-.54 (.35)		.35 (.15)*	-.55 (.35) [†]		.36 (.16)*	-.66 (.36) [†]	
Black	-.11 (.17)	-.35 (.37)		-.08 (.17)	-.33 (.37)		-.08 (.17)	-.33 (.37)	
PC depression	.30 (.13)*	1.28 (.31)**		.31 (.13)*	1.28 (.31)**		.30 (.13)*	1.29 (.31)**	
Neighborhood mobility ³	-.00 (.01)	-.01 (.02)		.00 (.01)	-.01 (.02)		.00 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	
Social support	.26 (.11)*	-1.97 (.26)**		.21 (.24)	-2.64 (.58)**		.16 (.24)	-2.49 (.58)**	
Social support × Hispanic				-.03 (.29)	1.14 (.71)		-.03 (.30)	1.54 (.73)*	
Social support × Black				.13 (.29)	.55 (.69)		.19 (.29)	.44 (.70)	
Neighborhood Characteristics									
Residential instability	-.00 (.08)	.23 (.13) [†]		.13 (.13)	-.36 (.26)		.13 (.13)	-.40 (.26)	
Concentrated disadvantage	-.02 (.10)	.08 (.19)		-.04 (.11)	.10 (.19)		-.04 (.11)	.12 (.19)	
Immigrant concentration	.01 (.08)	-.17 (.14)		.01 (.08)	-.20 (.14)		.01 (.08)	-.17 (.14)	
Cross-Level Interactions									

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Warmth	Conflict	Warmth	Conflict	Warmth	Conflict
	$\gamma(SE)$	$\gamma(SE)$	$\gamma(SE)$	$\gamma(SE)$	$\gamma(SE)$	$\gamma(SE)$
Residential instability $\times$ Social support	.34 (.11)**	-.38 (.27)	.37 (.12)**	-.46 (.28)	.01 (.26)	.73 (.62)
Residential instability $\times$ Hispanic			-.30 (.15)*	.62 (.34)*	-.32 (.15)*	.76 (.34)*
Residential instability $\times$ Black			-.10 (.14)	.77 (.30)**	-.10 (.14)	.81 (.30)**
Residential instability $\times$ Social support $\times$ Hispanic					.49 (.37)	-2.90 (.89)**
Residential instability $\times$ Social support $\times$ Black					.45 (.30)	-1.04 (.72)
Fit Statistics						
AIC	11,290	16,506	11,291	16,503	11,291	16,492
BIC	11,295	16,511	11,296	16,508	11,296	16,497
χ^2	65.02	4.69	64.71	3.43	64.62	3.22

Note. PC = primary caregiver, AIC = Akaike information criterion, BIC = Bayesian information criterion. All continuous variables lefted at the grand mean. Reference group is White, married, biological mothers, who have a high school degree or higher.

[†] $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.