

Chapter 2

Ethnic Variation in Poverty and Parenting Stress

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Introduction

Poverty, misery or want is a phantom with a thousand faces that vents its fury primarily among the majority of people who live in what is referred to as the Third World and among the pockets of poor people living on the fringes of the large industrialized cities... (Santiago Barquín, 2001, p. 127)

Given poverty rates in the USA, and that 33% of the nation's poor are children (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2015), poor families are hardly on the fringes. Santiago Barquín's words speak to the indiscriminate nature of poverty—it does not differentiate between color or creed when venting its fury. Living in poverty affects not only the individual, but also every domain associated with the individual's life. An important question that has received limited research attention is how poverty affects parenting stress. We extend this question by including racial and ethnic minority groups who are disproportionately affected by poverty in the USA. Together, our chapter focuses on poverty and parenting stress in families from varied racial and ethnic backgrounds. Our discussion begins with a review of the Family Stress Model (FSM) of economic disadvantage, which is the main framework used for understanding the relationship between poverty and parenting behaviors. The bulk of the chapter is situated in the poverty and parenting literature, paying special attention to factors salient to racial and ethnic families, such as the

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neighborhood environment. We also broaden our discussion to include families that sustain livelihoods across borders, and highlight the economic pressures that traverse national lines to exert themselves upon migrant parents. In doing so, a neglected group is incorporated into the literature on parenting stress.

The Family Stress Model (FSM)

The FSM (Conger & Conger, 2008; Conger & Donnellan, 2007) guides research on the relationship between poverty and parenting. The basic tenets of the FSM are covered adeptly in several review articles (Conger & Conger, 2008; Conger & Donnellan 2007; Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2011; McLoyd, Mistry, & Hardaway, 2014) and so will only be described briefly here. The FSM suggests that economic hardship creates economic pressure, or stress, which alters parenting behaviors. Economic hardship consists of such factors as low family income, high debt to asset ratio, and adverse financial events. These economic conditions change parents' financial resources and ability to maintain their households. The result is an increase in parents' psychological distress that is positively associated with family conflict and harsh, insensitive parenting practices. Although parenting stress is not explicitly stated in the FSM, parenting stress is clearly implicated in the process. Consider for a moment the financial resources needed to manage a household. On the one hand, adequate financial resources provide parents with the ability to care for their children, whereas lack of, or limited, financial resources creates economic pressure that stresses parents.

The United States Federal Poverty Threshold guideline for a family of four in 2015 was \$24,250 (Burwell, 2015). Families with annual incomes less than 100% of the poverty guideline (i.e., less than \$24,250) are considered poor. Families with annual incomes between 100 and 200% of the poverty line (i.e., between \$24,250 and approximately \$48,258) are vulnerable to difficulties associated with economic strain and are often considered "near poor" (Huston & Bentley, 2010). The percentage of children in poverty doubles when the inclusion criterion is extended to include near-poor families. In 2013, 15.8 million (22%) children lived in poverty and 31.8 million (44%) lived in low-income households (Jiang et al., 2015). Parenting stress occurs when parenting demands are greater than the resources available to contend with them (Deater-Deckard, 2004). The imbalance between parenting demands and available resources may arouse feelings of insecurity for parents and challenge their identity as successful parents. The bidirectional relation between parenting stress and parental efficacy, and specifically the evidence linking parenting stress to lower parental self-efficacy, is explored by Crnic & Ross in Chap. 11 of this volume. However, the context of poverty produces its own parenting stress that challenges parental self-efficacy.

Poverty is a powerful driver of parenting stress because it widens the demand-resource gap by diminishing the pool of financial resources while the demands remain relatively stable, that is to say they do not diminish accordingly. Having to

prioritize rent over medical insurance, or not having money for children's school trips, may build feelings of worthlessness. Mistry, Lowe, Benner, and Chien (2008) showed that parents are not only stressed by their inability to meet basic needs, but also stressed by their shortcomings in providing additional or "extra" needs (e.g., holiday presents). The authors elucidate a critical psychological difference between "making ends meet and meeting expectations," suggesting parents appraise successful parenting in ways that transcend the focus on providing basic resources.

Poverty rates vary significantly across racial and ethnic groups with some groups facing greater disadvantage than others. In the USA, 65% of Black children and 63% of Hispanic children live in low-income households, while only 31% of White and Asian children are from low-income households, (Jiang et al., 2015). Given the variation in poverty levels across racial and ethnic families, it is important to know whether poverty is expressed similarly across racial and ethnic groups, or whether there are differences among them that create distinctions in parenting outcomes.

The strength of the FSM lies in its ability to position economic strain in such a way that, conceivably, even families above the poverty line may experience economic strain. Yet, it clearly demonstrates the susceptibility of poor parents to economic pressure, or, for our purposes, parenting stress. There is also variation in parenting and child outcomes within low-income families. The FSM provides a parsimonious explanation for this heterogeneity by highlighting potential stress-buffering resources that may help some low-income families circumvent the deleterious effects of poverty.

What must also be noted is that throughout this chapter we review studies that show the effect of poverty on parenting behavior and parenting stress. Recall that parenting behaviors are part of the FSM, while parenting stress is only implicated. Economic resources impact parenting behaviors, and parenting stress is affected by parenting behavior (Abidin, 1992). Therefore, although they are separate constructs, parenting stress and parenting behaviors are indeed related; a greater number of parental stressors challenge parenting behavior (see Crnic & Ross, Chap. 11).

Extending the Family Stress Model

The FSM was developed in the context of poor, rural, White families (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). More needs to be known about the appropriateness of the model for other racial and ethnic groups. Recent scholarship has moved toward this end. Some have found success with European American, African American, and Spanish-speaking Hispanic parents, but not with Asian or English-speaking Hispanic parents (Iruka, LaForett, & Odom, 2012). Others have demonstrated the model's international applicability with a sample of Finnish parents (Solantaus, Leinonen, & Punamäki, 2004), parents from Hong Kong (Lam, 2011), and Chinese parents (Sun, Li, Zhang, Bao, & Wang, 2015). The model has been successfully replicated with African American parents from rural towns and small cities (Conger et al., 2002). The only noteworthy discrepancy relevant here is that depressive

mood, which was higher in the African American population of parents, did not directly lead to low-nurturing or uninvolved parenting as was the case for European American parents.

Even though aspects of FSM were generally replicated among Mexican American parents, some important deviations were found (Parke et al., 2004). In Parke et al.'s sample, income was a weaker predictor of economic pressure for Mexican parents compared to European American parents, and Mexican American children were more greatly impacted by parental conflict than European American children. Another study was able to replicate the model in a sample of Chinese parents (Benner & Kim, 2010), but there were considerable differences between foreign-born and native parents, and between mothers and fathers. Foreign-born Chinese mothers reported greater economic pressure and higher depressive symptoms than their native counterparts. In the context of economic pressures, Chinese fathers were warmer and more nurturing, whereas mothers were more hostile and utilized coercive parenting practices.

Importantly, such findings highlight the role of culture in altering the FSM's theoretical constructs. Extending scholarship on poverty and parenting stress to racial and ethnic minority groups will be beneficial because previously overlooked factors in the relationship between poverty and family stress may be illuminated. For example, how are the mechanisms different in multi-caregiver or multi-generational households? A recent study by Landers-Potts et al. (2015) represents an effort to fulfill this gap. They examined the FSM in an African American sample with primary and secondary caregivers. Previous replications of the FSM with African American parents consisted of caregivers who were mostly romantically involved (Conger et al., 2002), which ignores the diversity in parenting arrangements that can vary greatly, especially when we begin to consider ethnic variability cross culturally, both domestically and internationally. Landers-Potts et al. (2015) showed that the impact of economic pressure on parenting behavior was stronger when caregiver conflict was high. When caregiver conflict was low, the effect was not significant. Such findings highlight the influence of family conflict and demonstrate that family conflict extends beyond typical inter-partner accounts. The authors also found that the effects of economic pressure were sustained over time. What would further advance these findings is information on whether the interaction changes across caregiver types (e.g., romantic partners versus extended kin) and also whether cultural background moderates such variability in parenting arrangements on children.

Another extension of the FSM is the repositioning of children. As it stands, children are given passive treatment within the FSM; they are acted on rather than actors themselves. However, in some families, particularly racial and ethnic minority families, children serve as secondary caregivers, and some even contribute to family income (Falicov, 2001; Orellana, 2001; Song, 1997). Pooling labor and resources are key household economic strategies for immigrant families. Moreover, considering multi-generational immigrant households, the second generation and beyond often act as bridges between first-generation immigrants and their adopted community.

Orellana (2001) showed that Hispanic immigrant children see themselves as caretakers for younger siblings and helpers around the house. When parents have to work longer hours, children take on additional responsibilities that not only affect their own outcomes, but also change their role in the family. Additionally, in her seminal study with Chinese owners of takeaway businesses in Britain, Song (1997) showed that children provide considerable help to the family business. In these families, there is an understanding that family members should help out as part of the “family work contract,” which incites a desire and obligation to help among children. Another duty children perform is serving as language mediators for parents who are not proficient in English. This requires that children are heavily involved in business meetings and assist parents with day-to-day activities, which can foster dependence between parents and children. These kinds of familial arrangements position children, who may experience difficulties navigating their roles, at the center of family dynamics. Together, these studies show a need for children’s role in the family to be reconceptualized.

Moving beyond a passive role for children would lead to their inclusion in family conflict and their relation to parenting stress (see also Finegood & Blair, Chap. 8). One noteworthy study incorporated adolescent evaluations of family economic circumstances into the FSM (Delgado, Killoren, & Updegraff, 2013). In a sample of Mexican American families, mother and father ratings of economic hardship significantly predicted adolescents’ ratings of the same two years later. Adolescents’ perceived economic hardship was negatively associated with parental warmth and positively associated with parental conflict. These findings illustrate that children are keenly aware of their family’s economic situation. However, one shortcoming of this innovative study is that adolescents’ perception of family’s economic situation and parental warmth was related only to their own adjustment, and not to the model’s other constituent parts. A worthwhile line of inquiry concerns the relation between children’s knowledge of economic hardship and parenting stress.

These articles represent initial efforts to utilize more diverse samples in studies with the FSM and also embody an attempt to extend the FSM in ways that are more culturally appropriate for the diversity of family configurations. More work is needed on culturally specific factors that may alter the relationship between poverty and family stress. In the forthcoming section, we review the extant literature on poverty and parenting with specific attention given to studies with diverse samples in order to tease apart some of these factors.

Parenting in the Context of Poverty Across Racial and Ethnic Families

Race and ethnicity are predictors of income status, particularly for African American and Hispanic families (Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007). Research shows that Caucasian mothers fare better economically than other racial and ethnic groups; they have twice the income, are more likely to be homeowners

and credit cardholders, and possess other financial assets (Nam, Wikoff, & Sherraden, 2013). Even though Caucasian mothers tend to achieve higher levels of education, African American mothers have the same, or higher, rates of employment. On the other hand, Hispanic mothers are least likely to be employed and achieve the least amount of education (Gershoff et al., 2007; Raver, Gershoff, & Aber, 2007). Based on these differences, how do minority groups compare to their White counterparts in regard to poverty and parenting stress?

One study found that although economic resources contribute to differences in parenting stress between White, Black, and Hispanic mothers, noneconomic factors were also a significant source of variance. For example, much of the 41% difference in parenting stress between Caucasian and African American mothers owes to high depression scores among Black mothers. If depression scores were equivalent, the difference in parenting stress would decrease by 19%. Similarly, nativity status accounted for a significant portion of the 63% difference in parenting stress between Hispanic and Caucasian mothers. If the number of native born among Hispanics were the same as Whites, then 30% of the difference in parenting stress would disappear (Nam et al., 2013).

In a diverse sample, researchers found that economic hardship, such as difficulty in paying bills and cutbacks in material spending, was significantly associated with parenting stress for mothers and fathers (Williams, Cheadle, & Goosby, 2015). Another study examined several models that linked family income and material hardship to child cognitive skills and socio-emotional competence through parent investment, stress, and behavior (Raver et al., 2007). Best-fitting models for three racial groups were compared, with high similarity found. For White, Black, and Hispanic families, higher family income corresponded to greater parental investment and less material hardship. Material hardship is characterized by food insecurity, inadequate medical care, residential instability, and financial problems. For each group, material hardship predicted elevated parent stress and lower parent investment.

Nonetheless, there were some notable differences among the three groups. First, higher material hardship was more strongly associated with higher parenting stress for Black families. Second, high parent stress was more strongly related to cold parenting for Black and Hispanic parents. Additionally, there were model-specific pathway differences. For example, family income was associated with parent stress only for White parents and was positively associated with positive parenting behaviors only for Black families. Material hardship was positively related to positive parenting behaviors for Black parents, negatively related to positive parenting behaviors for White parents, and had no impact on the parenting behaviors of Hispanic parents. Hispanic families showed some divergence from their Black and White counterparts. That neither family income nor material hardship impacted positive parenting behaviors for Hispanic parents suggests that economic factors may not always impact parenting behaviors for these families. Further research is necessary to unpack why this may be the case.

On the other hand, socioeconomic variables do impact parenting stress among Hispanic families. One recent study teased apart the structural and cultural factors

contributing to parenting stress among US-born and foreign-born mothers of various ethnic origins (Nomaguchi & House, 2013; see also Nomaguchi & Milkie, Chap. 3). When controlling for structural characteristics (income, employment, and education) among foreign-born Hispanic mothers, structural factors accounted for nearly 100% of their maternal parenting stress; income and English language proficiency emerged as chief sources of maternal parenting stress. Parenting stress decreased by 32.6% for US-born Black mothers after structural factors were taken into account; single mother status and income were the most significant factors affecting maternal parenting stress for this group. Maternal parenting stress among foreign-born Asian mothers decreased by 24.1% when accounting for structural factors. Similar to foreign-born Hispanic mothers, income and English were significant determinants.

From these findings, there appears to be heterogeneity among the specific factors contributing to parenting stress for each racial and ethnic group. For example, Hispanic parents are affected more by structural economic factors than White and Black parents. For Black families, a number of noneconomic factors (like depression) affect parenting stress, and these factors are the missing mechanisms interceding between economic hardship and parenting stress. In the following section, we concentrate on specific dimensions of poverty to further assess differences in parenting stress across racial-ethnic groups.

Dimensions of Poverty and Parental Stress

When we talk about poverty, it is tempting to think only in terms of income levels. An additional value of the FSM is that it articulates the various kinds of economic hardships that influence parenting—not only income levels (Conger & Conger, 2008; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Conger et al., 2011). In fact, low-income status is not always sufficient in creating parenting stress. In some cases, income has little to no effect on parenting stress (Gershoff et al., 2007; Gonzales et al., 2011; Nam et al., 2013; Zhang, Eamon, & Zhan, 2015). For instance, Gershoff et al. (2007) found that income captured only 3% of the variance in parenting stress, whereas 35% was accounted for by material hardship.

One reason for this difference in explanatory power is the argument that economic pressure carries a psychological dimension that absolute income level does not necessarily capture. That is, it may be the perception of economic hardship as well as feelings of relative deprivation or social comparison that drives the relationship between poverty and parenting stress. For example, in a sample of mostly African American and Hispanic mother from inner-city Milwaukee, Mistry and Lowe (2006) found that these mothers ascribed different meanings to their economic challenges according to the type of expenditure. A different psychological interpretation and emotional response was associated with balancing household accounts, spending on children, and large purchases. Keeping up with bill payments

was associated with neutral feelings of satisfaction, spending on children created positive feelings, and purchasing expensive items was a source of pride.

In a recent study, Puff and Renk (2014) explored different aspects of economic disadvantage and assessed their relation to parenting stress and behaviors. Economic disadvantage included variables such as financial cutbacks, financial concerns, negative economic events, constraints on making ends meet, and constraints on satisfying material needs. With the exception of constraints on making ends meet, all factors were significantly related to parenting stress for both low- and middle-income families. This harkens back to the earlier distinction between “basic” and “extra” provisions, suggesting that making ends meet may not relate to parenting stress because it is not part of the framework for successful parenting.

Both these studies represent initial steps to capture the diversity of economic factors at play in the lives of poor parents. However, additional work would further advance our knowledge. In the first study, Mistry and Lowe (2006) did not explore whether psychological interpretations and emotional responses to household finances had racial or ethnic differences. The value of doing so would be to shed some light on how money is viewed and used across various racial and ethnic minority families. In the second study, although the sample was diverse, the majority of the participants were Caucasian, and analyses on racial or ethnic differences were not conducted (Punk & Renk, 2014). A replication that extends this work by addressing racial and ethnic differences would be useful. The potential linkages between cultural values and the salience of social comparisons, or perceived social status, may also warrant further scrutiny. The relevance of immigrant generational status can be readily imagined in this context as well. For instance, the second generation may rapidly “buy in” and acculturate to the excesses of American materialism in ways that the first generation may not, resulting in greater economic pressure among this group.

Given the results summarized thus far, it seems clear that differences in parenting stress among racial and ethnic groups will be better understood by parsing poverty-related variables. Assets, for example, are a useful way to think about economic hardship. In one study, more assets were associated with higher income, less financial demands, and less economic stressors over time (Rothwell & Han, 2010). Assets are considered more stable than income because they help to stem economic problems in times of financial crisis. Wealth can help families weather economic shocks such as job loss, rent increase, and unintended or needed expenses. Wealth may also buffer constant vigilance and worry about ongoing financial obligations and may augment feelings of control. Thus, wealth moderates, to some extent, the parenting stress uncovered when economic fortunes change. Many middle-income families have resources to mitigate economic shocks (e.g., an occasional checking account overdraft, job loss, and divorce)—an option not viable to the poor.

Homeownership and education are common types of financial assets. Research shows that low-income, African American ethnicity, and women are less likely to own their homes (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2010; Manturuk, Riley, & Ratcliffe, 2012; Nam et al., 2013). Thus, low-income African American mothers would be expected to have increased risk for high levels of parenting stress. Manturuk et al. (2012)

compared general stress, financial stress, and financial satisfaction between homeowners and renters. They asked whether owning a home in 2008 (before the economic recession) would heighten or reduce the effect of the recession on the aforementioned dimensions. Their findings showed that although both homeowners and renters have similar financial stress, homeowners had less psychological stress and reported higher levels of financial satisfaction. Even though identifying as Black was significantly and negatively associated with homeownership, there was no such association for identifying as Hispanic.

Interesting findings were found for the impact of education on parenting stress (Cardoso, Padilla, & Sampson, 2010). White mothers with high school and some college education had significantly lower parenting stress than White mothers with less than high school education. Yet, there was no significant difference in parenting stress between White mothers with less than high school education and those with college degrees. On the other hand, Black mothers with high school and college education had lower parenting stress than Black mothers with less than high school education. No difference in parenting stress between Black mothers with some college and those with less than high school education was observed. Unlike Black and White mothers, education had no impact on parenting stress for Mexican American mothers.

Conducting more studies that discern specific economic sources of parenting stress for various ethnic groups would advance our understanding of the relationship between poverty and parenting stress and add a more nuanced portrait of this relation. In the next section, we begin that effort by highlighting three variables that seem to occupy an important place in the lives of parents from diverse, minority backgrounds.

Three Mediators in the Relationship Between Poverty and Parental Stress

Family Structure

Change in family structure is common among low-income, ethnic minority groups and is a source of parenting stress. Convention holds that resources after a family transition, like divorce, will greatly impact parenting stress. However, Cooper, McLanahan, Meadows, and Brooks-Gunn (2009) found that post-transition income had little impact on parenting stress in all racial and ethnic groups studied. Rather, mother's post-transition social resources, in particular her relationship with her child's father, reduced the effect of family structure change on parenting stress. Another study with poor and low-income black families found that father's presence reduced parenting stress for mothers (Jackson, Preston, & Thomas, 2013). Father's presence was measured by mother's satisfaction with amount of love, time, and money the father contributed to the child. Knowing which of these factors has

the greatest influence on mother's parenting stress would improve our understanding of the importance of father involvement.

Nevertheless, what we see from these studies is a diminutive treatment of fathers in the literature on parenting stress. Fathers are typically included in relation to marital or relationship distress, but it is important to know how fathers respond to economic hardship and what impact it has on their parenting stress—aspects of the experience that are rarely investigated. Among the few studies to examine fathers, economic hardship was only related to lower parental warmth for Mexican fathers, whereas economic hardship was related to lower parental warmth and greater parental harshness for Mexican mothers (Gonzales et al., 2011). In another study with Mexican mothers and fathers, income was negatively associated with mother's warmth, but had no relation to father's warmth (Delgado et al., 2013). Similarly, mothers' perception of economic hardship was positively related to conflict between parents and adolescents, while no association was found between fathers. Moreover, consistent with what we would predict from the FSM, economic hardship predicted father parenting through quality of mother–father relationship in a sample of poor, single, Black mothers (Choi & Jackson, 2012).

Mothers and fathers do not necessarily respond similarly to economic disadvantage; that is, the effect of low economic resources impacts fathers' parenting stress in ways different from mothers' parenting stress. Given the salience of family dynamics to economic hardship, more studies on mothers' and fathers' response to economic hardship would inform thinking on their unique and combined influence on parenting stress. One can also imagine that the implications of inadequate provision of economic security for families differ between men and women and likely carry considerable cultural variability. Such heterogeneity may intersect powerfully with the FSM and parenting stress.

Before concluding the discussion on family structure, a final consideration must be given to non-parental caregivers and their influence on parenting stress. Extended household structures have historically been shown to be a form of income supplementation strategy for Black and Hispanic families (Angel & Tienda, 1982). Little is known about whether these living arrangements actually buffer against parenting stress, or whether they create further burdens. One study has looked at mother and grandmother parenting in low-income households and the effect of multiple caregivers on parenting behaviors, but Barnett (2008) did not examine whether income had a direct effect on each caregiver's parenting behavior, or whether income indirectly affected each caregivers' parenting behavior through their relationship quality.

Two studies have made some strides in this regard and found that young, African American mothers have greater caregiving stress when co-parenting with grandmothers than when co-parenting with the child's biological father (Arnold, Lewis, Maximovich, Ickovics, & Kershaw, 2011; Jackson, 1998). Although other racial and ethnic groups were present in the sample in Arnold et al., the majority were African American. The authors entered socioeconomic factors and ethnicity as demographics, but did not relate to outcomes. It would be helpful to know whether

the increase in parenting stress when co-parenting with grandmothers holds true for other low-income ethnic families.

Depression

Depression is a key element in the cascade of factors leading from economic pressure to negative parenting behaviors. Financial difficulties and negative life events led to higher levels of depression and the use of more negative and fewer positive parenting practices for Black, White, and Hispanic parents (Lyons, Henly, & Schuerman, 2005). For Chinese parents, depression was negatively associated with nurturing parenting and positively associated with hostile parenting for Chinese mothers. Depression also increased parental conflict, which in turn negatively impacted parenting behavior for both mothers and fathers (Benner & Kim, 2010).

In the case of African American mothers, the research on economic pressure, depressive symptoms, and parenting stress has been well documented (Jackson, 1998). In fact, in their replication of the FSM with African American parents, Conger et al. (2002) found that 19–22% of the variance in depressed mood could be attributed to economic pressure. However, the findings are mixed for Hispanic families. In another study with Latino mothers (including families of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and South American descent), chronic poverty did predict maternal depression (Pachter, Auinger, Palmer, & Weitzman, 2006). On the other hand, Mexican mothers were least likely to be depressed when compared to Black and White mothers (Cardoso et al., 2010), and depression was only a mediator between income and child outcomes for English-speaking Hispanics, but not Spanish-speaking Hispanics (Iruka et al., 2012). These inconsistent findings among Hispanic parents may be better understood if future studies did not lump the various Hispanic cultural groups together. More clarity may also be brought to the subject if the interplay of gender, poverty, and ethnicity is further examined, especially given the traditional gender roles often found in Hispanic culture.

Neighborhoods

Although the FSM captures the effect of economic hardships on parenting, it neglects the neighborhood environment as an important context for understanding poverty and parenting. Since the 1970s, the USA has seen a steady increase in neighborhood segregation as a result of mounting income inequality (Massey, 1996; Putnam, 2015). The legacy of institutional discrimination in the housing market compounds the problem such that neighborhoods are stratified not only by wealth or poverty, but also by race. Poor neighborhoods tend to have disproportional shares of African Americans and other minority groups, while more affluent neighborhoods are primarily White (Massey, 1996).

Families in low-income neighborhoods face greater physical and psychosocial environmental risks including inadequate infrastructure, pollution, and limited resources, in addition to greater violence and crime (Evans, 2004). The psychological security of a child depends on parental availability and warmth and the emotional response of poor parents may owe to stress brought on by neighborhood conditions. In another study, African American children whose parents used nurturing parenting practices were less likely to affiliate with deviant peers (Brody et al., 2001). However Garbarino, Bradshaw, and Kostelny (2005) argue that parents in poor neighborhoods employ hypervigilant parenting techniques in an effort to protect children from neighborhood danger. Similarly, Cruz-Santiago and Ramírez García (2011) found that Mexican immigrant parents utilized strict monitoring to ensure that their adolescent children did not succumb to neighborhood pressures like gang membership. Understood in this way, the utilization of authoritarian parenting may be reinterpreted as a means for low-income parents to safeguard children from neighborhood threats.

This is yet another aspect of cross-cultural and ethnic differences to consider when thinking about poverty's impact on parent-child relationship. What may appear to be similar parenting beliefs and practices may not convey equivalent meanings in every cultural context, and there is some evidence that the degree of concordance between parental control and warmth is different across racial and ethnic groups (Bornstein, 2012; Steinberg, 2001). For instance, Asian American, African American, and Latino adolescents reported their parents as using significantly more behavioral control in parenting than adolescents with European American parents. Asian American and African American parents were also reported as significantly less warm compared to European American parents (Chao & Kanatsu, 2008). Among African American parents, highly controlling and even rigid parenting are seen as more necessary for safety, and reflecting care and a sign of child investment (Tamis-LeMonda, Briggs, McClowry, & Snow, 2008). Similarly, traditional parenting styles do not accurately represent parenting among Latino families, and Latino parents have been shown to use "protective parenting" that shows high warmth and demandingness, but low autonomy granting (Rodríguez, Donovanick, & Crowley, 2009).

The neighborhood context, like economic variables, can alter parenting behavior; therefore, there is a need for its inclusion in the FSM and other theoretical models examining poverty and parenting. Indeed, some studies have begun to incorporate the neighborhood in the FSM as a key distal factor that interacts with the family environment. A recent study with families from inner-city neighborhoods in Milwaukee found that neighborhood disorder (e.g., vandalism and abandoned buildings) and housing disorder (e.g., exposed electrical wires and animal infestations) predicted psychological distress among parents (Jocson & McLoyd, 2015). Neighborhood disorder and housing disorder also predicted harsh and inconsistent parenting and less parental warmth through psychological distress. The study sample was predominantly African American single mothers who received some governmental assistance.

An earlier study with only African American families from inner-city Philadelphia found that income-to-needs ratio predicted financial strain and neighborhood stress, which then affected parent-child relations through parent psychological distress (Gutman, McLoyd, & Tokoyawa, 2005). As income declines, parents reported greater neighborhood stress and higher financial strain, inducing higher psychological stress. A higher level of psychological distress then decreased the amount of positive activities and relations between parents and adolescents and increased conflict.

A longitudinal study examined the relationship between perception of environmental stress and parenting behaviors in a sample of poor African American single mothers from inner-city New Orleans (Kotchick, Dorsey, & Heller, 2005). Perceptions of environmental stressors included gang presence, homicides, and unsanitary living conditions. Findings showed a significant indirect path of neighborhood stress to parenting behaviors through psychological distress. Neighborhood stress and maternal psychological distress were measured at time one, and parenting behaviors were measured 15 months later at time two. This suggests an enduring effect of neighborhood stress on parent's psychological well-being and subsequent parenting behaviors.

There are mixed results for the impact of low-income neighborhood environment on parenting for Mexican mothers and fathers. Gonzales et al. (2011) found that neighborhood disadvantage did not predict warm or harsh parenting, but perception of neighborhood danger decreased warm parenting. The authors also found an interesting interaction between perceptions of neighborhood danger and neighborhood disadvantage on warm parenting. Neighborhood disadvantage and mothers' warm parenting were only related when neighborhood danger was perceived to be high; the same was found for fathers. Mexican parents may attempt to stem the effects of perceived threat with positive, rather than negative, parenting. In another study with only Mexican fathers, perception of neighborhood disadvantage was not related to parental warmth or harshness (White & Roosa, 2012). Likewise, chronic poverty adversely affects parenting behaviors through neighborhood quality only for Black and White parents; no such relationship was found for Latino parents (Pachter, Auinger, Palmer, & Weitzman, 2006).

In regard to parenting stress, two important papers have explored how neighborhood factors relate to parenting stress. In the first, Guterman, Lee, Taylor, and Rathouz (2009) found that neighborhood characteristics such as presence of drug dealers or users, gang activities, and trustworthiness of neighbors predicted parenting stress for White, African American, and Hispanic parents. Although a majority of the sample was African American, this finding suggests that there may be some uniformity in the effect of low-income neighborhood context on parenting stress. In fact, the authors tested for equivalence between models with race and ethnicity constrained and another where they varied; both models were nearly identical.

Using a diverse sample, Zhang et al. (2015) recently examined the association between neighborhood disorder (e.g., gang prevalence and drug activity) and maternal stress, and the mediating role of perceived neighborhood social capital.

Again, the sample contained predominantly African American mothers (62%). Higher education was associated with less maternal stress while material hardship was related to more maternal stress. Overall, the authors found that neighborhood disorder was significantly related to maternal stress, and neighborhood disorder decreased perceived social capital. Interpretation of the potential interaction between SES, race, and ethnicity on neighborhood disorder and parenting stress was not included as these variables were controlled for in their analyses.

Given what has already been noted above about the dynamic transaction among income status, race, and neighborhood characteristics, these studies show that neighborhoods are a context in which to examine parental stress and economic processes and are deserving of more scholarship. Neighborhood conditions negatively affect parenting behaviors for Black parents, while findings with Hispanic parents do not show this trend. However, neighborhood contexts were measured in a number of different ways (e.g., neighborhood disorder, neighborhood quality, and perceived neighborhood danger). It is unclear whether Hispanics are generally less affected by neighborhood disadvantage, or whether the mixed findings relate to heterogeneity in variable measurements.

In the next section, we tackle an altogether different context—the immigration context—to illustrate how immigration contributes to the diversity among parents living in poverty. We also explore the unique stressors faced by immigrant parents, many of which go unnoticed in the literature, but have serious consequences for parent and child outcomes.

Immigration as Illustration of Diversity in Relation to Poverty and Family Stress

A chapter on parental stress among racial and ethnic families cannot ignore immigrant families who add significantly to the diversity among minority families. As of 2013, 13% of the US population consisted of immigrants. When the second generation is included, that percentage increases to 25%. This means that immigrants represent a quarter of the overall US population (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Economic factors are well-known determinants of migration. Low-income families in developing countries utilize migration as a way to stabilize incomes and diversify familial risks and resources (Stark & Bloom 1985). This strategy gives rise to the preponderance of transnational families—those separated by geographic boundaries who maintain emotional and social bonds. There are many reasons to study parenting stress in transnational families, not the least of which is its covariation with poverty.

Poor economic conditions not only induce migration, but they also shape the type of migration undertaken (see Figs. 2.1 and 2.2). Whereas middle-income families can migrate as a unit, low-income family members often have to migrate serially (i.e., one at a time) (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997; Crawford-Brown &

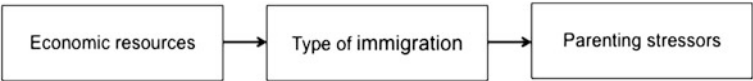


Fig. 2.1 Relations between economic resources and parenting stress

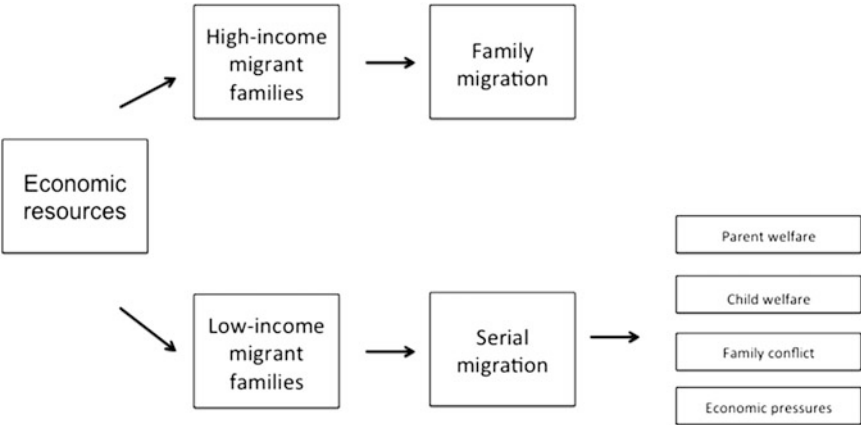


Fig. 2.2 Elaborated framework for understanding parenting stress in transnational families

Rattray, 2001). Given the global demand for female laborers, more females are initiating migration for their families (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2004; Benería, Berik, & Floro, 2016). When middle-class women began working outside the home, markets around the world began exporting women as nannies, domestic workers, and other kinds of care workers. This gave way to an increase in female migrants from countries such as Philippines (Arya & Roy, 2006), Jamaica (Crawford, 2003; Crawford-Brown & Rattray, 2001), and Mexico (Dreby & Stutz, 2012).

Figure 2.2 elaborates on Fig. 2.1 by specifying the types of immigration patterns and parenting stressors associated with serial migration. We draw inspiration from the FSM in order to construct a portrait of the stressors affecting immigrant parents including (1) economic pressures, (2) parent welfare (parent psychological distress in FSM), (3) child welfare, and (4) family conflict. The notable difference between our model and the model that inspires it is that children are ascribed power. They will not be fixed at an end point with unidirectional arrows pointing toward them. Likewise, though the elements in our model appear unidirectional, they are dynamic. For instance, there is a bidirectional relationship between parent and child welfare, which may lead to family conflict.

Another innovative component of our model is that we focus only on families that undertake serial migration. The reason for doing so is that, traditionally, immigrant families are discussed as one homogenous group. Differentiating

between family migration and serial migration elucidates unique factors for each group and brings attention to the experiences of the latter, which often go unacknowledged. Often parents leave behind spouses and children in families that migrate serially. This means that they face tremendous economic and emotional burdens having to provide for themselves in the destination country, but also having to provide financial and emotional support to those left in the country of origin. As noted earlier, immigration also creates potentially critical inputs into the parent–child dynamic when viewed across generations. Not only are some immigrant children assisting the pioneer generation with acculturation while simultaneously navigating their own social and cultural transformations as new citizens, for some immigrant children, there are differences in how much of their childhood happened colocated with their parents both within households and across cultures and class.

To give each element the proper due would require a chapter unto itself, so we narrow the discussion to the stressors Southeast Asian, Caribbean, and Mexican transnational families. We touch only briefly on parent and child welfare. We chose to focus on mother–child relationships given the recent trend toward female migration. We then situate the majority of our discussion on economic-related stress factors, specifically the function of remittances and their relationship to family conflict. We will also briefly mention surrogate caretakers, who care for left-behind children when parents are abroad, the relationship between them and the migrant parent, and the family tensions that sometimes occur. We will also briefly allude to the role of culture within this complex ecology.

Parent and Child Welfare

Migrant mothers often contend with depression, loneliness, and grief (Best-Cummings, 2009; Kim, Agic, & McKenzie, 2014; Miranda, Siddique, Der-Martirosian, & Belin, 2005; Ornelas, Perreira, Beeber, & Maxwell, 2009). For Caribbean and Filipino mothers, their participation in the care industry often means they are responsible for other children while their own children remain in the home country. This can breed conflict in the parent–child relationship because some children feel jealous of the children in their mother’s care (Parreñas, 2004), and mothers feel guilty for giving their love to these children (Hochschild, 2004).

For many Mexican and Central American families, significant parent psychological distress is brought on by the combined stress of separation from children and significant others, as well as their precarious legal status (Cervantes, Mejía, & Mena, 2010; Horton, 2009). At the same time, left-behind children in the Caribbean and Latin America face psychological distress and are vulnerable to abuse and engagement in risky behaviors (D’Emilio et al., 2007; Dillon & Walsh, 2015). Similar reports of psychological maladjustments are found with left-behind children in Southeast Asia (Graham & Jordan, 2011). Children of migrant parents feel pressure to make their parents’ efforts worthwhile, sometimes to the detriment of their own well-being (Dreby & Stutz, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie,

2002). Parents often cite their children as motivation for migration, and so many immigrant children feel a sense of obligation. They fulfill that obligation either through excelling academically or working to support the family (Fuligni, 2006). In families where separation has occurred, there may even be an extra layer of pressure because the stakes were even higher.

Together, we see that migrant mothers and their children experience psychological distress borne from life in a transitional family. Some migrant mothers also face additional psychological distress through marital conflict. When women are the ones to migrate, left-behind husbands sometimes feel threatened in their roles as providers, which can vary according to culture and whether gender roles dictate that males as breadwinners. For example, Sri Lankan custom is for women to be homemakers, while men are providers for their family (Kottegoda, 2006). When women migrate, their motives are questioned and they can sometimes be shamed and scrutinized for leaving (Gamburd, 2004). Family problems fall on the shoulders of migrant mothers as their absence receives the blame. Therefore, married migrant mothers in transnational families may be at an elevated risk for psychological distress.

Economic Pressures

Money and migration are inextricably intertwined. Economic motivations are chief reasons for migration, and financial resources are needed to pursue the journey (Massey et al., 1993). As illustrated by Fig. 2.2, low-income migrants cannot make the journey as a unit, and so remittances become “the currency of care and one of the ways in which migrants maintain their sense of belonging to the transnational family... The need for display is greater when the family is separated across borders,” (Cabraal & Singh, 2013, p. 56). For the migrant parents, and specifically migrant mothers, money, gifts, and other material goods are utilized to express love and are symbolic of the promise of a better life (Crawford, 2003; Crawford-Brown & Rattray, 2001; Crawford-Brown 1999; Dreby, 2010; Gamburd, 2008; Parreñas, 2001, 2005).

Remittances are contentious for transnational families when mothers are the ones abroad. Mothers are judged more critically for their migration because their prescribed gender role is to provide emotional intimacy, not financial support (Dreby, 2006). For example, the social norm in Vietnam is for husbands to be more economically successful than their wives. Interviews with left-behind husbands in Northern Vietnam reveal that these husbands do not receive remittances from their wives, but instead work extra hours or borrow money from social networks to maintain their households (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). The authors write that these fathers are willing to endure significant economic hardship to maintain their status as breadwinners.

While left-behind Vietnamese fathers are stressed by economic challenges due to their refusal to accept remittances from their migrant wives, the case is quite different in Sri Lanka. There, marital stress stems from the associations among migration, poverty, and male unemployment (Gamburd, 2004, 2008). In some cases, husbands use remittances on alcohol consumption instead of allocating it toward debt payment and food. This can undermine the goals of migration often by delaying economic prosperity if not exacerbating poverty (Thai, 2014). What we see then is that parent stress may operate through family conflict in transnational households that are governed by traditional gender roles. In some cases, the family economic situation does not change because husbands and wives are at odds as to who is responsible for sustaining the household.

The gender norms found in the Asian context are also seen in Mexican families as they struggle with issues of power and gender roles within the family (Dreby & Adkins, 2012; Dreby, 2006). However, in the Caribbean, many of the gender dynamics discussed do not pertain. Caribbean mothers experience support for their migration (Best-Cummings, 2009). In Jamaica, a small island nation that boasts among the highest emigration rates to OECD countries (UN Population Division, 2013), women have long-experienced independence and economic freedom (Bauer & Thompson, 2004). Bauer and Thompson (2004) found that Jamaican women are often the main initiators of migration, and the gender divide in migration seen elsewhere is not evident in this society and likely not in other Caribbean countries either.

The “money tree syndrome” is another determinant of economic pressure and family conflict. The money tree syndrome refers to the perception held by family members in the home country that money is easily acquired abroad, even though the reality is much different (Cabraal & Singh, 2013). Family members thus place considerable economic pressure on migrant family members. When Vietnamese migrants do not meet their families’ financial expectations, they are labeled as selfish or not a true “Viet Kieu” (overseas Vietnamese) (Thai, 2014).

In the Caribbean, the expectation is to provide remittances, but the sign of “making the most of the sacrifice” is when migrants are able to successfully return with substantial funds to purchase property and live out a more relaxed lifestyle (Olwig, 2012). Almost all migrants share the remittance burden in some form (Guarnizo, 2003), but migrant parents are in a worse position because their credibility as parents is contingent on their economic commitment; to not remit would be synonymous with “bad” parenting (Castaneda & Buck, 2011). When mothers do not send money home frequently, children question the extent of their love and sacrifice (Glasgow & Gouse-Sheese, 1995; Parreñas, 2001).

The problem with the money tree syndrome mentality is that it does not accurately reflect the economic conditions of many migrants. Job instability and unemployment are common among low-skilled immigrants. Many Filipino and Caribbean mothers work as nannies in New York City, a job with considerable inequities (Cheever, 2004). First, the nanny position is unstable due to children entering schools at earlier ages. Second, nannies work long hours, and many are underpaid for the services performed. For migrant parents, they endure significant

economic hardship while attempting to reduce the length of separation between them and their left-behind children. Some live in overcrowded houses and work long hours in order to speed along reunification (Dreby, 2010). Caribbean mothers expressed disappointment and disillusionment when faced with the difficulty of supporting two households—their household in the destination country and their household in the home country—with low wages, and often, they had little money for themselves (Best-Cummings, 2009). Paradoxically, migrants are pressured to send money to demonstrate their love, yet family members in the home country ascribe lesser value to remittances because they are not perceived as commensurate to physical care (Singh, Robertson, & Cabraal, 2012). One can imagine that these dynamics likely vary with child age and mother's history in the origin country, as well as experience in the host country.

Family Conflict

Family separation as a result of immigration is a source of parent stress through family conflict. Conflict often occurs between separated parents and children, and between parents and caretakers. In regard to former, many left-behind children feel that the money borne from migration does not buy the emotional support needed from their parents. Research with Filipino transnational families finds that common arguments between children and their migrant mothers are about “money or family” (Parreñas, 2001). Left-behind children do not see material goods as a substitute for having the emotional support of their parents (Castaneda & Buck, 2011; Parreñas, 2004).

On the other hand, caregiving responsibilities are important considerations for parents when deciding to migrate, especially if they cannot take their children with them. When fathers migrate, the matter is relatively straightforward. However, the matter is somewhat more complicated when mothers migrate, or when both mothers and fathers migrate. In the Asian context, fathers tend to take on the child-rearing responsibilities when mothers are away (Arya & Roy, 2006). However, in Mexico and the Caribbean, both parents tend to migrate (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2011). What this means is that the caregiving responsibilities are often given to other family members, most notably the maternal grandmother. In some cases, children are left with other kin. These caregiving situations are a source of stress and are more precarious in nature.

Dreby (2010) writes that grandparents offer more stable caregiving arrangements for Mexican left-behind children. When children are left with other kin, it is usually for a shorter time and parents experience greater pressure for financial contributions. In some cases, parents have to return home prematurely or take on exorbitant debt to bring their children to the USA when conflicts with these caregivers become unresolvable. Similar to the Mexican context, Caribbean mothers have to navigate relationships with caretakers of their children back at home. Although many report having good relationship with caretakers, this is likely due to their vulnerable

position in the relationship and need to maintain harmony (Best-Cummings, 2009). If relations between parent and caretaker disintegrate, then reunification becomes necessary.

One may assume that reunification is always positive; however, this too is a complicated ordeal. Conflict may emerge at reunification when children's attachments to caregivers in home country put a strain on the parent-child relationship (Arnold, 2006, 2011; Santa-Maria & Cornille, 2007; Schapiro, Kools, Weiss, & Brindis, 2013). There is also the issue of new siblings or romantic partners who are unknown to the left-behind child. The change in family structure may be a source of sibling rivalry and family conflict (Best-Cummings, 2009; Dreby, 2010; Phoenix & Bauer, 2012). Studies that examine how these factors contribute to parenting stress for immigrant parents are required.

Summary

Fifty-five percent of children with immigrant parents live in low-income households (Jiang et al., 2015). In light of the discussion in the paragraphs above, we hope this figure is a call to arms for research on parenting stress and poverty among transnational families. The economic situation for many families in the developing world drives migration. This section has shown that migrant parents seek to provide a better life for their families, but encounter significant challenges due to separation from loved ones. These parents have to financially support two households, often not improving their economic condition.

The perception of a money tree in receiving countries creates much stress for the migrant person because they are pressured to send money or goods back home, often receiving little gratitude for their efforts and sacrifice. In light of the feminization of migration, questions related to gender roles within transnational families are raised, particularly regarding the ways husbands or domestic partners respond to changes in the family structure and cultural traditions concerning who is the household breadwinner. Some left-behind fathers and/or husbands struggle with expressions of masculinity when their households do not necessarily adhere to traditional patriarchal norms. Because mothers are seen as nurturer, and fathers as breadwinner, migrant women face a significant amount of pressure and stress. Nevertheless, gender roles impact transnational families with both breadwinner and nurturer roles exerting their own unique stress. In cultures where more traditional maternal care dynamics exists, the family experience may be greatly affected by these gender roles, but for cultures with high level of co-parenting, the effects may not be as great.

We touched very briefly on some of the economic-related stressors associated with parenting in the transnational context, but there is still more work to be done. A rudimentary first step would be to assess parenting stress among transnational parents and compare findings to other immigrant parents and also to the native stock. In our discussion, we showed the various ways money exerts influence in

transnational families and its intersection with gendered notions of family. Another useful study would be one that compares parenting stress between migrant transnational mothers and fathers.

Conclusion

In regard to poverty and parenting, economic resources determine both the amount and kind of investments parents are able to make in order to support their children (Conger & Conger, 2008). Middle- and high-income parents are able to invest in resources that increase children's human capital, such as learning materials, educational toys, and tutoring. They are also able to afford foods high in nutrients and provide a safe home environment and medical care for children (Conger & Conger, 2008). On the other hand, low-income parents focus spending on immediate expenses related to basic needs. Much can be said about the impact of low economic resources on child outcomes, and in chapter eight of this volume, there is a rousing discussion on the impact of poverty on parent-child interactions and neurocognitive development (see Finegood & Blair, Chap. 8). Nevertheless, even though low-income parents are limited in how much they are able to provide for their children, the expectations they hold for themselves are more or less similar to their wealthier counterparts, and the desire is to provide similar experiences for their children (Hsueh, 2006; Mistry & Lowe, 2006).

We discussed family structure, depression, and the neighborhood context as factors related to poverty relevant for studies on parenting. In particular, the neighborhood context was shown to be important to the study of parenting stress, even though it is overlooked by the FSM. In light of the neighborhood findings reviewed above, one may assume that a solution would be for families to move out of low-income neighborhoods. Results from the Moving to Opportunity Program provide a more nuanced interpretation of who benefits from changing the neighbourhood environment, and provides greater clarity on some of the above mentioned findings. Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2015) revealed that moving into a low poverty census tract did not improve economic outcomes for adults. However, children younger than age 13 whose families moved to less poor neighborhoods showed a 30.8% increase in individual earnings later in early adulthood. This suggests that after a certain point, the effects of long-term exposure to neighborhood disadvantage are difficult to moderate. Therefore, a better solution may be to improve the neighborhood conditions across America and in the meantime provide housing vouchers for families with children under the age of 13 years.

Moreover, we discussed the dimensions of poverty beyond income. One finding illustrates the power of non-income variables on parent behavior: taking a payday loan (an indicator of financial stress) reduced the odds of a parent reading to a child by 60% (Grinstein-Weiss et al., 2010). Other scholars offered novel ways of conceptualizing the relation between poverty and parenting. Mistry and Lowe (2006) suggest that poverty is not only the deprivation of needs, but also a deprivation of

wants. Low-income parents express feelings of achievement when they are able to offer children more than just the necessary provisions such as food and clothing. When parents cannot afford to send their children on school trips or take them to the zoo, they become frustrated and disappointed. Therefore, subjective experience of poverty is an important topic for researchers to examine, especially in regard to parenting stress. Do parents who only provide basic needs show greater parenting stress, and are there interactions based on race and ethnicity? Further, how do conceptualizations of poverty affect this relationship? For example, do absolute or relative views of poverty dictate feelings of what should be provided? Do parents with more relative views of poverty experience greater parenting stress than those with absolute views, or vice versa? This is one direction research on poverty and parenting stress may seek to orient itself, especially given the sociocultural inputs that create and influence the subjective experience of poverty.

Furthermore, our review shows that there is important research yet to be done regarding poverty and parenting stress. Many of the published studies treat ethnicity and income as a covariates rather than examining their possible interactions. Future studies need to see this interaction as an important source of information regarding differences in the kinds of economic stressors faced by parents from racial and ethnic families. Furthermore, a major criticism of the current literature on poverty and parenting stress is the overall lack of studies with Asian families. The “model minority” myth may obscure research with poor Asian families because Asians are presumed to possess high levels of income and education. There is a tendency to treat Asians, and also Hispanics, as monolithic when there are considerable cultural and economic differences among such subgroups.

Takei and Sakamoto (2011) demonstrated that there is considerable heterogeneity in Asians in regard to their poverty levels. For example, some Asian subgroups such as Asian Indians, Japanese, and Filipinos are less likely to be poor than Whites. Others (Indonesians, Malaysians, and Thai) show no difference to Whites, while some (Bangladeshi, Cambodians, Chinese, Laotian, Korean, Vietnamese, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Hmong, and Other Asian) are likely to be poorer. The highest poverty rates are found among Bangladeshi, Cambodians, and Hmong. Foreign-born Asian Americans have higher poverty rates than native-born Asian Americans. In fact, poverty rates are highest among the most recent arrivals, illustrating diversity among Asian families and dispelling illusions of widespread wealth.

Moreover, another form of lumping occurs when immigration, and more specifically the type of migration, is ignored. There are profound impacts on parenting depending on whether the family came as a unit or were separated during immigration. Power emerges as a critical source of conflict as family members negotiate their roles when the family structure changes, yet the social structures remain. For example, even as social changes lead to greater agency for women, in traditional cultures parenting roles remain constrained by gender roles. Additionally, left-behind children exert their influence on parents during separation, and parents and surrogate caregivers strive to maintain amicable relations in order to ensure the welfare of children left behind.

Although the FSM informs much of our thinking about the impact of poverty and economic pressure on parenting, there are some important criticisms to be noted. The first line of criticism is a methodological one. In many of the studies, greater explanatory power is found when using an index of financial strain. Given that the parent is the source of information for material hardship, family conflict, and psychological distress, issues of mono-method bias demand further exploration. For example, the parent may feel inadequate and report greater economic pressure. Or a parent may have high levels of neuroticism and therefore report more money worries. Future studies may want to include measures that rule out these possibilities and strengthen the internal validity.

A second line of criticism concerns the treatment of children as passive actors in the FSM. The model situates the child at the outcome. Economic stressors affect parents, and children are affected by their parents. Children are not considered active in the model. Our discussion of transnational families shows the influence children have on their parents. In our model, we allow children to be fluid; they are as much affected by their parents as they affect them. Sometimes, migrant parents with children left behind make decisions about returning home or bringing a child abroad based on the influence of the child (Dreby, 2010). This is not done without conflict or stress, but it speaks to the power of children in family dynamics.

In the FSM, children are done to rather than doers. The chapter encourages us to abandon such unidirectional conceptions. For many immigrant families, it is cost-effective to hire children as labor. This keeps money in the family and helps to stem some of the effects of financial hardship. However, family tensions are borne from such practices (Falicov, 2001). When we consider that the conflict may be between parents and children, and not only between adults, the FSM falls short in addressing bidirectional, dynamic effects between parental stress and child stress. We see that poverty affects all family members, and household strategies to combat poverty may contribute to different kinds of family conflict that are likely to impact parenting behavior.

A final criticism of the FSM relates to a point made by Parke et al. (2004) who hypothesized that the reason for the weaker association between income and economic pressure in a replication of the FSM with Mexican parents was due to their frame of reference. Research shows that immigrants do compare their economic situation to others, but to their compatriots back home and not to the native stock (Rogers, 2006). A dollar in the USA is worth more than a dollar back home. Therefore, even if immigrants have lower incomes compared to Americans, they may perceive themselves as doing quite well because their income levels are higher than those in their origin country. Therefore, for immigrant families in particular, income may not be the driver of parenting stress. Uncovering exactly what economic factors contribute most to the parenting stress for immigrant parents is needed. This is one direction research on poverty and parenting stress may seek to orient itself.

Before concluding our chapter, we want to bring attention to two overlooked factors in the literature that require future investigation for their relationship to parenting stress—suburban poverty and shift work. Regarding suburban poverty,

Kneebone and Berube (2013) address the fallacy of suburban wealth in their recent book “Confronting Suburban Poverty in America.” They explain that the imagery conjured when poverty is discussed in the USA is one of inner-city slums. More still, discussions on the “intersection of poverty and place” mostly center on the rural–urban contrast, even though there has been a decline in the poor population in rural areas from 1970 to 2000 where suburban areas have been on a steady increase in the last few decades. Despite the fact that low-income residents have always been part of suburban development, the discussion fails to include this neighborhood type.

One reason for the neglect owes to the perception that poverty is not a feature of suburban areas. Suburbia invokes quintessential trappings of the American Dream. However, their findings show that, in fact, suburban areas are subject to significant poverty. Since the 1980s, the rate of growth in the amount of poor people living in suburban areas has been faster than in cities. For example, between 2000 and 2010, the percent change in the growth rate for suburban areas was approximately 53% compared to roughly 24% in cities (Kneebone & Berube, 2013). In 2010, 15 million people were poor and 22 million people were “near poor” in suburban areas. In other words, by 2010, one in four persons in a suburban area was poor.

Forty-seven percent of poor minorities live in the suburbs, and their rate of change is much greater than for poor Whites. In general, Blacks are least likely to live in suburbs (39%), yet 51% of all immigrants live in suburban areas, whereas only 33% live in cities (Kneebone & Berube, 2013). For Blacks and Hispanics, access to affordable housing induces a move to the suburbs, whereas high employment attracts Whites and Asians to suburban neighborhoods (Howell & Timberlake, 2014). A significant problem with living in a suburban area is transportation. Transportation system investments are low in these areas, and cars are a necessity. Poor families without cars are at a severe disadvantage. The perception that there is no poverty leads to lack of service provision, political response, and donations for poor suburban people (Kneebone & Berube, 2013).

There are many unknown questions regarding parenting stress for families from suburban areas since little work has been done in this regard. One question we would like to see answered is whether the perception of the suburbs as wealthy leads poor parents living in these areas to spend more and accumulate more debt in an effort to match the lifestyle of the suburban ideal, and whether this increase in economic pressure also increases parenting stress.

The second area for future research is on shift work. In the literature on poverty and parenting stress, there tends to be a focus on the employed versus unemployed. Employment among poor parents tends to be differentiated between shift work and nonstandard hours (Hsueh, 2006). In her ethnographic work with a subset of mothers from the Child Family Study, mostly African American and Hispanic single mothers receiving some form of government assistance, Hsueh (2006) found that 45% of the sample worked fixed standard hours, 26% worked nonstandard, 15% worked variable standard, and 14% worked variable nonstandard.

Standard hours are those that occur between 8 AM and 4 PM. Nonstandard hours fall outside this range, and also anytime on weekends. Mothers who worked

fixed nonstandard schedules reported less maternal stress than mothers with fixed standard work schedules; however, this effect depended on choice. That is, if mothers did not choose to work nonstandard hours, then maternal stress was higher (Hsueh, 2006). According to the qualitative data, many mothers who worked nonstandard hours were those working multiple jobs and overtime to supplement their regular hours. Many were doing so in order for their children not to feel “poor” or “deprived.” There are serious costs to nonstandard hours. These include fatigue and stress, time away from children, and difficulties arranging childcare (see Crnic & Ross, Chap. 11 of this volume). Given the paucity of research on shift work and parenting stress in ethnic minority groups, this is a fruitful research area.

As we have shown, poverty is an important factor contributing to parental stress. Many of the individual factors considered in this volume such as material hardship, family structure, and neighborhood environment covary with poverty. A less understood but critical contributor to poverty and parenting stress is culture. Both different cultural traditions themselves as well as their intersections with caregiver roles as nurturer, breadwinner, and marital partners all overlap in potentially powerful ways with poverty to affect parenting (see Nomaguchi & Milkie, Chap. 3, for a robust discussion on the social intuitions and ideologies that bring to bear on parents, particularly in the context of social and economic change). We have also introduced to the discussion an important but neglected role of immigration in family dynamics and parenting. Many families from low-income countries move to high-income countries in search of a better life. There are profound implications for child rearing, especially when families cannot move together due to economic constraints. Lastly, children are not simply the passive recipients of parenting. They themselves play an active, dynamic role in family systems. Income, culture, age, and immigrant status converge to create an experience of disadvantage for families.

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