

# The Power of Codesign in Research



Centering Parent Voices to Learn About  
Parent-Child Relationships

Presented by:



**DATE**

Tuesday, October 21st

**TIME**

2:00-3:30 PM ET

# Welcome!



# About Nurture Connection

A national network committed to promoting Early Relational Health. By supporting strong, positive, and nurturing early relationships for every family, we can build healthier, more connected communities.



## Nikki Shearman, PhD

Chief of Research & Innovation,  
Reach Out and Read

# Nurture Connection Presents:

## The Power of Codesign in Research

*Centering Parent Voices to Learn About Parent-Child Relationships*



**Dani Dumitriu,  
MD, PhD**

Associate Professor of  
Pediatrics and  
Director, Center for  
Early Relational  
Health, Columbia  
University, Panelist



**Tiffany  
Solomon**

Parent Leader, Reach  
Out and Read, Panelist



**Deepa  
Srinivasavaradan**

Parent Leader,  
Panelist



**Steven  
Thibert**

Parent Leader, Family  
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**Nikki  
Shearman, PhD**

Chief of Research  
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Reach Out and Read,  
Moderator





## Dani Dumitriu, MD, PhD

Associate Professor of Pediatrics and  
Director, Center for Early Relational  
Health, Columbia University, Panelist

# What is ERH?

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**Emotional Availability**

**Maternal Sensitivity**

**Entropy/Unpredictability**

**Bonding**

**Attachment**

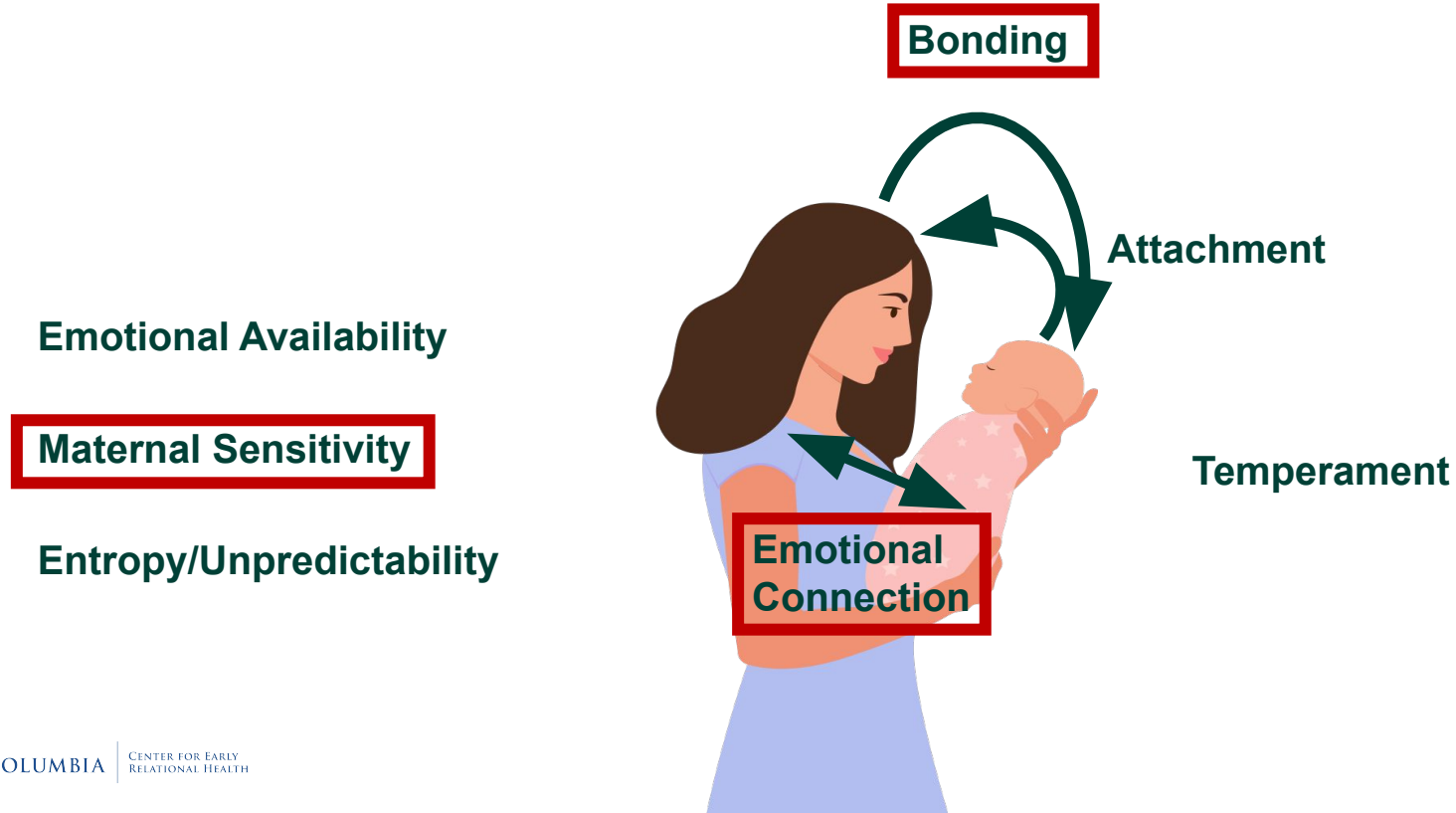
**Temperament**

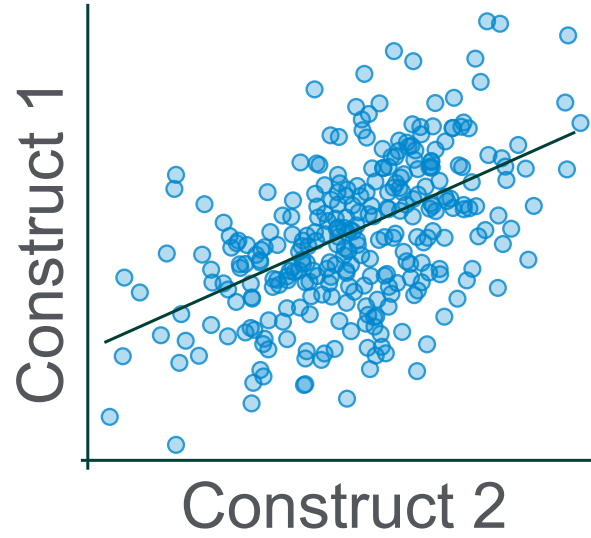
**Emotional  
Connection**

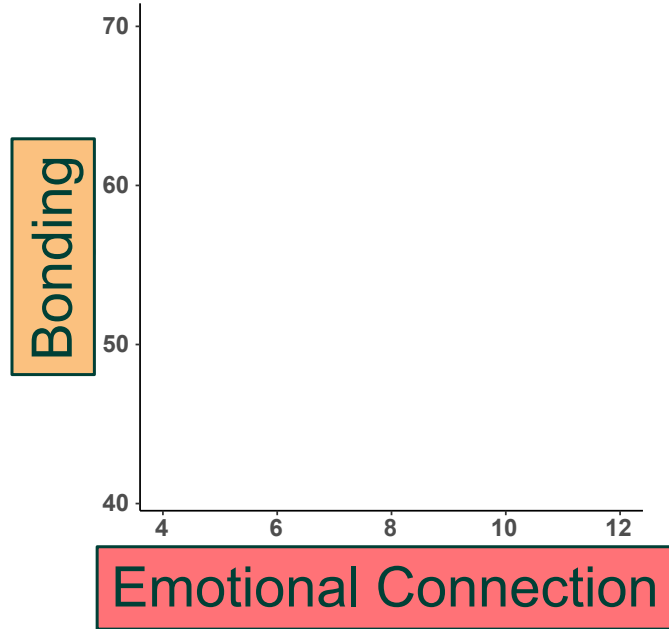


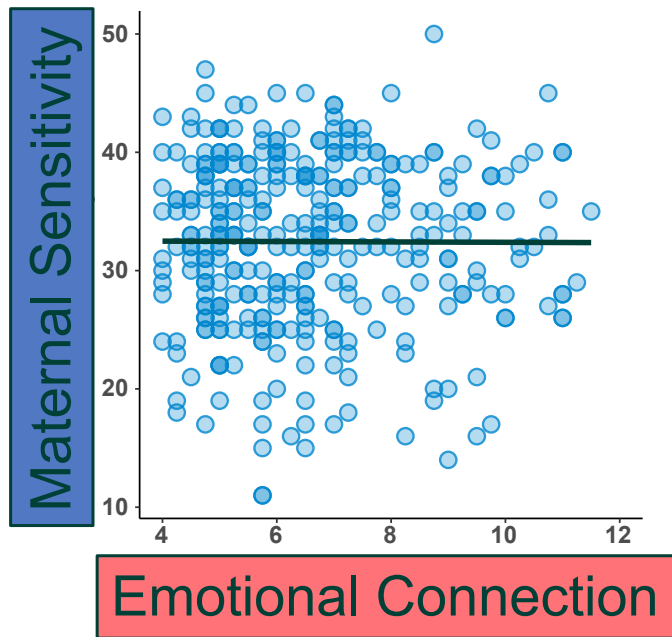
# What is ERH?

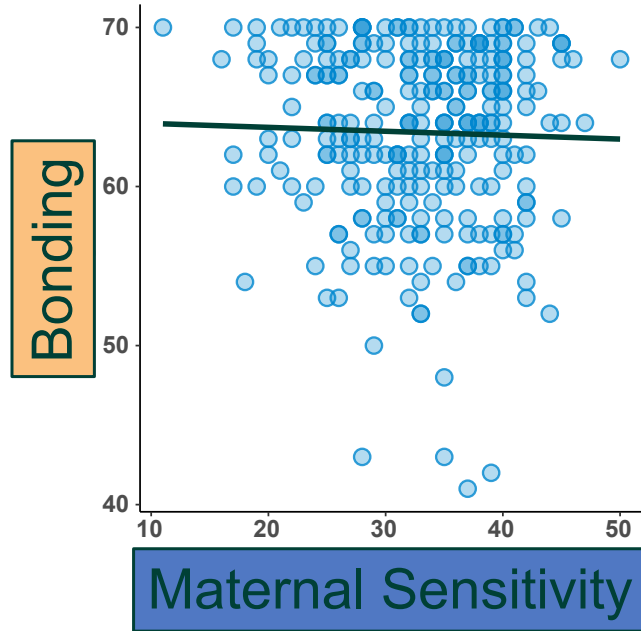
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4 mo



**Bonding**

**Sensitivity**

**Emotional  
Connection**

2 yr



**Cognitive**

**Fine motor**

**Gross motor**

**Expressive language**

**Receptive language**

**Internalizing**

**Externalizing**

## Research Question

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**Are there additional ERH constructs we can identify by listening to the lived experiences of parents?**

***Q: Describe your relationship and experiences of connection with your youngest child***

# Methods

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## Interview guide co-designed with Parent Leaders

(5 meetings, Jul-Sep 2024)

Tell me about your experiences with the pregnancy and birth of *[child's name]*.

*and*

Tell me about the first time you felt a connection with *[child's name]*.



Tell me the story of your relationship, starting from whenever you felt that it began.

*(Sample question)*

## Interviews conducted & transcribed by Parent Leaders

(18 interviews, May-Aug 2025)

# Methods Interview Analysis with 4 Coders

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- **Dr. Allison Kimble-Cusano**
- Modeled after methods in Cordoba's 2024 paper *Parents' Perspectives on Early Relational Health: A Qualitative Study*

## Sept-Oct

- Coders read all interviews
- Meet weekly to discuss emerging themes
- Develop codebook

## Oct-Dec

- Use codebook to double-code interviews, meeting for consensus as-needed
- Meet weekly to document themes

# Parent Partnership Reflections



**Tiffany  
Solomon**

Parent Leader, Reach  
Out and Read,  
Panelist



**Deepa  
Srinivasavaradan**

Parent Leader,  
Panelist



**Steven  
Thibert**

Parent Leader, Family  
Network Collaborative  
(FNC), Panelist

# Overview of Themes

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1. **Emotional connection as a feeling greater than words—an embodied experience**
2. **Differences between children in timing and quality of connection**
3. **Reciprocal joy/connection**

## Theme #1 Emotional connection as an embodied experience

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**PL: Think of a recent moment that made you feel really close. Describe that moment.**

**I:** When I was in the hospital with her after [her birth], I barely held her. I barely saw her. ...But when we finally came home and we just snuggled up in bed...it's just, I don't, I don't know how to explain it. It's just, there's like a click there where it's almost like you could feel, I don't know how to explain this, other than it's almost as if there's like a thread, you know, if you want to think of it as there are threads between people...It's almost like ours just intertwined and just melded together, and it was just beautiful *[Interview 14]*

## Theme #1 Emotional connection as an embodied experience

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**PL: How connected do you feel with your child right now?**

**I:** ...There was a time when I was breastfeeding, I felt, I don't know what it's what it's called. Like something from my brain through my breast to him. Like I felt that a lot. So I'm like, Oh, we're definitively connected. I don't know what it's called, but yeah, there was a connection, a heavy connection. *[Interview 10]*

## Theme #1 Emotional connection as an embodied experience

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**PL: Was it like instantly falling in love? Or was it kind of like this slow slide down this deep hole of, you know, kind of connectedness?**

**I:** I will say that, um, before she was born, I was scared. This is a silly scare. I was scared that I wouldn't have enough room in my heart for her. I was afraid that I I loved my first daughter so much. How could I love anyone else that much? Yeah, but when [*youngest daughter's name*] was born, it was just an instant. It was an instant, like the sun rising for the first time in the sky. It was just an instant pull of it was like gravity. It was like gravity. [*Interview 14*]

## Theme #2 Differences between children in timing and quality of connection

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**PL: With your youngest, how connected do you feel to this child?**

**I:** Oh, my God, I never felt so connected to any [as I do with her] which is scary to say, because I know I have two and don't tell my children I said that... I feel so connected with her, and part of me does wonder if that's because of the timeline of when I learned all these new things...about being a parent and how to parent, because, you know, nobody teaches you how to do that. You're just, you're just thrown in, thrown in, in the deep end. And it's like, alright, sink or swim, but you figure it out. *[Interview 14]*

## Theme #2 Differences between children in timing and quality of connection

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### **PL: How is your relationship similar or different with your daughter?**

**I:** ...This one was hard when it came to to her...so she's my first born, and I wanted, I had this vision of what she would be. You know, reading came naturally to me, and I thought that time [reading] or going to the library and things like that, would would create the same environment, and that she would be a natural reader. ...When she struggled, I felt a level of disconnect, and I really had to step back, because as an educator, I was like, Did I do something wrong? Did I not care enough? Did I not put enough attention to it? But she's just a different learner, and I figured that out quick, quick enough, but I didn't. I felt disconnected when it came to that, whereas I kind of think that my son is, is he's going to carry the same skill that I do, where reading comes easily to him. *[Interview 13]*

## Theme #3 Reciprocal joy/connection

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**PL: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about you about your relationship with the twins?**

**I:** Like I said, I just get joy out of watching my babies grow up...And the best part even of working and coming in the door is...the joy that they have when they see me come in the door, it's just an amazing feeling. That's, that's the best I can say. **It's like the joy I get from them is the same joy I think they get from me....**It's just a, it's, it's something it's like I said, it's unexplainable. It's just a heartwarming feeling that you get when it comes to your kids. *[Interview 9]*

## Theme #3 Reciprocal joy/connection

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**PL: Think about a recent moment that made you feel really close. Describe that moment.**

**I:** Sure, um, when after we drop his sister off to school, we pass by a construction site that has been present for at least six months, and he always comments on it, but we just keep driving. This week, I paused. They had something closer to the street. There were adults present, and we pull[ed] over and we rolled the windows down, and we sat there. We interacted with the construction worker employees. He talked about *[the digger]* and how similar it is to his digger at home. And...**I'm...be honest, I would never just stop and talk to strangers, [but] because he was there and his engagement, it gave me as an adult more power to...get out of my comfort zone,** and to just say...I have a little guy who really loves construction sites and the tools that you all use. Do you mind us watching? One of the gentlemen even came over and stood in the middle of the road and flagged cars to go around us. Yeah, it was beautiful, and it was a moment just the two of us. *[Interview 13]*

# Audience Q&A



# Join Us Tomorrow: Wednesday, October 22nd

## Learn about the NASEM ERH Consensus Report!

NATIONAL  
ACADEMIES

Sciences  
Engineering  
Medicine

October 22 from 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM ET • Report Webinar

Early Relational Health: Building Foundations for  
Child, Family, and Community Well-being





# Connect with Us

[www.nutureconnection.org](http://www.nutureconnection.org)



Thank you! 