



Research Transformation Through Parent Codesign

How Parent Partnership Is Shaping Our
Research Methods, Results, and Interpretation

Presented by:



DATE

Tuesday, June 9th

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.

Nurture Connection Presents:

Research Transformation Through Parent Codesign

How Parent Partnership Is Shaping Our Research Methods, Results, and Interpretation



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June 9, 2026

Research Transformation Through Parent Co-Design

How Parent Partnership Is Shaping Our Research Methods,
Results and Interpretation: Findings from a Qualitative Study

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Background & Aim

Most early relational health constructs are defined by researchers' observations, not by parents' lived experiences.

Few prior qualitative studies have:

- Included both mothers and fathers
- Used everyday rather than clinical samples
- Recruited parents from across the country
- Been co-designed with parents as co-researchers (CBPR)

How do parents from across the country describe connection with their young children?

Qualitative Research Innovation

Parent leaders **co-designed every step** of the research process with researchers.

6

parent leaders each conducted
1–4 interviews (60–90 min)

18

parents interviewed in total

Parent leaders came from the same communities as those they interviewed:

1. Black, African American, or Brown parents
2. Indigenous parents
3. Parents of children with special health care needs or disabilities
4. Spanish-speaking immigrant parents
5. Parents with a Southern cultural background
6. Fathers



Qualitative Research Innovation

Member checking

What is member checking

Returning analytic findings to participants to check whether the researchers' interpretations ring true and hold up (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

How did we adapt it within reflexive thematic analysis (RTA)

Themes are actively generated by researchers, not verified as fixed facts, so member checking deepened interpretation rather than confirming it.

Who did we check with

The six parent leaders who conducted the interviews, not the original interviewees, drawing on shared community membership and analytic insight.

What it produced

Two member-checking sessions plus a structured questionnaire shaped how we reviewed, defined, and eventually named the six principles in parents' own words.

Positionality matters in qualitative research

Member-checking sessions were designed explicitly to counteract the team's interpretive blind spots.

The research team

- Demographic makeup substantially different from research population
 - Four coders
 - All women under 30
 - Three White, one Hispanic/Latina
 - None are parents
- Familiar with ERH constructs: double-edged, risked mapping parents' experiences onto existing frameworks

The parent leaders

- Closely mirrored the participants
 - Demographic makeup
 - Shared lived experience of parenting and community
- Reframed researcher language into parent-generated terms

Study Timeline

Parent leaders and research team co-designed every phase.



Early Parent-Child Connection

Academic researchers' first pass at organizing principles

- 1** Connection as a feeling that is bigger than words.
- 2** Connection is unique to each child (differences across children of same family).
- 3** Connection as a catalyst for parent's growth or self-discovery.
- 4** Variation in onset of connection (when it starts, what facilitates it).

Early Parent-Child Connection

Parents' Initial Feedback in December

1 **We were focusing on the “pretty descriptions” of connection.**

Parents used beautiful language to describe connection, for example as feeling like “the sun rising for the first time in the sky.” Parent leaders pointed out that we were centering this imagery rather than the more complete story.

2 **We had not considered how parents view their past as shaping the parent-child relationship.**

This includes the cultural, familial, and intergenerational factors that influence connection, none of which our initial framing accounted for.

Interview Guide

Four interview sections

1. Childhood relationships with primary caregivers
2. Current adult relationships
- 3. Relationship with their youngest child**
4. Brief demographic close

Parent leaders made a difference

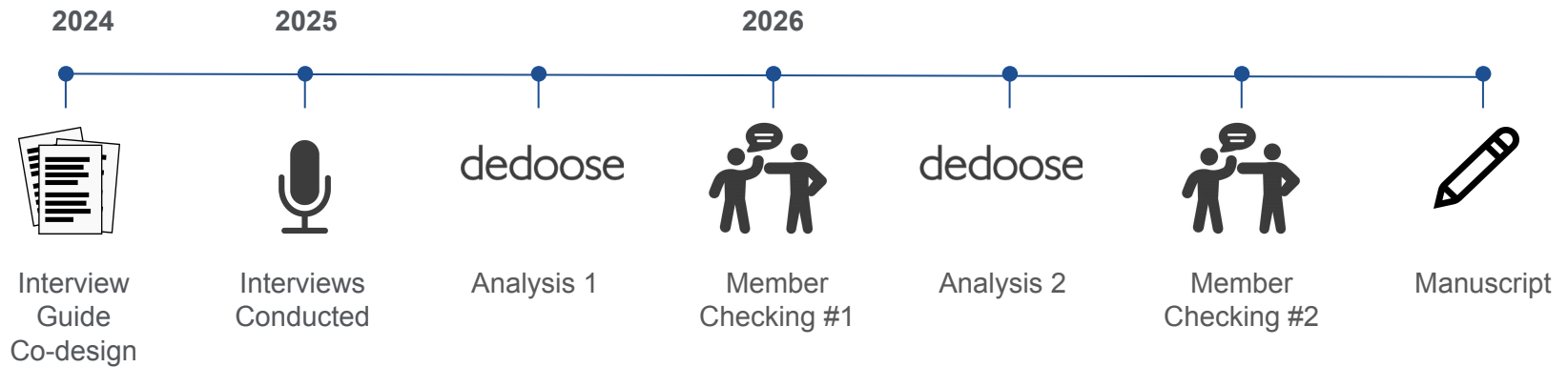
- Researchers first analyzed only the section on the relationship with the youngest child (Section 3)
- Parent leaders made clear a parent's relationship with their child cannot be understood apart from the parent's own identity and history.
- Researchers repeated the analytic cycle with the full dataset, situating connection within the parent's whole relational context.

Early Parent-Child Connection

Final Organizing Principles

- 1** Parent-child connection begins with an instinctual sense of responsibility.
- 2** From this foundation, connection builds as a dynamic process that ebbs and flows.
- 3** Family circumstances directly shape this connection.
- 4** Parents' own upbringing and past relationships indirectly shape how they connect with their child.
- 5** For connection to grow, parents must show up physically and emotionally, even when other demands compete for their attention.
- 6** Over time, parents grow from parenting and that growth feeds back into the connection.

Study Timeline



Conclusions

Parent co-designed shaped what we found, not just how we described it.

- Our initial analysis focused on the vivid language parents used, treating their descriptions of connection as the main finding.
- Parent leaders redirected attention to intergenerational and contextual influences we had set aside.
- Re-analysis of the full dataset surfaced *relational legacy*, a construct the original framing would have missed.

Thank you!



Parent Partnership Reflections



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Now Streaming on PBS: *Wired for Connection*

Wired for Connection

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Scientists link friendship to a remarkable range of benefits—both physical and mental: lower blood pressure, stronger immunity, reduced dementia risk, better sleep, and longer life. But technology and the pace of contemporary life threaten our ability to connect. Cutting-edge science reveals how isolation can harm us, while meaningful relationships can heal. Based on "Friendship" by Lydia Denworth

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Thank you!

