

HE LOVES ME, SHE LOVES ME NOT: DOES THE LOVE OF A PARENT REALLY MATTER? THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL WARMTH ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOMES OF ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN POVERTY

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Background

Positive adolescent outcomes have been associated with a father's¹ and a mother's warmth³. Adolescents who experience positive relationships with their father have positive behavioral outcomes⁵ and a mother's warmth has positively impacted adolescent females' sexual behaviors³. Other studies show that time spent with a father and the support received from a father is related to psychological well-being⁵.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of maternal and paternal warmth on the psychosocial outcomes and behaviors of adolescents living in impoverished neighborhoods.

Method

The Mobile Youth Survey (MYS)

- Administered to youth ages 10 -18 years of age.
- Neighborhoods are predominately African-American (95%).
- Poverty levels ranged from 31.5% to 81.4%.

Statistical Analysis

- A linear mixed model used for continuous variables.
- Generalized linear mixed models were used for dichotomous variables.
- All models were controlled for age, gender, neighborhood, cohort, and wave of participation.



Results

LINEAR REGRESSION OF PATERNAL WARMTH AND ADOLESCENT RISK BEHAVIORS

Risk Factor	Unadjusted for Maternal Warmth			Adjusted for Maternal Warmth		
	β	SE	p-value	β	SE	p-value
<i>Sexual Behavior</i>						
Condom use	-0.0015	0.01	0.8251	-0.0050	0.01	0.4903
Had sex w/ someone who did not want to	-0.0048	0.00	0.2200	-0.0046	0.00	0.2467
Had sex when they did not want to	-0.0080	0.00	0.0364	-0.0067	0.00	0.1097
Ever had sexual intercourse	0.0047	0.02	0.8115	0.0196	0.02	0.3657
<i>Substance Use</i>						
Marijuana use	-0.0166	0.01	0.2070	-0.0051	0.01	0.7226
Alcohol use	-0.0201	0.01	0.1258	-0.0142	0.01	0.3242
Cigarette use	-0.0159	0.01	0.0367	0.0120	0.01	0.1488
Cocaine use	-0.0039	0.00	0.1198	-0.0047	0.00	0.0851*
Ever got drunk or high	-0.0106	0.02	0.5458	0.0049	0.02	0.7977
<i>Psychosocial</i>						
Hopelessness	-0.0308	0.01	0.0193	-0.0128	0.01	0.3758
Positive marriage expectations	0.0150	0.01	0.0063	0.0058	0.01	0.3362
Worry	-0.0163	0.03	0.5986	-0.0081	0.03	0.8118
Self-worth	0.0867	0.02	<0.0001	0.0756	0.02	<0.0001
Traumatic stress	-0.0019	0.02	0.9407	-0.0011	0.03	0.9689
Adult Expectation	0.0246	0.01	0.0014	0.0077	0.01	0.3617
<i>Violence or Delinquency</i>						
Ever been arrested	-0.0090	0.01	0.0911	-0.0041	0.01	0.4758
Ever cut or shot someone	-0.0020	0.01	0.7410	0.0063	0.01	0.3343
Ever been in a physical fight	-0.0190	0.01	0.1511	-0.0170	0.01	0.2425
Gang involvement	-0.0145	0.01	0.2739	0.0016	0.01	0.9134
Ever carried a gun	0.0018	0.02	0.9093	0.0227	0.02	0.1843
Ever carried a knife	-0.0402	0.02	0.0311	-0.0346	0.02	0.0904*
Ever got other kids to fight	-0.0216	0.01	0.1408	-0.0106	0.02	0.5111
Ever carried a knife or gun	-0.0276	0.02	0.1760	-0.0034	0.02	0.8777

Statistically significant variables are highlighted in bold and italics for easy viewing.
*Moderately significant variables (p<0.10).

Results - cont'd

LINEAR REGRESSION OF MATERNAL WARMTH AND ADOLESCENT RISK BEHAVIORS

Risk Factor	Unadjusted for Paternal Warmth			Adjusted for Paternal Warmth		
	β	SE	p-value	β	SE	p-value
<i>Sexual Behavior</i>						
Condom use	0.0177	0.01	0.0266	0.0220	0.01	0.0229
Had sex w/ someone who did not want to	-0.0046	0.00	0.3175	-0.0010	0.01	0.8522
Had sex when they did not want to	-0.0084	0.00	0.0872*	-0.0016	0.01	0.7789
Ever had sexual intercourse	-0.0495	0.03	0.0494	-0.0509	0.03	0.0869*
<i>Substance Use</i>						
Marijuana use	-0.0448	0.02	0.0079	-0.0483	0.02	0.0143
Alcohol use	-0.0333	0.02	0.0470	-0.0268	0.02	0.1772
Cigarette use	-0.0217	0.01	0.0248	-0.0177	0.01	0.1210
Cocaine use	-0.0017	0.00	0.5950	0.0021	0.00	0.5793
Ever got drunk or high	-0.0747	0.02	0.0009	-0.0623	0.03	0.0182
<i>Psychosocial</i>						
Hopelessness	-0.0672	0.02	<0.0001	-0.0618	0.02	0.0019
Positive marriage expectations	0.0351	0.01	<0.0001	0.0335	0.01	<0.0001
Worry	0.0057	0.04	0.8824	-0.0120	0.05	0.7967
Self-worth	0.0659	0.03	0.0014	0.0384	0.02	0.1205
Traumatic stress	-0.0133	0.03	0.6721	-0.0151	0.04	0.6868
Adult Expectation	0.0612	0.01	<0.0001	0.0595	0.01	<0.0001
<i>Violence or Delinquency</i>						
Ever been arrested	-0.0165	0.01	0.0148	-0.0160	0.01	0.0439
Ever cut or shot someone	-0.0234	0.01	0.0021	-0.0268	0.01	0.0026
Ever been in a physical fight	-0.0185	0.02	0.2699	-0.0090	0.02	0.6540
Gang involvement	-0.0436	0.02	0.0097	-0.0514	0.02	0.0104
Ever carried a gun	-0.0523	0.02	0.0077	-0.0681	0.02	0.0037
Ever carried a knife	-0.0346	0.02	0.1432	-0.0206	0.03	0.4627
Ever got other kids to fight	-0.0448	0.02	0.0159	-0.0504	0.02	0.0241
Ever carried a knife or gun	-0.0818	0.03	0.0016	-0.0849	0.03	0.0057

Statistically significant variables are highlighted in bold and italics for easy viewing.
*Moderately significant variables (p<0.10).

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Conclusion

The current study shows that the perceived warmth of a mother or mother figure may have more impact on the psychosocial outcomes of adolescents living in poverty than the perceived warmth of a father or father figure as seen in other studies^{2,4}. Although paternal warmth had significant impacts on several psychosocial outcomes, when controlling for maternal warmth, many of the effects were no longer significant. This study does not propose that the warmth of a father is unnecessary. Instead it may be a result of the context in which these adolescents live. Living in predominantly single-women headed households, these adolescents may be more exposed to a mother or mother figure's warmth more than the warmth of a non-resident father of father figure which may be reflected in the results.