Mother-child relationship, daily hassles, and behavior problems in Arab Muslim youth

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• Team for the larger study
  – PI, Aroian
  – Statistician, Templin
  – Family expert, Hough
  – Culture expert, Kulwicki
  – 12 Arabic-speaking data collectors
Previous Findings: Latent Change Model

- Adolescent stressors and mother-child relationship had the strongest direct effects on adolescent behavior problems at two different time points in a complex family level model of mother-child adjustment.
Latent Change Score Model

\[ \Delta \text{Mother-Child Relationship} \rightarrow \Delta \text{Child Stressors} \rightarrow \Delta \text{Child Adjustment/ Behavior Problems} \]

- \(.40\)
- \(.64\)
State of the Science on Youth Outcomes

• Ample findings:
  – a positive relationship between everyday stressors and behavior problems
  – an inverse relationship between a good mother-child relationship and behavior problems

• Little to no research investigating causal relationships
Mother-child relationship & Everyday Stressors

- Little understanding of the relationship, causal or otherwise, between quality of the mother-child relationship and everyday stressors for adolescents
Research Question

• What are the causal relationships between everyday stressors, quality of the mother-child relationship, and behavior problems in Arab Muslim immigrant youth?

  – Do the causal relationships differ for boys and girls?
Study Design

Three wave longitudinal study

- **Wave 1 (N = 633)**
  - (baseline)
  - Mean Age (S.D. pooled)
  - 13.78 yrs. (2.24)

- **Wave 2 (N = 530)**
  - (18 months)
  - 15.33 yrs.

- **Wave 3 (N = 454)**
  - (36 months)
  - 16.62 yrs.
Study Criteria

- Arab Muslim immigrant mother living in greater Detroit (USA)
- Child between the ages of 11 and 15
- English language and reading ability *not* required
## Constructs & Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday Stressors</td>
<td>Adolescent Daily Hassles Scale (ADHS)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seidman et al., 1995</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother-child Relationship</td>
<td>Parent Scales of the Family Peer Relationship Questionnaire (FPRQ)</td>
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<td>Ellison, 1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Behavior Problems</td>
<td>Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and Youth Self-report (YSR)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Achenbach, 1991</td>
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ADHS

• Measures daily hassles in five domains:
  – Parents
  – Peers
  – School
  – Neighborhood
  – Resources

• Higher score = more hassles

• Assessed by youth only
FPRQ

• Three mother-child relationships scales:
  – **Togetherness** (frequency of activities)
  – **Disclosure** (from child to parent about various child experiences)
  – **Parent as mediator** (parent’s role in facilitating peer relationships)

• Assessed by both mothers and adolescents

• Higher score=better mother-child relationship
CBCL / YSR

- Summed mother and child reports of child behavior problems
- Two Scales
  - Internalizing (withdrawn, somatic complaints, depression, anxiety)
  - Externalizing (delinquent & aggressive behavior)
- Higher score = more behavior problems
Data Analysis

• Planned series of cross-lagged structural equation models (SEM) for:

– Time/age effects

– Causal relationships

– Other predictors (gender, other potentially confounding demographic characteristics)
### Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>M (SD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s age</td>
<td>40.61 (6.50)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child age at immigration (excludes 16% born in US)</td>
<td>6.81 (3.83)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother’s yrs. in US</td>
<td>8.16 (4.23)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Child gender (% girls)</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married mothers</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers less than high school</td>
<td>64.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fathers less than high school</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers unemployed</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income less than $20,000</td>
<td>76.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Family Country of Origin

- Lebanon: 36%
- Iraq: 43%
- Other: 21%

Additional countries: Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Palestine...
Hypothetical/Statistical Model
Three-wave Cross-lagged SEM
Final Model
Conclusions

- Everyday stressors are more a consequence than a cause of behavior problems.
- Mother-child relationship and behavior problems are reciprocally related over time.
- A poor mother-child relationship contributes to everyday stressors and behavior problems.
- Youth with less educated fathers are more at risk for a poor mother-child relationship and greater behavior problems.
Implications for Practice

Mother-child relationship -- main point of intervention for Arab Muslim adolescents regardless of gender or age

- Intervening can reduce both everyday stressors and behavior problems
- Reducing behavior problems is essential to reducing everyday stressors
Implications for Research

- Identify Arab Muslim youth and mothers at risk for poor-mother child relationships
- Strategies to improve the mother-child relationship in Arab Muslim youth
- If the causal relationships noted in this study occur in other adolescent groups