Exhancing Intergenerational Links Between Parent and Adolescent Self-Esteem: A Family Process Model
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Introduction

**Youth self-esteem has long-term implications**
- For their health, economic strain, relationship, and life satisfaction for later life stages (e.g., Bosen et al., 2008; Tzizernowski et al., 2006).

**Family as the key developmental context**
- Is linked with self-esteem development in various facets (e.g., Whitbeck et al., 1991; Pumpert et al., 2007).
- Family process model (Bakery, 1984).
- "Spillover" (Erel & Burman, 1995).
- Key determinants of healthy family functioning
  - Parent characteristics
  - Interparental relationships
  - Key family functioning → positive youth development
  - Parenting behaviors
  - Family climate

**Innovation**
- Focus on a developmentally salient domain—self-esteem during adolescence
- Include multiple-reporters and explore the possible distinguished roles for mother and father
- Evaluate a family process model that traces pathways from parents' self-esteem, through interparental relationship quality, parenting, and family climate, to adolescent self-esteem in a 4-wave longitudinal study

The Current Study

**Aim 1: Parent Self-Esteem → Martial Interaction**
- To examine how mother's and father's self-esteem is associated with both mother's and father's martial behaviors during their interactions

- Hypotheses:
  - Higher levels of mother's and father's self-esteem in 6th grade are associated with more positive behaviors during their marital interactions half year later.

**Aim 2: Marital Interaction → Family Dynamics**
- To examine how both parents' martial behaviors are associated with Mother's parenting, Father's parenting, and family climate

- Hypotheses:
  - More positive behaviors in marital interaction from both mother and father in 6th grade are associated with better mother's parenting and father's parenting, as well as more positive family climate in 7th grade.

**Aim 3: Family Dynamics → Youth Self-Esteem**
- To examine how mother's parenting, father's parenting, and family climate are associated with youth self-esteem

- Hypotheses:
  - Mother's and Father's acceptance toward the youth and positive family climate in 7th grade are associated with higher level of youth self-esteem in 9th grade.

Method

**Participants and Procedure**
- Families were drawn from the PROSPER project; Approximately 43% of those invited participated
- Online written questionnaires were completed independently by each family members during in-home interviews
- Only include two-parent families
- 59.3% (N=414) were in intervention group at W1; Good retention for the whole sample (75.6% at T4)

**Data collection time**
- 6th grade (2004 Fall) 11.27 (SD = .48)
- 6th grade (2005 Spring) 11.94
- 7th grade (2005 Fall) 12.95
- 9th grade (2007 Fall) 14.30

**Retention**
- Control group: 80.3%, 79.3%, 75.7%
- Intervention group: 84.5%, 84.1%, 75.6%

**Missingness associated with demographic**
- Parents' education: 21%, 28%, 24%

**Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Reporter</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1985)</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1985)</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Martial</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Affection Quality of the Relationship (Spoth, Redmond, &amp; Shin, 1998)</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Behavior</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Affection Quality of the Relationship (Spoth, Redmond, &amp; Shin, 1998)</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Climate</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>HIV = HIV status</td>
<td>Elliot's Parental Rejection Scale (Brennan, 1974)</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Climate</td>
<td>T3</td>
<td>F = Y = F, Y = T</td>
<td>Family Environment Scale (Moos &amp; Moos, 1994)</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Self-Esteem</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>T4</td>
<td>Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1985)</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Measures**
- Family Climate as the nexus for family dynamics
  - Family climate as a family-level variable that represents the whole family functioning (e.g., Bloss, 1985; Olson et al., 1979)
  - Expanded current literature of family climate’s influence on youth positive development (specifically, self-esteem)

Results

Figure 1. SEM Model for Transmission of Self-Esteem through Family Processes

Discussion

**1. Parent Self-Esteem → Martial Interaction**
- Higher level of mother/father's self-esteem are associated with more positive behaviors for themselves and her/his partner during the marital interaction

- Evidence for family process model
  - Parents' personal characteristics are factors that influence family processes (Sulsky, 1984)

- Innovatively include positive aspects
  - Extended existing literature that largely focus on negative characteristics (e.g., depression, psychopathology, Cuming et al., 2005; Beng-Nielsen et al., 2002) to include positive aspects (i.e., parent's self-esteem)

**2. Marital Interaction → Family Dynamics**
- The parent's positive martial behavior is associated with one's partner's acceptance toward the youth (for both parents)

- Interdependence
  - The results highlight the interdependence between interparental subsystem and parent-child subsystem (e.g., Erel & Burman, 1995; Konhasewski & Bowerl, 2000)

- "Spillover" process
  - The parent's perception of his/her partner's behavior directly influence his/her acceptance toward the youth
  - Consistent with existing studies on the spillover process between marital interaction and parenting behavior (e.g., Kuhl & Guttman, 1999; Malik & Ruhner, 2010) but extended to positive aspects (i.e., parental acceptance)

- Positive behaviors from both parents in their marital interactions are associated with better family climate

- Evidence for family systems framework
  - Both parents' behaviors in their marital interaction set the foundation for the whole family climate and whole family functioning (e.g., Lindahl et al., 1997; Michal et al., 2016)

**3. Family Dynamics → Youth Self-Esteem**
- Father's acceptance toward youth is a significant predictor for youth self-esteem

- The distinguished role of father's warmth
  - One of the first studies demonstrate the unique effect of father-adolescent relationship rather than mother-adolescent relationship
  - Consistent with studies showing that the father has his distinguished role in youth positive development (e.g., Jaynes, 2016; Lamb, 2004)

- Better family climate is associated with higher level of youth self-esteem

- Family climate as the nexus for family dynamics
  - Family climate is a family-level variable that represents the whole family functioning (e.g., Bloss, 1985; Olson et al., 1979)
  - Expanded current literature of family climate’s influence on youth positive development (specifically, self-esteem)

**Limitation and Future Direction**

1. Primarily comprised by White sample (limited generalizability)
2. Future studies can explore the family processes in the time range between prior to pregnancy and having a child
3. Intervention program should especially highlight father's unique contribution to youth self-esteem and have relevant module to improve father's warmth

**Implications for Intervention Research**
- To improve youth self-esteem
  - 1. design different modules targeting on each family subsystems simultaneously
  - 2. use family climate as the indicator for the whole family functioning
  - 3. intervention program should especially highlight father’s unique contribution to youth self-esteem and have relevant module to improve father’s warmth

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