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Child Agreeableness as a Buffer Against Depression
Curtis Layne Pollard II, Natalie Gariby, Megan Sheldon, Jonathan Kersh, Dr. Roy Bean*

Introduction
There is a clear correlation between the quality of family life and adolescent depression; the more conflict within a home, the more likely adolescents are to become depressed (Sheeber, Hops, Alpert, Davis, & Andrews, 1997). Another factor that is positively correlated with increased levels of adolescent depression is parental depression. Specifically, continuous maternal depressive behavior wears on an adolescent’s psychological well-being and leads to a reaction of depression or a behavior disorder (Tully, Iacono & McGue, 2008). Adams, Abela, Auerbach, and Skitch (2009) found that negative personality traits were correlated to a distinct vulnerability to depression for adolescents. Because of this correlation, we hypothesized that positive personality traits would buffer adolescents from depression. An adolescent’s risk of developing depressive symptoms can be predicted by examining the factors of parental conflict and depression. We hypothesize that adolescents whose parents exhibit low amounts of conflict and depressive symptoms will themselves be at a lower risk for depression.

Methods
The sample for this study was 500 families from the Flourishing Families Project. The data were collected in Seattle during 2007. This sample is unique in that it includes multiple respondents within families: one child between the ages of 10-13 and both parents, when possible, participated. Participants responded to detailed questionnaires with items measuring constructs such as parenting, family relationships, how things get done in the family, child development, and marital relationships. Measures important to the present study include child agreeableness, parent and child depression, and marital conflict.

Discussion
In accordance with past research, results showed that there is a strong positive relationship between parental conflict and child depression (Sheeber, Hops, Alpert, Davis, & Andrews, 1997). Differential findings for the relationship between parental depression and child depression may be attributed to a closer relationship between mothers and children than between fathers and children. In related fashion, this finding may also be attributed to the greater amount of time that mothers spend with children.

A child’s individual personality characteristic of agreeableness did show a significant negative relationship with child depression. This can be explained by virtue of **

Also, based on these preliminary findings there is evidence that child personality characteristics (in this case, agreeableness) may mediate the relationship between maternal depression and child depression. Additional research should be conducted to determine if there are other personality characteristics that may be related to this association as protective or risk factors.

Results
Fit indices for the structural equation model were within professional standards (X² = 623.04, df = 311, p < .001, CMIN/DF = 2), with CFI being .90 (achieving the expected minimum) and RMSEA being .038 (less than the .05 standard), indicating a good fit between the model and data. The following hypothesized relationships were found to be significant:

- A negative relationship between maternal depression and child agreeableness
- A negative relationship between child agreeableness and child depression
- A positive association between parental conflict and child depression
- A positive association between maternal depression and child depression

In contrast, several hypothesized relationships were not found to be significant, including:

- Paternal depression and child depression.
- Parental conflict and child agreeableness.
- Paternal depression and child agreeableness.

References


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