



Supporting
Military Families
Through Research
and Outreach

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Parent-Child Hostility and Child and Adolescent Depression Symptoms: The Direction of Effects, Role of Genetic Factors and Gender.

Lewis, G., Collishaw, S., Thapar, A. & Harold, G.T. (2014). Parent-child hostility and child and adolescent depression symptoms: The direction of effects, role of genetic factors and gender. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 23, 317-327. doi:10.1007/s00787-013-0460-4.



316 Welsh families and 1, 075 Welsh and English twin pairs participated in a study to examine whether hostile parent-child relationships confer an environmental risk for depression in youth; the influence of both parent and child gender were also examined. Girls and mothers had a significant, bi-directional relationship between mother-daughter hostility and depression symptoms, but no such finding existed for boys.

Key Findings:

- For girls, there was a significant bi-directional relationship between mother's hostility and youth depressive symptoms.
- Depressive symptoms displayed by daughters were found to predict increased father-daughter hostility, but not vice versa.
- There was no evidence of any significant relationships between parental hostility and boys' symptoms of depression.
- In the twin sample, there was a significant environmental link between mother hostility and symptoms of daughter depression; this finding was independent of genetic factors.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could offer classes for parents about recognition and management of depressive symptoms in their children.
- Programs could offer enjoyable social activities for families to enhance parent-child interactions in a low-stress environment.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could allocate funding to train educators of children about how to recognize depressive symptoms in children and adolescents.
- Policies could recommend offering professional development to family program workers on how to support families dealing with troubled parent-child relationships.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could evaluate the impact of adding a component in cognitive behavior therapy that targets mother-daughter relationships.
- Additional research could use non-self-report measures of mental health and parental-child relationship in order to strengthen these findings.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu

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Background Information

Methodology:

- Children (ages 11-12 years) and their families from 12 schools across South Wales were approached to participate in this study; 83% consented.
- Families were part of a twin registry project in Wales and England and were invited to have their data included in these analyses; 69% consented.
- For the first study, children completed a measure of depression and one of their parents completed a measure of hostility at baseline and again one year later (Time 2); 82% participated at Time 2.
- In the second study, twin participants completed assessments of family environment and child depressive symptoms at one time period.
- Cross-lagged models were estimated to assess the direction of the association between a child's depression and parent's hostility.

Participants:

- 316 families participated (50% boys) in the initial study.
- Average child age at baseline was 11.70 years, average age at Time 2 was 12.70 years.
- 1,075 twin pairs participated in the twin study
- 29% male twin pairs, 23% female twin pairs, 31% opposite sex pairs
- The average age of twins was 16.12 years.
- No additional demographic data on the sample used for these analyses was presented.

Limitations:

- Two datasets were used and there was some variability in measurements, making some comparisons imprecise.
- Participants in the two studies were different ages which may impact the comparability of findings across the two studies.
- Measures of depression were all self-reported which includes some inherent limitations.
- Participants were Welsh and English; it is unknown how these results generalize to American youth.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent <i>Minor Limitations</i> (★★★)	Appropriate <i>Few Limitations</i> (★★★)	Limited <i>Several Limitations</i> (★★★)	Questionable <i>Many/Severe Limitations</i> (★★★)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications	
Overall Quality Rating				★ ★ ★	