

Does Parent Daughter Relationship Explain Demographic Differentials in Early Sexual Behavior?

Afra R. Chowdhury

Objectives: The study analyses the effect of parents' relationship with their daughter on her risk of pregnancy during adolescence.

Background: The common finding of prior research is that there is a positive association between growing up in a non-intact family and the risk of pre-marital pregnancy. Family formation and sexual behaviors of adolescents also differ according to their childhood socialization, and level of social and parental control. Mothers' own expectations about the age of their daughters at first marriage and parenthood, and the expected sequencing of these two transitions effect early sexual behaviors; partly through daughters' own expectations. We also know that not only family structure but also the instability in family situations or in other words, number of changes in the family situation (from two parents to single parent to step parents or from single parent to other family situation etc.) is highly associated with the risk of a premarital birth for teenage women. Researchers in early childhood development suggest that parent-child interactions during early childhood have lasting consequences for later behaviors, and may intervene in the relationship between demographic family factors and sexual behavior. This study will assess the impact of family interaction and parent-daughter relations in different family settings on teenage sexual behavior and the risk of pregnancy. It will investigate whether these relationships and interactions mediate or buffer the negative effects of adverse family situations on adolescents' sexual behavior and risk of becoming pregnant.

Dataset and Sample: The study uses the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) which is a large, ongoing longitudinal survey, designed to be nationally representative of US residents in 1997, who were born during the years 1980 through 1984. The survey first interviewed the respondents and one of their parents in 1997 and only the youths every year following. Five rounds of data have been released so far. The sample for this study includes 2621 women who were 12 to 14 years old at round 1. At

the end of round 5, they were 16 to 18 years old. Of the respondents, 554 are Hispanic White, 694 are Black and 1373 are Non-Black and Non-Hispanic. There are 1122 women living in a household with both biological parents, 328 with stepparents, 832 with single parent. The remaining 339 responding women come from household with other types of living arrangements. Of all the responding female adolescents, 567 report a first pregnancy. These women with pregnancy experience come from different family situations. This suggests a research opportunity to look at the effect of parent-daughter relationship on risk of becoming pregnant controlling for family demographic situation before the pregnancy occurred. The event history data also provides information about family situation at age 2, 6 and 12, which are used as a indicator of instability of family situation.

This paper uses the parent-youth relationship scale developed by Haire et al., 2002. Eight questions were employed to construct the parent-adolescent relationship index. The questions address youth's identification with parents, and parental supportiveness; the responses of each question were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Method: A discrete time hazard model is being used to investigate the effect of relationship between parent and their young female adolescents (12 to 14 years) on their sexual and reproductive behaviors — (1) the hazard of young women becoming sexually active between the ages of 12-14 to 16-18 years, (2) the risk (hazard) of becoming pregnant among sexually active teenagers, and (3) the probability (logistic regression) of contraceptive use during first intercourse.

Reference:

Hair, Elizabeth C., Kristin A. Moore, Sarah B. Garret, Akemi Kinukawa, Laura Lippman, and Eric Michelsen. "Psychometric Analysis of the Parent-Adolescent Relationship Scale in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997" paper prepared for the Positive Outcomes Conference; March, 2003.