

Satisfaction With Parenting: A Comparison Between Adolescent Mothers and Fathers

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In this study we compared adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants to examine levels of and predictors of parenting satisfaction. Participants were 41 adolescent mothers who were contacted through alternative school programs and the fathers of their infants. Not all of the fathers were adolescents. The sample was racially diverse (White, Black, Native American, and Hispanic). Correlation and *t* test analyses were conducted and those variables that were significantly correlated with parenting satisfaction were used in regression analyses. Mothers' parenting satisfaction and paternal control scores were higher than fathers' scores. Self-esteem, age at the baby's birth, and social support satisfaction significantly predicted parenting satisfaction for fathers, whereas only self-esteem and social support satisfaction did so for mothers.

KEY WORDS: adolescent parenting; fathers; parenting satisfaction; adolescent mothers.

Parenting satisfaction varies among contextual situations that range from a financially stable, two-parent, one-child home to the household of a single father who is raising two small children after his wife's death. Variables that contribute to parenting satisfaction include educational attainment, parent gender, family structure, and income (White & Rogers, 1998). Among the most significant contributors is age at onset; the older and more mature the parent, the greater the parenting satisfaction (White & Rogers, 1998). In this article we discuss variables related to adolescent parents' parenting satisfaction.

In general, researchers to date have not investigated the fathers' parenting satisfaction to the extent they have the parenting satisfaction of mothers. We have very little understanding of how these fathers view their parenting role. Less than 50% of fathers of children born to adolescent mothers are adoles-

cents themselves; the other half are older (Darroch, Landry, & Oslak, 1999). Fathers of infants born to adolescent mothers are notoriously underrepresented in the literature because of sampling issues and lack of involvement with social service agencies. Therefore, this study focused on the differences in parenting satisfaction and related variables between adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants.

Adolescent pregnancy is a pressing social concern that has received a great deal of attention from many sources. National birth rates for adolescent girls have dropped for all age groups except for the youngest (10- to 14-year-olds); however the United States has one of the highest adolescent birth rates of any industrialized nation (Martin, Hamilton, Ventura, Menacker, & Park, 2002). Premature pregnancy triggers an increased need for family support, particularly as 78% of the adolescent mothers are unmarried (Ventura, Mathews, & Curtin, 1999), and the majority receive no support from their partners. Becoming a parent during adolescence without family support may lead to less satisfaction with the parenting role.

Adolescence is a distinct stage between childhood and adulthood defined by both biological and social factors. Through social exploration they begin

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to transform the immaturity, habits, and attitudes of childhood into responsible adult behaviors (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1986). Some of these processes are interrupted when an adolescent becomes a parent. Parenthood undoubtedly has an impact on the psychological well-being of an adolescent due to the role changes that accompany the transition to parenthood. These changes include the psychological preparation for parenthood, changes in the relationships with the adolescent's own parents as well as with the other parent of the child, adjustment to child-care responsibilities, and identification with the new role of parent (Cowan & Cowan, 1992).

Belsky (1984) provided a foundation for understanding parenting behavior by addressing three general areas of influence on parenting: (1) the parent's psychological and personal resources, (2) the broader context in which the parent-child relationship evolves, and (3) the characteristics of the child. In the present study we examined parenting satisfaction in view of Belsky's model. We assumed that the variables that affect parenting behavior also affect parents' satisfaction with their role. For example, self-esteem is a psychological resource that can help an adolescent adapt to the parenting role. It might assist an adolescent to perceive personal characteristics as positive. In turn it can help the adolescent to feel more secure in her or his ability to fulfill the parenting role and therefore promote satisfaction in that same role. Current research on parenting satisfaction, psychological and personal resources, broader context, and child characteristics is summarized below.

Parenting Satisfaction

For this study, *parenting satisfaction* is defined as perceived gratification from the parenting role. Parenting satisfaction in general has been found to be most affected by marital happiness, family structure, and parents' gender (Rogers & White, 1998). Degree of commitment to the role is positively related to parenting satisfaction, and degree of role overload is inversely related to parenting satisfaction (Goetting, 1986). Family structure has been shown to be a determinant of satisfaction; single parents report less satisfaction than do either biological, married parents or stepparents (Rogers & White, 1998). Adolescent parents' parenting satisfaction is at risk because most are single. Mothers generally report higher parenting satisfaction than do fathers, and parenting satisfaction is positively related with parental age (Goetting, 1986),

which place adolescent parents at even more risk for low levels of parenting satisfaction. We know very little about parenting satisfaction and related variables for adolescent mothers and even less about the fathers of their children. Therefore, this study was designed to compare parenting satisfaction of adolescent mothers and the fathers of their children and the predictors for each.

Psychological and Personal Resources

Self-Esteem

A literature search uncovered no information about whether self-esteem is linked to level of adolescent parenting satisfaction. However, there appeared to be a relationship between self-esteem and whether or not an adolescent becomes a parent.

Holden, Nelson, Velasquez, and Ritchie (1993) found that nonpregnant adolescents had a higher perception of self-worth than did pregnant adolescents. Similarly, Barth, Schinke, and Maxwell (1983) noted that pregnant and parenting adolescents reported significantly lower self-esteem than did nonparenting adolescents. Finally, several researchers (Barth et al., 1983; Holden et al., 1993; Horn & Rudolph, 1987; Keddle, 1992; Patten, 1981; Zongker, 1977) have suggested a relationship between low self-esteem and the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy. Some (e.g., Medora, Goldstein, & von der Hellen, 1994) have found no significant difference in the self-esteem of pregnant, parenting, and nonpregnant adolescent girls. However, Medora et al. (1994) did find significant ethnic group differences in the self-esteem scores; African American adolescents reported higher self-esteem than Latinas, European Americans, and Asian Americans. Self-esteem remained stable for the European American and Latina adolescents. Furthermore, the adolescents' scores tended to decrease with age.

Pirog-Good (1995) used National Longitudinal Survey—Youth Cohort data to examine the family backgrounds and attitudes of 6,403 adolescent boys including 650 of whom were fathers. They examined three key attitudinal measures: self-esteem, gender-role attitudes, and locus of control. Findings indicated that White adolescent fathers had lower self-esteem than Black adolescent fathers and White nonparenting adolescent boys, whereas Black adolescent fathers had self-esteem scores similar to Black nonparenting adolescent boys. Rivara, Sweeney, and Henderson

(1985) studied a sample of 100 mostly Black adolescent fathers and nonfathers between the ages of 14 and 19 years. The adolescent fathers were significantly more likely than the nonfathers to accept adolescent pregnancy in their families as a common occurrence and as minimally disruptive of their current or future lives. Thus, adolescent fathers viewed adolescent fatherhood as a normative cultural experience, which may account for the absence of anxiety or poor self-concept among the adolescent fathers in the sample. Similarly, after interviewing 20 adolescent fathers before and after the baby's birth, Elster and Panzarine (1983) found that those adolescent fathers who expected the pregnancy suffered less stress.

Depressive Symptomatology

We have been unable to find any studies that directly examined the relationship between depression and parenting satisfaction of adolescent parents, but there does appear to be an association between depression and adolescent pregnancy. According to Horowitz, Klerman, Sungkuo, and Jekel (1991), pregnancy is three times more likely among depressed adolescent girls than among girls who are not depressed. There is evidence of frequent depressive disorders and a 13% suicide attempt rate among adolescent mothers (Gabrielson, Klerman, Currie, Tyler, & Jekel, 1970; Osofsky, Hann, & Peebles, 1993). Furthermore, Wilcox, Field, Prodromidis, and Scafidi (1998) assessed depression in 155 adolescent and young adult mothers from a maternity unit at a large urban university hospital and found that the majority of the adolescent mothers were depressed. Most researchers have found pregnant and parenting adolescents to have significantly higher depression scores than their nonparenting peers (e.g., Barth et al., 1983), but few have addressed whether depression was a precursor to the pregnancy or presented after the pregnancy. Little is known about the psychological well-being of adolescent fathers beyond Pirog-Good's (1995) study.

Parental Bonding

The attachment that individuals form with their own parents is related to how those individuals parent their own children. Bowlby (1980) identified types of parent-child attachment and how the bonds formed in childhood affect the child's attachments in later life. Children whose attachments with parents were

insecure or anxious were likely to develop problematic attachments as adults, which, in turn, impacted their attachment to their own children. We hypothesize that an adolescent's perceived attachment to his/her parent might also relate to level of parenting satisfaction.

Parental bonding is often referred to in terms of parental warmth and control. Warm and involved parents have adolescents who are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors such as associating with deviant peers (Scaramella, Conger, Simons, & Whitbeck, 1998). The presence of parental controlling behavior may have more permanent socioemotional damage on boys than on girls. Girls' adjustment problems lessened as parental controlling behavior lessened, but the same was not true for boys' adjustment problems (Conger, Conger, & Scaramella, 1997). When adolescents become parents, these variables may be related to the level of satisfaction with their parenting role.

Age at Time of First Birth

The transition to parenthood is a stressful time for all parents, regardless of age (Cowan & Cowan, 1992). Older parents, however, appear to be better equipped than younger parents to handle the transition. Data suggest that older mothers are more competent parents than adolescent mothers (Luster & Mittelstaedt, 1995) in that they are more responsive and vocalize more to their infants and provide a more supportive overall home environment than do their younger counterparts. This competence is likely to increase parenting satisfaction. Increasing age is often accompanied by increasing income, which also contributes to higher levels of parenting satisfaction (Goetting, 1986). However, Luster and Mittelstaedt (1995) suggested that higher levels of competency in older parents are more likely to be due to maturity than income, although few researchers have taken background and socioeconomic status differences of adolescent and older mothers into account. Little research exists on the relationship between age at birth of first child and parenting of adolescent fathers and older fathers.

Social Support

The parenting role and the challenges of the adjustment to it may be mediated by social support.

Perceived social support provided by the child's father is important to adolescent mothers (Crnic, Greenberg, Ragozin, Robinson, & Basham, 1983; Crockenberg, 1987). Unger and Wandersman (1985) suggested that the adolescent mother's parenting role competence could be influenced by social support from the father, as well as from her family of origin (Helm, Comfort, Bailey, & Simeonsson, 1990). In fact, a continuous relationship with the baby's father is positively associated with quality of child-rearing environment 6 months after delivery as measured by the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Scale (Cutrona, Hessling, Bacon, & Russell, 1998). The studies described above did not investigate the fathers. Research on the social support of adolescent fathers and those who father infants born to adolescent mothers is lacking in the literature.

Child Characteristics

Perceptions of the child characteristics may affect the parenting behavior, parents' feelings about their parenting role (Bell, 1968; Belsky, 1984), and parenting satisfaction. For example, if a mother perceives her child is an "easy baby," then her feelings about being a competent mother may be enhanced. In turn, she may have more positive satisfaction with parenting. Researchers have not examined the relationship between infant temperament and parenting behaviors in adolescent mothers (Crockenberg, 1987; Luster & Rhoades, 1989). Luster, Boger, and Hannan (1990), however, found that those infants whose adolescent mothers reported that they were generally cheerful also had more supportive home environments. Once again, the majority of studies have focused on the adolescent mother and rarely on the infant's father.

Hypotheses

We investigated the following research questions: (1) Do adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants (who were not all adolescents) differ on levels of parenting satisfaction? (2) Which variables are related to parenting satisfaction for adolescent mothers and their infants' fathers? and (3) Which variables predict parenting satisfaction for adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were a convenience sample of 41 adolescent mothers and 41 fathers of their children ($n = 82$) recruited through alternative school programs for pregnant and parenting adolescents from rural and urban southwestern areas. The mothers volunteered to participate after being informed about the study. If a mother volunteered to participate, she was asked if the father was involved with his child. Fathers' involvement was a requirement for participation. If the father was involved, the mother was asked to bring the father of the infant with her when she participated or to provide his contact information so he could be invited to participate. Only fathers with consistent contact with their children were included in the sample, although they were not required to have a romantic relationship with the mother. *Consistent contact* was defined as spending time with the child at least twice per month. None of the fathers were contacted apart from the mothers. One mother was excluded from the sample because the father declined to participate. The participants each received \$20 for their participation.

Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 19 years of age for the mothers with a mean of 16.73 ($SD = 1.18$) and from 15 to 32 with a mean age of 19.83 ($SD = 3.63$) for the fathers. The majority of the fathers were older than the mothers with the exception of one couple in which the mother (17 years) was 2 years older than the father (15 years). In six couples the mothers and the fathers were the same age when the child was born. In four of the cases, the fathers were significantly older than the mothers (i.e., 9, 11, 13, and 18 years older). Twenty-one mothers and 17 fathers were White; 7 mothers and 10 fathers were Black. Four of the mothers and 5 of the fathers reported that they were Native American. There were equal numbers of Hispanic mothers and fathers ($n = 7$), and equal numbers of those mothers and fathers that reported "other" for race/ethnicity ($n = 2$).

The fathers' educational level was higher than the mothers'; this could have been due to the higher mean age of the fathers. Two of the adolescent mothers had completed less than a 7th-grade education, 5 had completed junior high school, 24 had completed some high school, 9 were high school graduates, and 2 had completed some college or technical school. In contrast, 6 of the fathers had completed junior high

school, 15 had completed some high school, 14 were high school graduates, and 7 had some college or technical school.

Several of the participants did not have a relationship with their own parents, most often with their fathers. Of the 41 adolescent mothers, 40 had relationships with their mothers, but only 29 had relationships with their fathers. Of the 41 fathers, 40 had relationships with their mothers whereas only 34 had relationships with their fathers. Regarding the relationships between the adolescent mothers and the fathers of their children, 3 of the couples were married, 19 were living together, 1 was dating, and 2 had "some contact." The remaining 16 couples had limited or no contact with the other parent of their child. Parents were asked how often they performed certain caretaking activities such as feeding, playing with, changing, bathing, and putting their baby to sleep. All of the mothers reported performing all of these activities on a daily or nearly daily basis, whereas the fathers' involvement varied widely (see Table I).

Instruments

Parenting Satisfaction

The Satisfaction With Parenting Scale (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990) consists of two subscales: degree of pleasure with their infants (five items) and satisfaction with the parenting role (seven items). Possible scores for the overall scale range from 12 to 48; higher scores represent greater satisfaction. The items have forced-choice response options with ranges. Two example items are "If sometime you were to have bad or angry feelings about your child, how many people could you talk to about this?" (1 = 0–1 person to 5 = more than 6 people) and "How much of the child's care are you doing yourself?" (1 = Someone else does

most of it to 5 = I do everything myself; 95–100%). Each question is followed up with "How satisfied are you with this situation?" (1 = Very dissatisfied/I wish things were very different to 4 = Very satisfied/I'm really pleased). In this study, the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α s) were .70 for the adolescent mothers and .77 for the fathers.

Self-Esteem

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is widely used and appropriate for adolescents. The 10 items use a 4-point Likert-type scale; possible scores range from 10 to 40, higher scores represent greater self-esteem. Half of the items are reverse-coded and then summed to get one self-esteem score. Previous reliability has been established at .92, with a test-retest reliability coefficient of .85 (Wylie, 1961). In this study, the reliabilities were .75 for the adolescent mothers and .85 for the fathers.

Depression

The Center for Epidemiologic Studies—Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977) assesses current frequency of depressive symptoms. It focuses on depressed affect and was designed for use with cross-sectional samples. The 20-item scale represents the following six major components of symptomatology: depressed mood, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, psychomotor retardation, loss of appetite, and sleep disturbance. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale (0 = rarely or none of the time to 3 = most or all of the time). Scores range from 0 to 60; the higher the score, the greater the depressive symptomatology. Radloff (1977) reported split-half

Table I. Amount of Time Spent in Child-Caretaking Activities for Adolescent Mothers and the Fathers of Their Infants

	Activity, <i>n</i> (%)									
	Feeding		Changing		Bathing		Playing		Putting to sleep	
	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers	Mothers	Fathers
Daily	41 (100)	24 (59)	41 (100)	23 (56)	31 (76)	8 (20)	41 (100)	33 (80)	10 (98)	24 (59)
2–3 times/week	0 (0)	8 (20)	0 (0)	10 (24)	10 (24)	14 (34)	0 (0)	4 (10)	1 (2)	10 (24)
1 time/week	0 (0)	5 (12)	0 (0)	5 (12)	0 (0)	6 (15)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	1 (2)
2 times/month	0 (0)	2 (5)	0 (0)	2 (5)	0 (0)	2 (5)	0 (0)	3 (7)	0 (0)	3 (7)
Once/month	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	4 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)
Never	0 (0)	2 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (17)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)

correlations of .85 for patient groups and .77 for normal groups. Coefficient α and Spearman–Brown coefficients were .90 or above for both normal and clinical participants (Radloff, 1977). In the current study, the reliabilities were .86 for the adolescent mothers and .77 for the fathers.

Parental Bonding

The Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) was used to examine parental warmth (care) and control (overprotection). The instrument consists of 25 Likert-type items that participants rate on a scale that ranges from 0 to 3. The scores on the 12 care subscale items range from 0 to 36, and the 13 overprotection subscale items have a range of 0–39. The higher scores represent greater “care” or “overprotection.” Test–retest reliability and split-half reliability resulted in Pearson correlation coefficients of .76 ($p < .001$) and .88 ($p < .001$) for the “care” scale and .63 ($p < .001$) and .74 ($p < .001$) for the “overprotection” scale, respectively (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979). Reliability coefficients for adolescent mothers were .86 for maternal warmth, .76 for maternal control, .88 for paternal warmth, and .73 for paternal control. Reliability coefficients for fathers were .83 for maternal warmth, .80 for maternal control, .96 for paternal warmth, and .94 for paternal control. Each participant completed the instrument twice, once for their mothers and then again for their fathers.

Social Support

The Questionnaire on Social Support (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990) consists of a series of questions regarding available support sources at three ecological levels: (1) friendships, (2) neighborhood and community, and (3) intimate relationships. Participants indicate the number of people they can turn to for support or companionship at each ecological level. Each support item has two parts, one assesses the availability of support and the other assesses parents’ perceived satisfaction with the availability of support. An example item is “If you were to become upset or angry, would you have someone to talk honestly to, who is not involved? How many people?” (1 = *no people* to 5 = *more than four people*) followed by “How satisfied are you with this?” (1 = *Very dissatisfied/I wish things were very different* to 4 = *Very satisfied/I’m re-*

ally pleased). The scores from each ecological source are added together to get the overall social support score. For the purpose of this study, only overall social support satisfaction was used. Reliability coefficients for this study for adolescent mothers were .76 for overall social support and .68 for the fathers.

Child Characteristics

The Degree of Bother Inventory (Broussard & Hartner, 1970) was used to classify concerns parents have about their infants and the comparison parents may make to the “average” infant. Parents assess concern for their own infants and then are asked to compare concerns about their infant to their perception of the behavior of the “average” infant. Finally, parents are asked to rate things that may bother them when caring for their infants such as crying and sleeping. This inventory has high face validity and a test–retest reliability of .89 (Francis, Self, & Horowitz, 1987). For the present study, only the parental assessment of concern for their infant was used (scores ranged from 5 to 30; higher scores indicate more concern about their infants). The reliability for this sample was .80 for the adolescent mothers and .75 for the fathers.

Procedure

For their participation, adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants were asked to complete several questionnaires. Data collected included demographic information about themselves, their partners, and their children. Self-report measures were used to gather information about participants and were completed in the following order: self-esteem, depression, parenting satisfaction, social support satisfaction, perceived parental bonding to the participants’ own mother and father, and bothersomeness of their infant. Their participation took approximately 30–45 min.

RESULTS

The differences in scores between the adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants were compared using *t* tests. Correlations were then computed to determine relationships between predictors and the outcome variables of parenting satisfaction for the adolescent mothers and the fathers. On the

Table II. Comparison of Adolescent Mothers and the Fathers of Their Infants on the Variables

Measures	<i>M (SD)</i>		<i>t</i> Score
	Mothers (<i>N</i> = 41)	Fathers (<i>N</i> = 41)	
Parenting satisfaction	41.41 (4.76)	38.88 (6.13)	-2.09*
Psychological resources			
Depression	16.49 (9.73)	13.43 (6.72)	-1.65
Self-esteem	32.71 (4.08)	32.37 (5.13)	-0.33
Maternal warmth	36.65 (7.56)	37.79 (6.03)	0.73
Paternal warmth	35.31 (8.99)	36.21 (8.34)	0.41
Maternal control	29.08 (7.30)	29.21 (6.99)	0.08
Paternal control	29.59 (7.06)	25.06 (7.40)	-2.47*
Age at birth	16.73 (1.18)	19.83 (3.63)	5.91***
Context			
Social support satisfaction	27.21 (4.09)	26.37 (3.73)	-0.94
Child characteristics			
Baby bothersome	10.29 (3.55)	12.10 (5.75)	1.66

p* < .05. **p* < .001.

basis of our review of previous research, the following predictors were chosen: (1) psychological resources of self-esteem, depression, paternal warmth and control, maternal warmth and control, and age at child's birth; (2) contextual resources of satisfaction with social support; and (3) the child characteristic of bothersomeness of infant. Finally, regression analyses were computed using only those predictors that were significantly correlated with parenting satisfaction for the adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants.

How do adolescent mothers and the fathers differ on the measures? The adolescent mothers' and the fathers' adjustment variable scores were compared using independent, two-tailed *t* tests (see Table II). There was a significant difference between adolescent mothers' and the fathers' parenting satisfaction, $t(80) = -2.09$, $p = .04$, and paternal control, $t(61) = -2.47$, $p = .016$; mothers had higher scores on both. There were no significant differences on any of the other measures between adolescent mothers and the fathers.

Correlational analyses were conducted for adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants to determine relationships between parenting satisfaction and related variables (see Table III). For both the adolescent mothers and the fathers, parenting satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with depression, $r = -.406$, $p = .008$; $r = -.365$, $p = .021$, respectively, and significantly positively correlated with self-esteem, $r = .481$, $p = .011$; $r = .394$, $p = .011$, respectively, and with social support satisfaction, $r = .436$, $p = .006$; $r = .619$, $p = .0001$, respectively. For adolescent mothers, parenting satisfaction was significantly positively correlated with paternal warmth,

$r = .375$, $p = .045$. For the fathers, parenting satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with age at child's birth, $r = -.314$, $p = .045$. Note that the adolescent mothers' and the fathers' parenting satisfaction were correlated with the same variables except for paternal warmth and age at child's birth.

Separate regression analyses were conducted for adolescent mothers and the fathers to determine psychological and personal predictors of parenting satisfaction (see Table IV). The significant predictor for the adolescent mothers was self-esteem ($p = .022$), and paternal warmth approached significance ($p = .052$). Significant predictors for the fathers were self-esteem ($p = .008$) and age at first birth ($p = .005$), and depression approached significance ($p = .053$). This combination of variables accounted for 34% of the variance in parenting satisfaction

Table III. Correlations Between Parenting Satisfaction and Related Measures of the Adolescent Mothers and the Fathers of Their Infants

Measures	Mothers (<i>N</i> = 41)	Fathers (<i>N</i> = 41)
Psychological resources		
Depression	-.406**	-.365*
Self-esteem	.481**	.394*
Maternal warmth	.223	.155
Paternal warmth	.375*	.207
Maternal control	-.196	-.109
Paternal control	-.351	-.184
Age at birth	-.126	-.314*
Context		
Social support satisfaction	.436**	.619**
Child characteristics		
Baby bothersome	.135	-.169

p* < .05. **p* < .01.

Table IV. Psychological and Personal Resources as Predictors of Parenting Satisfaction in Adolescent Mothers and the Fathers of Their Fathers

	R^2	df	B	$SE\ B$	β
Mothers ($N = 41$)	.34***	(3, 37)			
Depression			-0.008	.077	-.170
Self-esteem			0.436	.182	.373*
Paternal warmth			0.175	.086	.273
Age at first birth			—	—	—
Fathers ($N = 41$)	.37***	(3, 37)			
Depression			-0.251	.125	-.272
Self-esteem			0.459	.164	.384**
Paternal warmth			—	—	—
Age at first birth			-0.673	.223	-.399**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

scores for the mothers, $p = .001$, and 37% of the variance in parenting satisfaction scores for the fathers, $p = .001$.

The regression analyses conducted for the adolescent mothers and the fathers to determine contextual predictors of parenting satisfaction are shown in Table V. Social support satisfaction was a significant predictor of parenting satisfaction for the adolescent mothers ($p = .008$) and the fathers ($p > .001$). Satisfaction with social support accounted for 42% of the variance in parenting satisfaction scores for the adolescent mothers, $p = .008$, and 62% of the variance in parenting satisfaction scores for the fathers, $p > .001$. Regression analysis was not conducted for child characteristics as a predictor of parenting satisfaction because bivariate correlations were not significant.

DISCUSSION

Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting emphasizes the importance of psychological resources of parents, contextual influences, and characteristics of the child on parenting. In our study, adolescent mothers and their infants' fathers were fairly similar, although the mothers reported higher parenting satisfaction and more paternal control in their relationship with their own fathers than did the fathers.

Table V. Contextual Influences as Predictors of Parenting Satisfaction in Adolescent Mothers and the Fathers of Their Infants

	R^2	df	B	$SE\ B$	β
Mothers ($N = 41$)	.42**	(1, 36)			
Social support satisfaction			0.489	.175	.421**
Fathers ($N = 41$)	.62***	(1, 36)			
Social support satisfaction			1.025	.217	.619***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

When examining the correlations between parenting satisfaction and the study variables, the findings for adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants were similar with one noted difference. Parenting satisfaction for both adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants was related to self-esteem, depression, and social support satisfaction. In addition, parenting satisfaction was related to perceived paternal warmth for adolescent mothers, whereas it was related to age at first birth for the fathers. Analyses yielded no significant relationships between child characteristics and parenting satisfaction.

In the regression analyses, adolescent mothers and the fathers also differed on significant predictors of parenting satisfaction. It was surprising that only one psychological and personal resources variable (self-esteem) significantly predicted parenting satisfaction in the adolescent mothers. For the fathers, however, several factors significantly predicted parenting satisfaction, including self-esteem and age at first birth (psychological and personal resources) and social support satisfaction (contextual influences). Only self-esteem and social support satisfaction significantly predicted parenting satisfaction for both the adolescent mothers and the fathers.

Psychological and Personal Resources

Belsky (1984) suggested that individuals are able to function more successfully as parents when they have psychological maturity and are able to focus on the needs of the child. We interpreted our findings on the basis of the proposition that parental functioning is interrelated with parental satisfaction. Level of self-esteem significantly predicted parenting satisfaction in both adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants. Previous researchers have not examined

the link between self-esteem and parenting satisfaction, although pregnant and parenting adolescent girls have been found to have lower self-esteem than their nonparenting peers (Barth et al., 1983; Holden et al., 1993; Horn & Rudolph, 1987; Keddle, 1992; Patten, 1981; Zongker, 1977). Similar findings were found for the fathers depending on father's race (Pirog-Good, 1995).

Another interesting finding was that although level of depression was associated with the criterion in both groups, the variable predicted parenting satisfaction in neither group. In previous research, depression was found more often, and to a *greater* degree, in adolescent parents than in adolescent nonparents (Barth et al., 1983; Osofsky, Hann, & Peebles, 1993; Wilcox et al., 1998). The correlation might be explained by the fact that depressed adolescent girls are more likely to get pregnant than are those who are not depressed (Horowitz et al., 1991). Depressed individuals are less likely to find satisfaction in general; therefore, depression is associated with, but not predictive of, parenting satisfaction.

An important finding was that age at the child's birth negatively predicted parenting satisfaction for the fathers. That is, as age decreases, the fathers' parenting satisfaction increases. The mean age of the fathers in the sample was about 20 years of age, 3 years older than the mothers' mean age, with some fathers being several years older than the adolescent mothers. There is no previous literature to support this finding, but it makes sense that younger fathers might be given less responsibility in childrearing, which would lead to less stress, and thus increased satisfaction in their parenting role. In some cases, the adolescent mother and/or the families of both parents may provide more direct caregiving than the father does; he therefore is free to engage in a playmate role with less responsibility. For example, in our study the adolescent mothers were performing caretaking activities for their infants on a daily basis whereas the fathers' reported participating in caretaking activities less often. This is likely to be related to lower parenting satisfaction.

As the age of the fathers of children born to adolescent mothers increases, more responsibility to meet emotional and financial needs may be expected from them in raising their children. Some of the fathers in the study were attending college and many were working full-time. These fathers are at the launching stage themselves where money is scarce. Increasing age is associated with increasing income level and thus higher levels of parenting satisfaction (Goetting, 1986); thus it makes sense that

parenting satisfaction may suffer when age increases and income does not. Simultaneously, pressures of financial independence and provision of ongoing support for their infants was likely to be escalating for the fathers in the study. This is also likely to be related to lower parenting satisfaction.

Finally, perceived paternal warmth (a parental bonding variable) was correlated with, but not predictive of, parenting satisfaction in adolescent mothers. Coopersmith's (1967) notion that parental expression of warmth positively relates to self-esteem in children supports this finding. Self-esteem significantly predicted parental satisfaction in a positive direction, thus the relationship between paternal warmth and parenting satisfaction in adolescent mothers is consistent. But can we really say that parental bonding is related to parenting satisfaction? Of the parenting warmth and control factors, paternal warmth of adolescent mothers' fathers is the only variable that correlated with the criterion. This variable is also one of the two parental bonding factors that had the most missing data because of the lower level of relationships between adolescent mothers and their fathers.

Whereas parental bonding might be related to adjustment during adolescence (Conger et al., 1997), bonding in later life (Bowlby, 1980), and parental functioning (Frommer & O'Shea, 1973), parental bonding did not predict parenting satisfaction in this study. A reason might be that the impact of parental bonding on the parent could be inconsistent. For instance, we might expect those who experienced positive parental bonding to know how to form positive bonds with their own children, which would increase parenting satisfaction. On the other hand, those with negative or no parental bond might be determined to raise their children differently from the way they were raised and thus develop positive bonds with their children, which would result in increased parental satisfaction. In this way, parental bonding is, at best, weakly correlated with parenting satisfaction.

Contextual Influences

Social support satisfaction was related to parenting satisfaction in both groups and significantly predicted the criterion for both. This finding for the fathers was consistent with the notion that social support relates to the overall parenting experience (Belsky, 1984), including level of parenting satisfaction. Fathers appear to need more support than do mothers in their parenting role in order to have higher parenting satisfaction. The relationship of

partner support with parental satisfaction has also been implied, although not confirmed, by previous researchers (e.g., Belsky, 1984). That the relationship is consistent for both groups further emphasizes its importance.

Child Characteristics

Contrary to Belsky's model (1984), we found no significant relationships between parenting satisfaction and child characteristics. This could be due to the way child characteristics were operationalized for this study. Perhaps if we had used a measure of temperament, we may have had some significant results.

We can conclude the following: (1) the adolescent mothers and the fathers of their infants do differ on the level of parenting satisfaction, and adolescent mothers report higher scores; (2) the variables related to parenting satisfaction do not differ for adolescent mothers and the fathers, with the exception of paternal warmth and age at first birth; and (3) predictors of parenting satisfaction do differ for adolescent mothers and their infants' fathers, with the exception of self-esteem and social support satisfaction.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the size of the sample. As previously noted, recruiting fathers involved in an adolescent pregnancy to participate is especially difficult. Many fathers of infants born to adolescent mothers do not have consistent involvement with their infants (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998), which reduced the population from which we could draw our sample. Because the participants were offered money, of which the adolescent mothers were in need, the mothers were more likely to participate and to encourage the fathers to participate. Having the father's participation contingent on the mother's was an especially effective strategy in obtaining fathers for the sample.

Another limitation of the study is the way that some of the variables were operationalized. The assessment of personal and contextual factors using an instrument for family support might have influenced the results. Also, child characteristics could have been assessed differently (such as via a temperament scale), which might have yielded significant predictors of parenting satisfaction.

Implications

Adolescent pregnancy and parenting is a significant social problem in the United States. Other industrialized nations do not have the substantial adolescent parenting population that is characteristic of the United States. Once these teenagers become parents, they begin to impact the next generation. Thus, the support of young parents in their premature roles is of utmost importance to enhance their development and to promote the most favorable outcomes for their children. Provision of adolescent parents with opportunities to increase their self-esteem is essential, as are screenings and treatment for depression. These young parents are often at a disadvantage due to their ages and lack of resources, thus support groups where they can meet others in similar situations as well as find relationship support for those with poor interaction patterns may help improve parenting satisfaction. Future studies should be conducted to determine how the parenting experience for these young parents, particularly for mothers, can be optimized. This is an area worthy of further exploration because the future development of the children is dependent on their parents. The role that parents play in their children's lives is essential to healthy development. An understanding of the variables that influence adolescent parents greatly enhances society's abilities to provide appropriate and fitting support services.

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