

To Help or Not to Help: When does Parental Assistance with Homework Matter?

BACKGROUND

- Homework positively predicts academic achievement, with percentile gains for middle school students around 12%
- Parental assistance with homework has received federal attention as a viable strategy to improve academic outcomes for youth
- However, findings linking homework help to academic outcomes for adolescent samples are mixed
- An integrative model of parenting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) suggests that the effects of parenting practices depend in part on the context of the parent-child relationship

➤ Objectives of the current study:

- 1) Is the effect of parental homework help on adolescents' academic motivation and school engagement enhanced by warm parent-adolescent relationships?
- 2) Do these links differ for fathers and mothers?

METHODS

Participants & Procedures

- 279 youth (53% African American) grades 6-8 (55% girls) completed in-school surveys

Measures

- Mother/Father homework help & warmth
- Academic Outcomes:
 - Intrinsic Motivation = academic motivation
 - School Self-Esteem = cognitive engagement
 - School Trouble = behavioral engagement
 - School Bonding = affective engagement

Analysis

- 3-Step Multiple Regression Analyses:
 - Controls (race & grade), main effects, & interaction

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Homework Help and Academic Outcomes as a Function of Parental Warmth

Figure 1

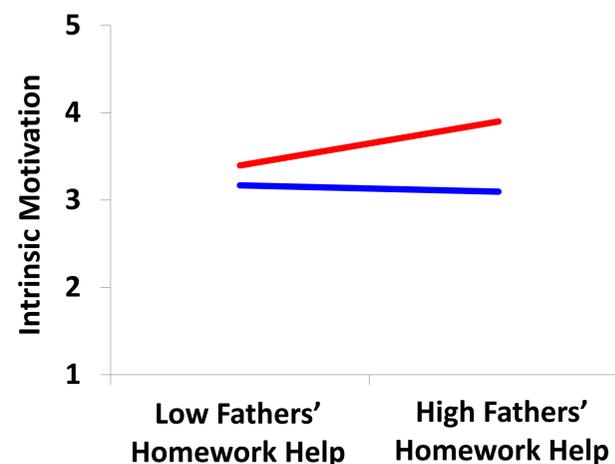
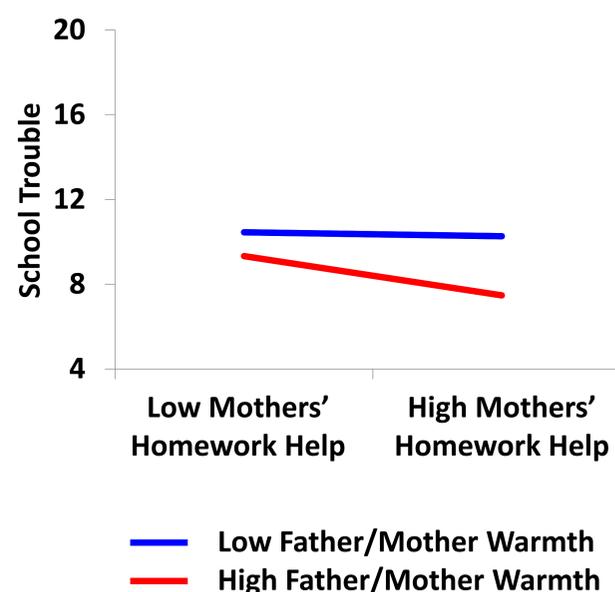


Figure 2



RESULTS

Fathers' Models:

- ❖ At high levels of warmth, a one unit increase in homework help predicted:
 - A .34 increase in intrinsic motivation ($\beta = .37^{***}$ **Fig. 1**)
 - A 1.74 increase in school self-esteem ($\beta = .25^{**}$)
 - A 1.62 decrease in school trouble ($\beta = -.33^{***}$)
- ❖ Warmth had a positive main effect on school bonding ($B = 1.54, \beta = .28^{**}$)

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

Mothers' Models:

- ❖ Warmth had a main effect on all outcomes, such that a one unit increase in warmth was linked to:
 - A .38 increase in intrinsic motivation ($\beta = .31^{***}$)
 - A 2.62 increase in school self-esteem ($\beta = .29^{***}$)
 - A 1.66 decrease in school trouble ($\beta = -.26^{**}$)
 - A 1.50 increase in school bonding ($\beta = .20^*$)
- ❖ At high levels of warmth, a one unit increase in homework help predicted a 1.54 decrease in school trouble ($\beta = -.25^*$ **Fig. 2**)

CONCLUSIONS

- Overall results suggest that parental assistance with homework may be developmentally appropriate for adolescents *if* delivered within the context of warm, supportive parent-adolescent relationships
- Given academic motivation and school engagement decline across adolescence, results emphasize sustaining positive relationships with fathers and mothers to support the best academic outcomes for youth
- This study provided empirical validation for the integrative model of parenting, and advanced understanding of the conditions under which parental homework help facilitates academic outcomes among adolescents