**Our Aim**

- This study sought to better understand the influence of relationship and family factors during pregnancy on parenting behavior 6 months postpartum among low-income young parents.

**Community & Clinical Relevance**

- The relationship between the father and mother of the baby may impact parenting.
- Young parents who had positive experiences while growing up and who have strong current relationships with their parents may be more committed to becoming parents and have more confidence in their ability to be good parents, leading to increased commitment and parenting involvement.
- Men and women may differ in their involvement and ability as parents. Mothers tend to be more attentive and comforting to a young child’s needs compared to fathers. Few studies have directly compared whether the influence of family context and relationship factors differently influence parenting for males and females.
- In addition, poor upbringing (e.g., neglect, bad relationship with parents as a child) and a poor relationship between parents has been linked to poor parenting for both males and females.

**Research Questions**

- Are parenting behaviors affected by the couple’s relationship?
- Does family functioning or family history affect parenting behaviors during pregnancy?
- What role does gender play in the influence of relationship and family factors on parenting behavior?

**Our Study**

**We asked 296 young couples what it is like to become parents.**

- To enroll, women had to be between the ages of 14 and 21, in their third trimester of pregnancy, and in a relationship with the father of their baby. Their partners had to be at least 14 years old.
- Participants were recruited from obstetrics and gynecology clinics in four university-affiliated hospitals in Connecticut.
- Couples completed 3 interviews—the first in the third trimester, then at six and twelve months postpartum—regardless of whether they stayed together.
- Participants answered questions about their physical and mental health, sexual behavior, relationship quality, and parenting experiences.

“Your happiness [in a relationship] will influence how you act with your kid”
- Mom, 2008
**FINDINGS**

- Better relationships related to more parenting involvement and better parenting.
- Mother involvement during childhood was related to more parenting involvement and better parenting for men and women.
- History of being spanked as a child related to less time spent caregiving and less positive life change from being a parent.
- Male parenting behavior was more influenced by relationship and family factors than females.

**OUR PARTICIPANTS**

- 296 pregnant adolescents and their male partners (592 participants total) enrolled in the study.
- 44% of participants were African-American, 38% Latino, 14% White, and 4% were of another self-reported race.
- The average age of mothers was 18.7 years old and 21.3 years old for fathers.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Good relationships between parents during pregnancy and a strong family during childhood was associated with better parenting for young mothers and fathers. There may be a need for programs that focus on strengthening young parents’ romantic relationships and that address negative parenting experienced during childhood.

**ABOUT US**

PARTNRS, PARENTING AND RELATIONSHIP TRANSITION AND RISK STUDY, SEeks TO undersTAND sexual AND rePRODUCTIVE health among yOUNG exPectant FATHERS AND THEIR ADOLESCENT PARTNERS AS THEY transition FROM PREGNANCY TO PARENTHOOD. We ARE dedicAted TO understanding the context of relationships AND health among young parents, WITH THE UNTIMATE GOAL OF BUILDING programs THAT WILL strengthen families, improve sexual AND reproductive health, AND decrease the incidence of HIV AND STDS.

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