Depression: Common Cold of Mental Health

- The mental disorder epidemic
  - (Rottenberg, 2014; Wakefield & Demazeux, 2016).

- More prevalent with females than males
  - (Lewinson et al., 1993; Peterson et. al., 1993).

- Adolescent major depressive episodes increased from 8.7% in 2005, to 11.3% in 2014
  - (Mojtabai et al., 2017).

- Most vulnerable stage of life: adolescence
  - (Lewinson, Rhode, Seeley, & Andrews, 1993; Peterson et. al., 1993).

- Associated with low academic success and poor psychosocial development
  - (Birmaher, 1996)
Predictors of Lower Depression

• High levels of religiosity
  • (Ahmed, Fowler, & Toro, 2011, Good & Willoughby, 2006)
  • Orthodox Jews who view God as benevolent have “elevated happiness and lower levels of anxiety and depression,”
    • (Rosmarin, Pirutinsky, Pargament, & Krumrei, 2009, p. 97).
  • It is not the affiliation with religion, but the level of belief that has the ability to lower depression
    • (Rosmarin et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2012).

• Stronger family relationships
  • (Brody, Stoneman, & Flor, 1996)

• Environment that is conducive for developing emotional regulation:
  • Parents give their children opportunities to be self-directed
  • Parents are responsive and supportive
  • Parents fulfill the adolescent’s need of relatedness
    • (Inguglia, et al. 2015)
Predictors of Higher Depression

- Parents of depressed youth were often:
  - Over-protective with low levels of nurturing
  - Unavailable caregivers
  - Cold
  - Controlling and intrusive
    - (Betts, Gullone, & Allen, 2009)
The Impact of Religion on American Teens

• Religion appears to be a positive force in the lives of Americans—especially among teens.
• Many studies have found that religious affiliation and participation is inversely related to juvenile drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, as well as a host of delinquent behaviors (Smith, 2003).
• Other studies have documented that religiosity is negatively related to suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and actual suicide (Donahue, 1995).
• Studies have also shown a contrary relationship between religious participation, teenage sexual activity, and teen pregnancy (Lammers et al., 2000; Whitehead et al., 2001).
• In the past, religion has served as a buffer for adolescent delinquent activities. Other studies have shown the positive impact of adolescent religious participation on physical health (Jessor et al., 1998), family cohesion (Varon & Riley, 1999), effective coping (Shortz & Worthington, 1994), and academic achievement (Muller & Ellison, 2001; Regnerus, 2000).
Mormon teens have been called the “Spiritual athletes” of their generation, because of their spiritual sacrifices, devotion, and energy towards their faith (Dean, 2010, 51).

- Does religiosity among Latter-day Saint teens reduce their rates of depression?
- What aspects of religiosity affect depression most significantly?
- How does the parent-child relationship affect depression rates among Latter-day Saint teens?
Latter-Day Saint Youth

• From the *National Study of Youth and Religion*:
  • 40% of all youth surveyed attend Church services at least weekly (Smith & Denton, 2005, 37).
  • In the same study, 71% Mormon youth reported attending Church at least weekly, compared to 40% of Catholic teens, and 44% of Protestant adolescents.
  • What may be more impressive is the response to the question, “Would you attend Church if it were totally up to you?” Almost 70% of Mormon youth responded, “Yes,” to that query, with 47% of Protestant youth, and 40% of Catholic teens responding in the same manner (Smith & Denton, 2005, 37).
Smith and his team of researchers also noted that Mormon teens are significantly more likely than their peers to hold religious beliefs similar to their parents (73%), attend religious services once a week (43%), and talk about religious matters in their families more than other teenagers (80% once a week or more).

They rate the importance of religious faith in shaping their daily life as “extremely important (43%), and engage in practices like fasting and other forms of self-denial (68%).

Compared to other teenagers, Mormon youth participate in more religious practices of all kinds, and are much more articulate about Church teachings (Dean, 2010).
Sample: Random Sampling

- Utah Regions: Salt Lake County, Utah County
- Demographics:
  - 45% male, 55% female
  - 88% Latter-day Saint
  - 12% other religions
  - 89% Caucasian
  - 11% Hispanic, African American, other
- Participants:
  - 579 dyads: 1 parent/guardian and 1 youth per family
  - 40 parents
  - 17 children
  - 636 families represented
  - Age: 12-14 year old teens
Measures

- 20-item CES-DC (Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children) (Weissman, Orvaschel, & Padian, 1980)
- Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire—Short Version (PSDQ) (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2001)
- Strength of Religious Faith questionnaire (Plante & Boccaccini, 1997)
- NIA/Fetzer Religion and Spirituality Scales (Idler et. al, 2003)
- Intrinsic Spirituality Scale (Hodge, 2003)
- Religious Coping Scale (Pargment, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011)
• Model 1: Daily Spiritual Experiences & Negative Religious Coping
  Both daily spiritual experiences ($b(\text{se}) = -0.12(0.04), p < 0.001$)
  and negative religious coping (abonnement by God) ($b(\text{se}) = 0.28(0.03), p < 0.001$)
  were significantly related to depression.

• Model 2: Mother Warmth
  Both daily spiritual experiences and negative coping remained significant and relatively unchanged, with combined report of mother warmth significantly predicting depression ($b(\text{se}) = -0.18(0.05), p < 0.001$).
Nested Regression

• **Model 4: Mother verbal hostility**
  The child’s unique view—rather than combined view—of mother verbal hostility was significant ($b(se) = .09(.04), p < .05$) with mother warmth no longer being significant.

• **Model 5: Father verbal hostility**
  The child’s unique view of father verbal hostility was significant ($b(se) = .09(.04), p < .05$) with all other family variables becoming non-significant, yet mother warmth again being significant ($b(se) = -.11(.05), p < .05$).

• **Model 6: Gender**
  Gender was significant ($b(se) = -.23(.04), p < .001$) with boys reporting less depression than girls. No other parameters changed from significant to not-significant (or vice-versa) when adding demographics.
Religious Implications

• Feeling their God’s presence in their lives
  • They find strength and comfort in their religion
  • Less likely to be depressed

• Religious strength
  • Active church participation (Religious Strength) was not significant in this study
  • Simply attending religious services is not related to adolescent depression
Comparing Male and Female Participants

- Boys’ depression was unrelated to parental warmth whereas girl’s depression was.
- Girls who have a strong connection (warmth) with their mothers are less likely to experience depressive symptoms.
  - Perhaps attachment theory can best explain this phenomenon.
  - Girls securely attached to their mothers feel more:
    - Certain and sure about their environment
    - Gain a more positive and self-efficacious image
Limitations

• Since our sample was drawn in Utah, 86 percent of our participants were Latter-day Saints and primarily causation.

• Furthermore, 92 percent of our sample represented intact families, with a mother and father present in the home.

• In order for our findings to be generalizable, in the future, our participants in the study will need to be more diverse.

• We intended to also include participants from other faiths to better understand both similarities and differences.

• The data will be more useful as we track these teens through adolescence and young adulthood