

Background

Family Structure and Relationships

Parenting

- Attachment between parent and child is vital to the ability for children to adjust to the biological, cognitive and social changes that take place during adolescence and young adulthood (Moretti & Peled, 2004).

Adjustment

- Positive adjustments manifests more frequently for children in two-parent families or traditional family structures (Lamb, 2012).
- Five C's Model of Positive Youth Development emphasizes that development is embodied within an ecological system that includes cross-contextual relationships (Lerner, 2005).

Youth-Adult Relationships (YARs)

- "The foundation from which youth can be active agents for themselves, others around them and their community" (Zeldin et al., 2005).
- The relationship that youth have with their parents make the distinction between seeking a non-parental adult as a role model and confidant vs. for emotional and social 'attachment' needs that are also found in successful parent-child relationships (Rhodes et al., 2006).

Research Questions

RQ1: Does family structure (single vs. two-parent home) influence the type of VIP a youth chooses (e.g., teacher, family member, etc.)?

RQ2: Does family structure influence the number of YARs a youth reports having?

RQ3: Does family structure influence how close youth report feeling to their VIP?

Participants

- Participants include subsample of **35 adolescents** (n=12 males; n=23 females) who were interviewed and surveyed during the 2013-2014 academic school year.
- Adolescents were in grade levels 7-12th and were recruited from various middle schools, after school programs, and other community programs.
- 71% Caucasian, 11.4% African American, 5.7% Hispanic and 8.6% Multiethnic
- 17.1 % eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Method

A secondary analysis of Wave 1 Data from a three-year longitudinal entitled "*Who Builds the Village? Examining Youth-Adult Relationships Across Contexts and Time*" was conducted.

Research Question	Variable Types	Source	Analysis
RQ1	Family Structure, Very Important Person (VIP) Type	T1 Qualitative Interview and SOR_SNQ database	Chi-square
RQ2	Number of YARs	Social Network Map	Linear Regression
RQ3	Closeness to VIP	Strength of Relationships Scale (BBBS, 2008)	Linear Regression

Results

- RQ1:** The likelihood for family structure to influence the type of VIP a youth chooses very small. $X^2(5, N =) = 2.10, p = .84$
- RQ2:** The relationship between family structure and the number of YARs approached significance $F(1,33) = 3.33, p > .077$
- RQ3:** There was no significant relationship between family structure and how close youth feel to their VIP. $F(1,33) = .461, p > .502$

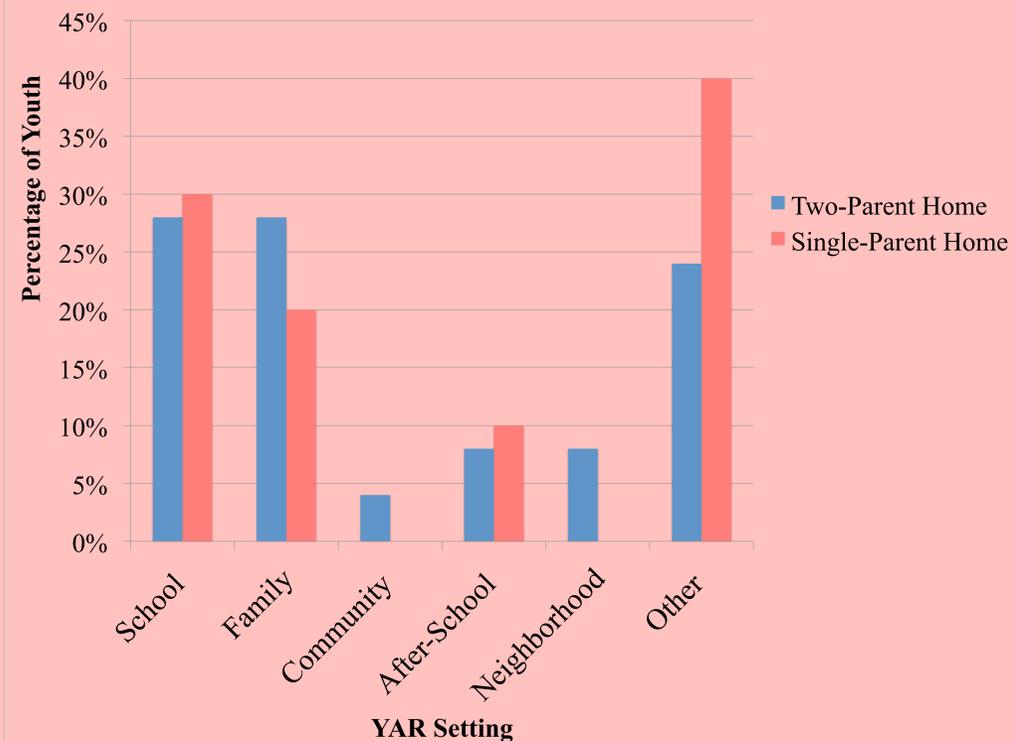


Figure 2. Setting of YARs for Adolescent Participants

Results Continued...

Table 1. Qualitative Excerpts

Two-Parent Home	"Well, for the circle group sometimes she asks really deep question, and I'm not really a deep person because my life's good. And half the people are like, "Our parents are divorced," or like, "My parents died," or something and I'm just like, "Okay." Because I don't have a really bad thing in my family, so I'm good."
VIP- Teacher	
Single-Parent Home	"Well, like in 7 th grade I used to be really sad all the time and she helped me get over that phase and stuff. She just told me that I don't have to be sad about anything...Like my grades or how I feel inside. It makes me feel a lot better to get it off my chest."
VIP- Family Friend	

Discussion and Conclusion

- Most of the research that exists on this topic has taken place in large urban environments. Applying a similar theory that is indicative of past literature to the smaller, less diverse, college community of Charlottesville, VA suggested uncommon findings.
- One major limitation of this study was it's small sample size (N=35). With a larger group of adolescent participants, findings may have reached significance.
- However, the findings of the current study imply a broader context for the ways in which the ecological system assists in the development of adolescence. It extends family structure as a possible source of influence and further suggests the reasons for why researchers should consider characteristics of communities as possible regulators of what occurs in the home.
- An additional implication of this study is the examination of ways in which children report their family structure to explore how they compare to the actual relationships adolescence possess with parents.

References

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