



Parental Problem Drinking and Adolescent Externalizing Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Family Functioning

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Research Question

- What are the relationships among parental problem drinking, family functioning, and adolescent externalizing behaviors?
- Do these relationships vary by adolescent and parent gender?



Theoretical Frameworks

- **Family system theory** (Cox & Paley, 1997; 2003)
 - Examine individuals within the context of their families
 - Mutual influences among family subsystems
- **Social learning theory** (Bussey & Bandura, 1984)
 - Children imitate their same sex-parent



Parental Problem Drinking

- Parental substance use may have adverse outcomes for adolescents (Kendler et al., 2013; Vermeulen-Smit et al., 2012)
- Differential effects for maternal and paternal problem drinking
 - Unique influences of each parent (Shorey et al., 2013)
 - Mothers have a greater negative impact (Rognmo et al., 2012)
 - Fathers have a greater negative impact (Haugland, 2003)



Adolescent Externalizing Behaviors

- **Linked to disruptive behavior and offending during adulthood** (Barnes 2013; Fergusson et al. 2014)
- **Children of alcoholics (COAs) are at high risk for developing externalizing disorders**
 - **Adolescent substance use** (e.g. Coffel et al., 2006; Handley & Chassin, 2013; McCarty et al., 2013; Ohannessian, 2012)
 - **Delinquency and aggression** (Hussong et al., 2010; Marmorstein et al., 2009; Obot & Anthony, 2004)
- **Unique effects for girls and boys** (Skeer et al., 2011)



Family Functioning

- Family functioning supports adolescents
 - Against alcohol and drug use (Kopak et al., 2012)
 - Harmful effects of parental problem drinking (El- Sheikh & Buckhalt, 2003)
- Adolescent-parent communication
 - Related to later alcohol use initiation and lower levels of alcohol **USE** (Ryan et al., 2010)
 - Protective factor against depression (Ohannessian, 2013)
- Again, unique effects for girls and boys (Davies & Lindsay, 2004)



Limitations of Previous Studies

- The inconsistent findings in research examining the role of the family in outcomes for adolescent girls' and boys' and the effects of mothers and fathers drinking
- This study sought to disentangle the unique effects of maternal and paternal problem drinking on adolescent girls and boys externalizing behaviors while considering the role of family functioning



Present Study

- Purpose of this study was to examine whether family functioning mediates the relationships between parental problem drinking and adolescent externalizing behaviors over time
 - Specifically, alcohol use, drug use, binge drinking, rule breaking, and aggression
 - Explore variation in these relationships by adolescent and parent gender





Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1
 - Both maternal and paternal problem drinking will positively predict adolescent externalizing behaviors
- Hypothesis 2
 - Family cohesion, adolescent-mother communication, and adolescent-father communication will mediate the relationship between parental problem drinking and adolescent externalizing behaviors
- Hypothesis 3
 - The relationship among parental problem drinking, family functioning, and adolescent externalizing behaviors will vary by adolescent and parent gender



Sample

- Adolescent Adjustment Project (Ohannessian, 2009)
- Adolescents and their parents from 7 public high schools in the Mid-Atlantic States in the Spring of 2007 (Time 1) and 2008 (Time 2)
 - Average age of the adolescents was 16.15 ($SD = .75$)
 - Approximately half identified as female (52.5%)
 - Racial ethnic groups: European American (57.9%), African American (22.6%), Hispanic (11.6%), Asian (2.4%), and Other (5.5%)



Measures

- Parental problem drinking (mother and father)
- Family functioning
 - Family cohesion
 - Adolescent-mother communication
 - Adolescent-father communication
- Adolescent externalizing behaviors
 - Alcohol use
 - Binge drinking
 - Drug use
 - Rule breaking
 - Aggression

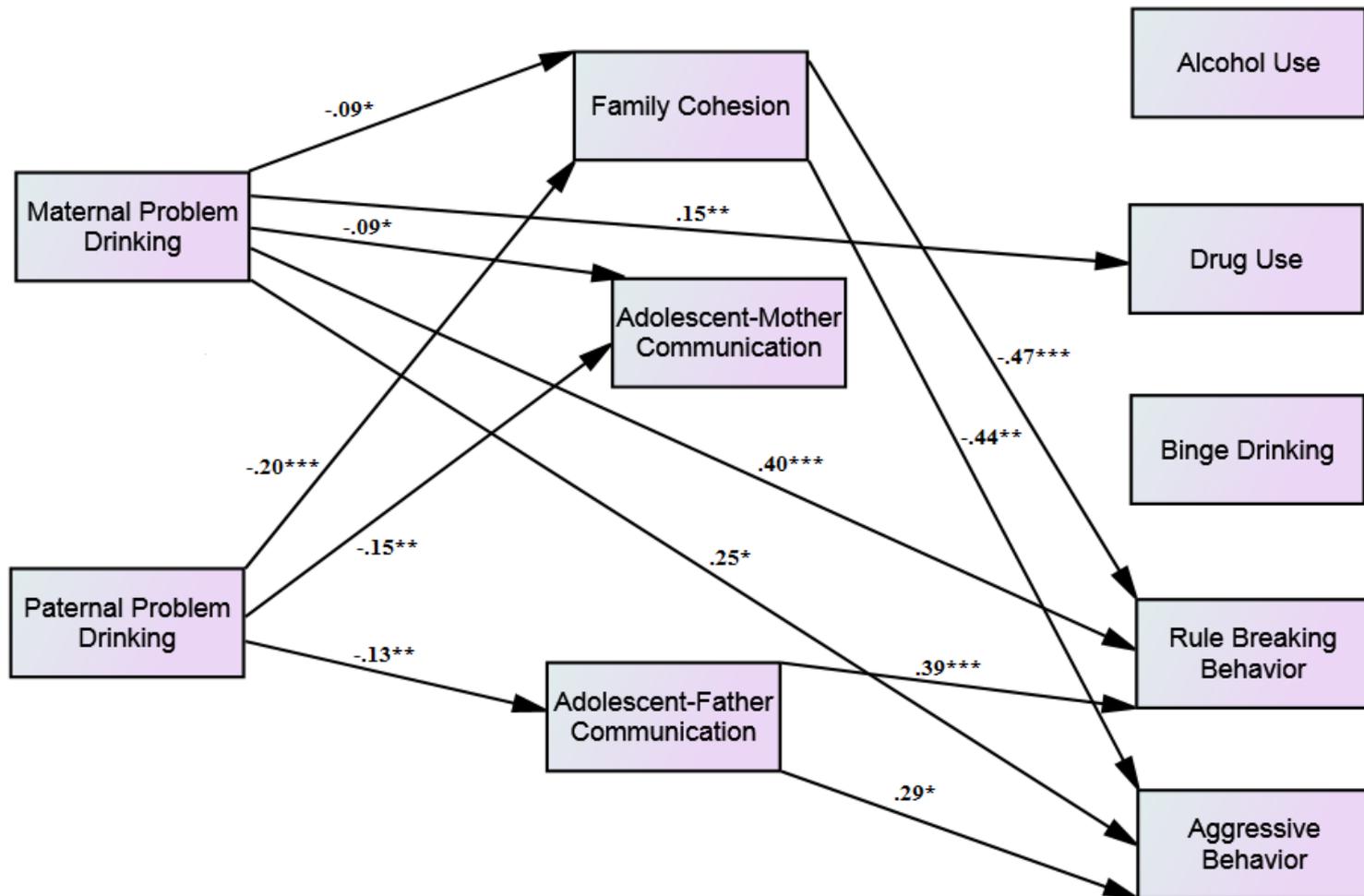


Analytic Strategy

- Time 1: parental problem drinking and family functioning
- Time 2: adolescent externalizing behaviors
- Structural Equation Modeling used to conduct path analysis models
 - Direct paths between parental problem drinking and adolescent externalizing behaviors
 - Indirect paths through family functioning
- Multiple group analysis to determine if these relationships varied by adolescent gender

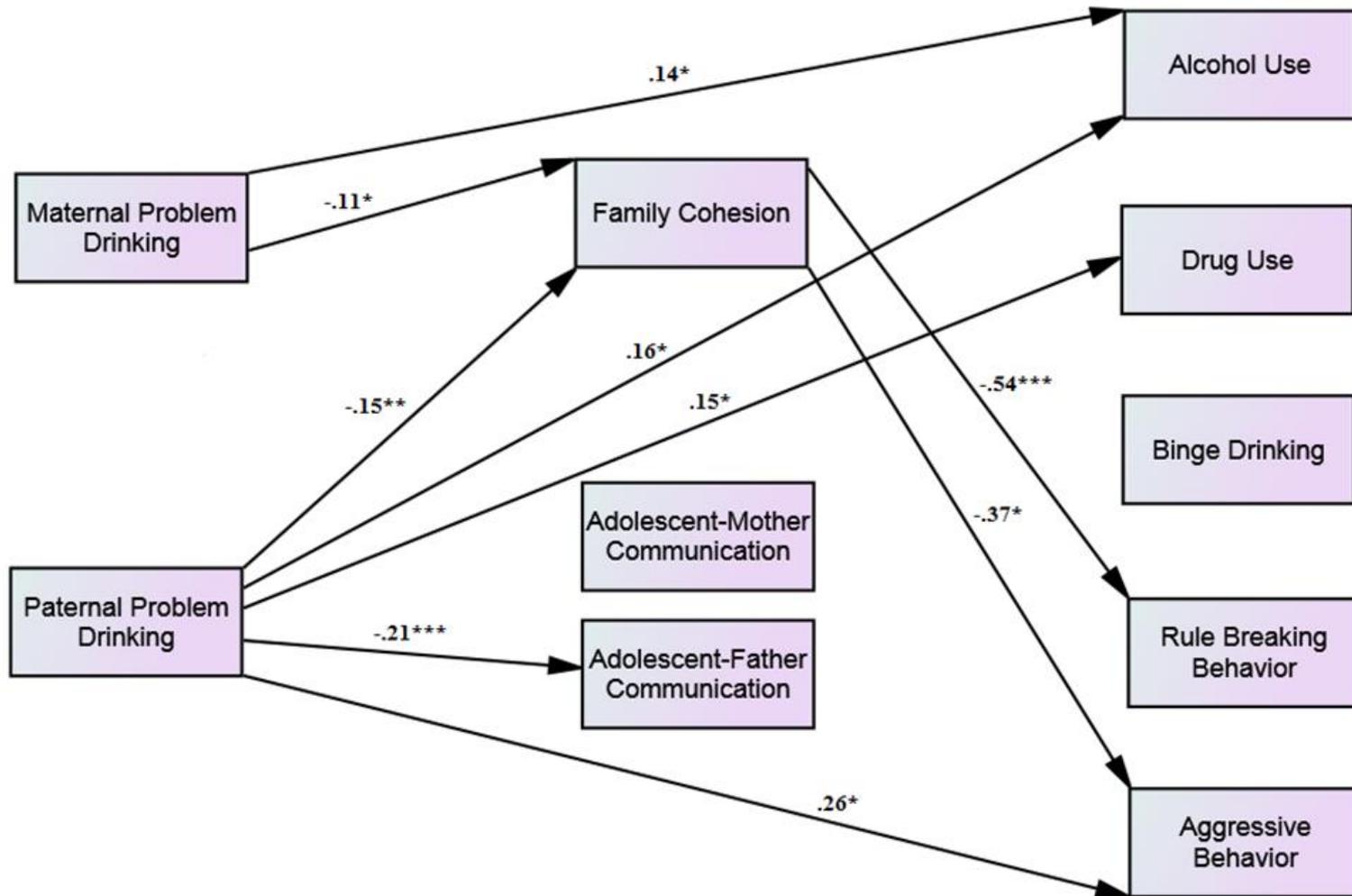


Results for Girls





Results for Boys





Discussion

- Maternal and paternal problem drinking was positively related to later adolescent externalizing behaviors and these relationships varied by adolescent and parent gender
- Family cohesion plays an important mediating role for boys and girls, especially for rule breaking and aggression
- For girls, adolescent-father communication plays an important role for girls externalizing behavior



Limitations

- Data in this study were collected through self-report measures
- The study is that the sample was drawn from the Mid-Atlantic U.S., and therefore the findings may not be generalized to the entire adolescent population



Conclusions

- Parental problem drinking positively predicted adolescent externalizing behaviors
- Important role of family functioning
- Need to consider both adolescent and parent gender when examining these relationships



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Thank you!

Questions?

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