HYPOTHESES

H1: We hypothesized that parent drinking during adolescence would positively predict substance use in emerging adulthood.

H2: We also predicted that parent-adolescent communication would moderate the relationship between parent drinking and emerging adult substance use.

PARTICIPANTS AND MEASURES

Sample:
- Participants (N=88, 62% female) were selected from a larger longitudinal study (Adolescent Adjustment Project; Ohannessian, 2009).
- This study examined data from 2008 (Time 1; Mean age=17.18, SD=1.12), and 2009 (Time 2; Mean age=17.98, SD=1.17).
- Students all were enrolled in public high schools in the Mid-Atlantic States at Time 1, but some of the participants had graduated from high school while others were still enrolled as seniors at Time 2.

Measures:
- A revised version of the Short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (SM-MAST/M-MAST; Crews & Sher, 1992), an eleven-item questionnaire, was used to assess substance use in both fathers and mothers, reported by the adolescent. Example items include “Has your mother’s/female guardian’s drinking ever created problems between you and her father (or stepfather) or another relative” and “Has your father/male guardian ever gone to anyone for help about his drinking?” The M-MAST had an alpha of .86 and the F-MAST had an alpha of .87, indicating good reliability.

RESULTS

• Longitudinal regression analyses were used to predict total drug use in emerging adults at Time 2.
• Parent problem drinking and adolescent-parent communication variables from Time 1 were entered in the first step of the hierarchical analyses, followed by the parental problem drinking × communication interaction in step 2.
• Because prior research has demonstrated that both the gender of the parent and the gender of the adolescent should be considered when predicting substance use (Ohannessian, 2013), the regression analyses were run separately by gender.
• As shown in Table 1, results suggest that for male participants, father problem drinking and father-open parent communication explained a significant amount of the variance in reported drug use.
• For females, the interaction between father problem drinking and adolescent-father communication was a significant predictor of drug use.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

• Open communication facilitates trust and security, as well as a positive and warm exchange of ideas between parent and adolescent, allowing the dyad to address concerns or issues such as substance use in a healthy way.
• For girls, only the interaction between paternal problem drinking and father problem communication was a significant predictor of emerging adult substance use. Problem communication, marked by conflict or negative feelings such as hostility, prevents adolescent girls from engaging in the sort of warm, open conversation needed to address issues such as substance use. Furthermore, paternal problem drinking impairs modeling healthy behaviors around substance use and predicts more permissive attitudes towards adolescent substance use (van der Zwaluw, 2008).
• Given that research also suggests adolescent girls may report greater difficulty in talking to fathers than boys, intervention efforts in ameliorating cross-gendered father-daughter problem communication and addressing paternal problem drinking may prove promising in substance use prevention (Luk et al., 2010). However, in order to maximize the effectiveness, family-based intervention efforts should target children sooner, not only before parent influence begins to wane in emerging adulthood but also even before substance use initiation in the early adolescent or late childhood years (DeWitt et al., 2014).

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