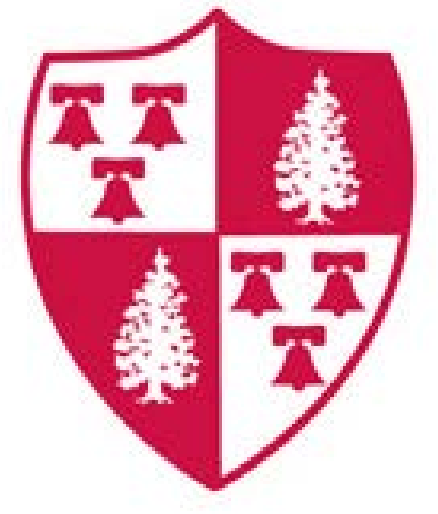


Parental Warmth as a Moderator of Parental Control and Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms in Elementary School-Age Children



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Introduction

- High parental control has been linked with anxiety and depression in children (Patton et al., 2001; Ballash et al., 2006). In contrast, low parental warmth has been shown to predict depressive symptoms (Patton et al., 2001) and may be related to anxiety, though findings regarding the latter are mixed.
- Some studies have shown that “affectionless control,” a parenting style characterized by a combination of high control and low warmth, is associated with adolescent and adult depressive symptoms (Parker, 1983, Patton et al., 2001). It has been suggested that affectionless control parenting may promote a low sense of autonomy and emotional security in children.
- However, it remains unclear whether affectionless control parenting is related to depressive symptoms in children. Additionally, further research is needed to elucidate the relationship between warmth, control, and anxiety.

Aims/Hypotheses

- To examine the potential moderating effect of parental warmth on the relationship between parental control and anxious and depressive symptoms.
- As illustrated in Figure 1, it was expected that parental warmth would moderate the effect of control on depressive symptoms but not anxious symptoms.

Methods

Participants: Children from five elementary schools completed questionnaires at baseline (T1; N=189, ages 8-11) and one year later (T2; N=129, ages 9-12)

Measures (all self-report questionnaires completed at school):

Egna Minnen Beträffande Uppfostran-Child (EMBU-C)

- 40-item scale, including maternal warmth (MW; e.g., “does your mother like you just the way you are?”) and maternal control (MC; e.g., “does your mother want you to reveal your secrets to her?”)
- Children rated frequency of each parenting behavior on a 4-point scale, from *No, never* (1) to *Yes, most of the time* (4)

Revised Children’s Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS)

- 47-item self-report questionnaire, including anxiety and depressive symptoms scales
- Children rated each item on a 4-point scale, from *never* to *always*

Results

- A series of moderation analyses were conducted using PROCESS in SPSS (Field, 2013). MC, MW, and their interaction at T1 were each analyzed as predictors of anxiety and depression at T1 and T2.
- **T1 Depression:** MC ($b = .26, p < .001$) and MW ($b = -.26, p < .001$) were significant ($R^2 = .16, F = 8.13, p < .001$). An interaction between MC and MW was also significant ($b = -.02, p < .05$). MC was positively associated with depression in the context of low MW ($b = .42, p < .001$; see Figure 2).
- **T1 Anxiety:** MC ($b = 1.15, p < .001$) was significant ($R^2 = .0915, F = 5.18, p < .01$). There was not a significant main effect of MW and no interaction effect was observed.
- **T2 Depression:** MC ($b = .29, p < .01$) and MW ($b = -.17, p < .01$) were significant ($R^2 = .11, F = 4.75, p < .01$). No interaction effect was observed.
- **T2 Anxiety:** MC ($b = .57, p < .05$) was significant ($R^2 = .04, F = 1.83, p = .15$). There was not a significant main effect of MW and no interaction effect was observed.
- After including T1 symptoms moderation analyses for T2 outcomes, main effects of MC and MW were no longer significant.

Figure 1: Moderation Models

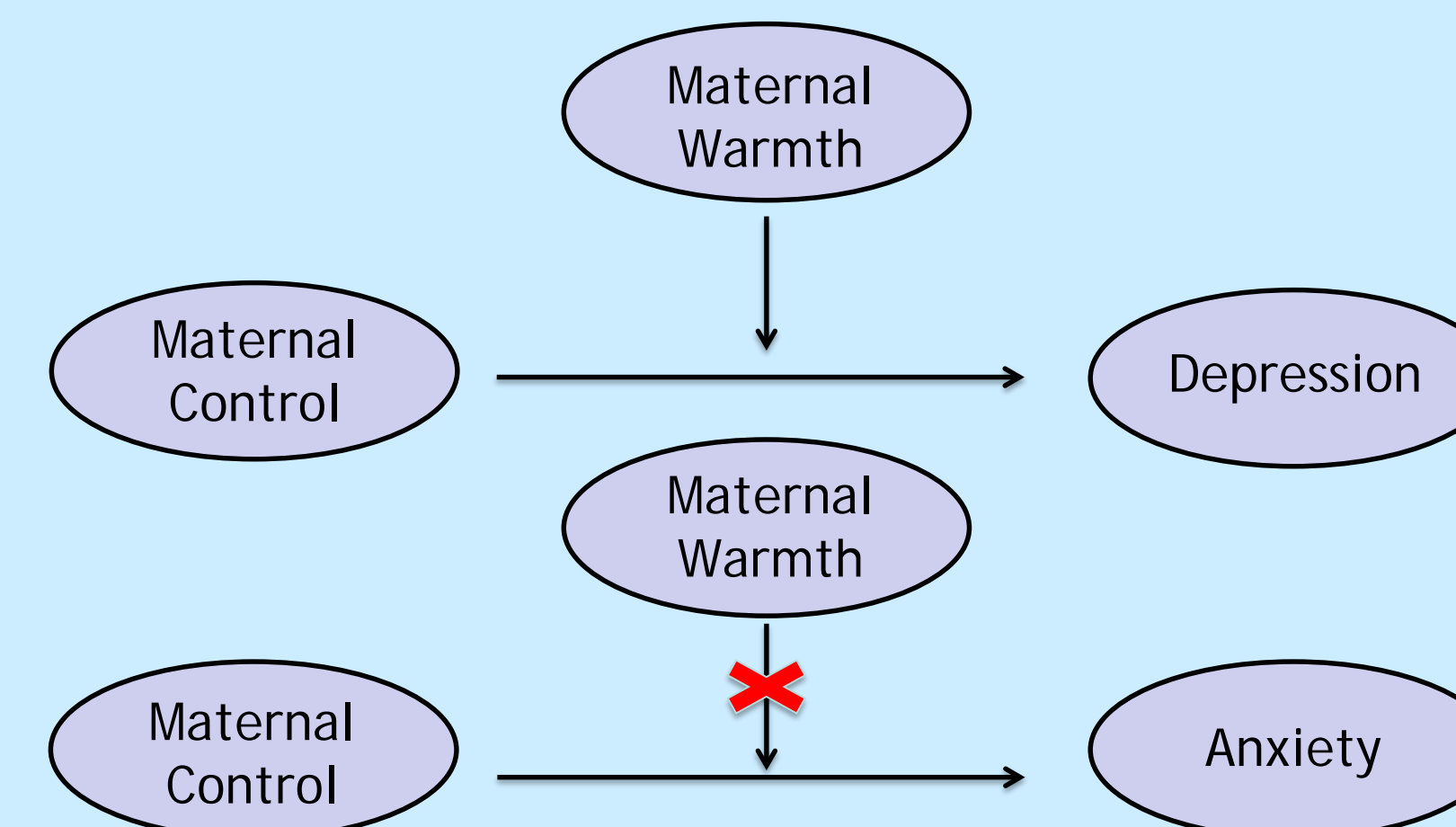
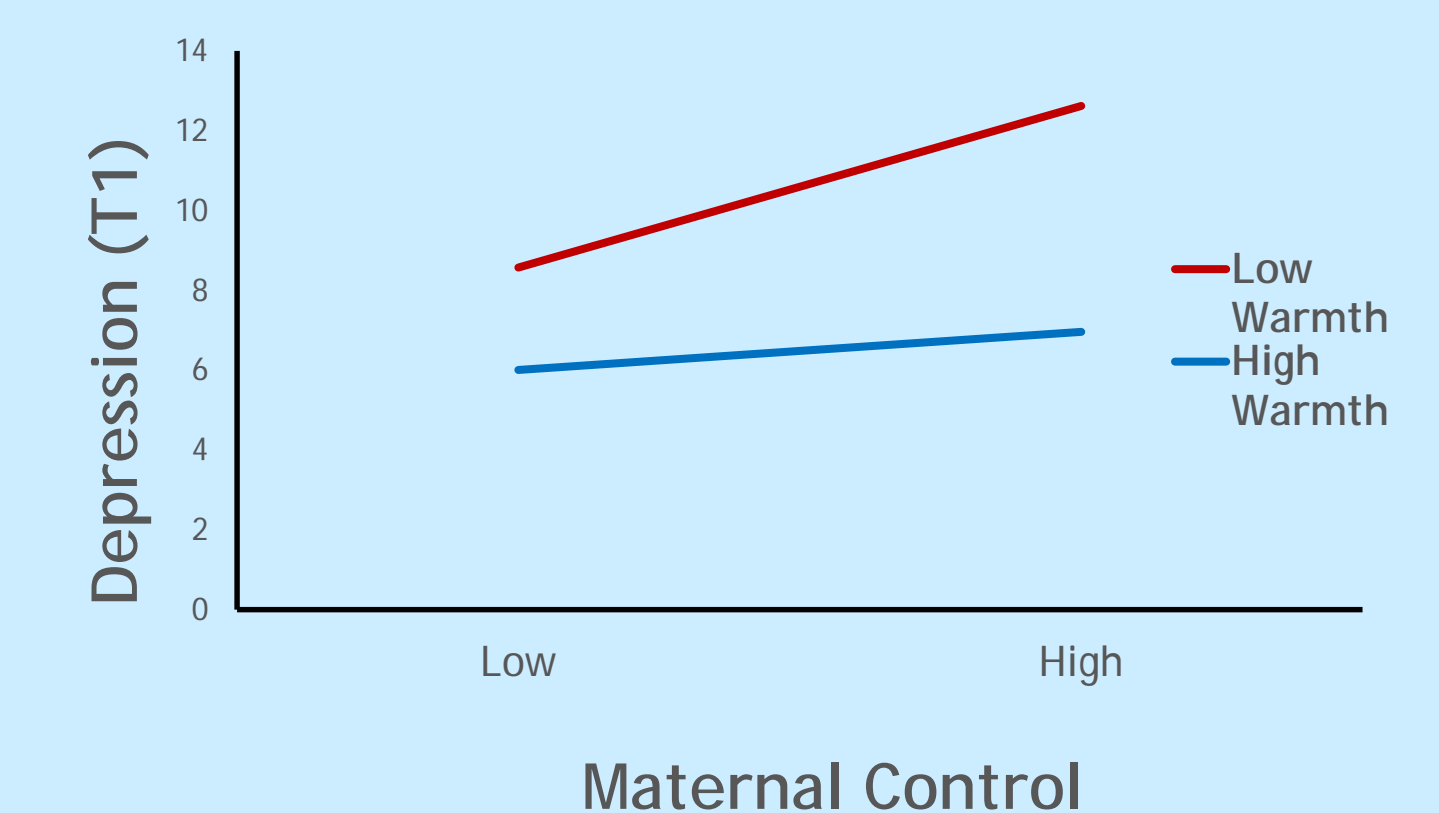


Figure 2: Depression (T1)



Discussion

- High maternal warmth may buffer the effects of control on depressive but not anxious symptoms. Although parental warmth may be more influential in predicting depression compared to anxiety, findings were not significant over time.
- Findings may lend support to designing interventions to increase affectionate behavior in parents of depressed children while decreasing control in parents of anxious children.

References

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