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## Stress, marital satisfaction, and child care provision by mothers of adolescent mothers: Considerations to make when providing services

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### Abstract

When communities provide parenting service programs for adolescent women, many times the mothers of the adolescent mothers become involved in the intervention sessions. Many service providers acknowledge the mothers knowing they influence their daughters' parenting practices. However, very few programs or studies know much about the mothers of the adolescent mothers (MaMs); few studies have interviewed them directly. In this descriptive study, MaMs reported demographics, stress, marital satisfaction, and child care support given to their daughters. The sample's mean age is 41 years, most were Caucasian, and half had incomes below federal poverty levels. Most reported marital satisfaction lower than a national sample; and over half provided child care weekly or daily for grandchildren. Stress and marital satisfaction related negatively to amount of child care MaM provided. Provision of child care related negatively to their daughters' parenting attitudes. Age of adolescent mother did not differ between groups of high and low child care support. Implications are discussed for community parenting service programs.

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## 1. Introduction

Adolescent mothers are at-risk for difficulties in parenting due to the multiple demands and distress of confronting adolescence and parenting simultaneously (Hess, Papas, & Black, 2002; Sadler, Anderson, & Sabatelli, 2001). One specific matter which influences adolescent parenting is the complex relationship between the adolescent and her mother (Caldwell, Antonucci, Jackson, Wolford, & Osofsky, 1997; East, 1999; Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Paskiewicz, 2001; See, Bowles, & Darlington, 1998).

The literature on the effects of mothers of adolescent mothers (MaMs) providing support to their adolescent daughters varies from positive to negative effects (Logsdon, Birkimer, Patterman, Cahill, & Cahill, 2002). In some studies, MaMs are a positive source of support for many adolescent mothers (Brooks-Gunn & Chase-Lansdale, 1995; Klaw, Rhodes, & Fitzgerald, 2003; Nath, Borkowski, Whitman, & Schellenbach, 1991; Spieker & Bensley, 1994; Voight, Hans, & Bernstein, 1996; Way & Leadbeater, 1999). This may be especially true for younger adolescents (Vorán & Phillips, 1993) even though older adolescent mothers receive similar amounts of emotional support from MaM and peers (Davis, 2002). Support ranges from keeping the teen and baby in their home, providing child care, buying materials and food, giving advice, giving money when needed, and supporting decisions to go back to school.

By keeping their daughters in their homes, MaMs promote fewer transient relationships with men (Unger & Cooley, 1992), a better chance of staying in school (Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Paskiewicz, 2001; Trent & Harlan, 1994) and better child developmental outcomes (Committee on Adolescence and Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care, 2001). On the other hand, positive child attachment and feeding interactions were found in adolescents who were not living with MaM yet were getting high amounts of support from her such as material aid, feedback, physical assistance, intimate interaction, and child care (Spieker & Bensley, 1994).

In other studies, adolescent mothers do not always perceive the support from MaMs as a positive event, nor is the outcome always positive. Crockenberg (1987) found that support from MaM related to angry toddler–mother interactions when the child was 2 years of age. Recent research finds that children of adolescent mothers living with MaM had no fewer behavioral and developmental difficulties than preschool children who did not live with MaM, adding that the MaMs' presence does not moderate, and in cases of maternal depression or child maltreatment, MaMs' presence exacerbated negative developmental outcomes for the children (Black et al., 2002). For many adolescent mothers, especially older ones, living with their mothers during this time is related to increased mother–daughter conflict (Brooks-Gunn & Chase-Lansdale, 1995; East & Felice, 1996), decreased daughter economic independence (Unger & Cooley, 1992), poor adolescent mother parenting outcomes (East & Felice, 1996), and decreased daughter sense of independence and self sufficiency (Brooks-Gunn, 1990; Unger & Cooley, 1992).

MaM support and involvement typically vary with culture and ethnicity (Coley & Chase-Lansdale, 1998; Rosman & Yoshikawa, 2001) where the value of the parenting role

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