



The Association between Family Dynamics during Adolescence and Higher Education Attainment in Adulthood



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Introduction

- Research shows that although economically disadvantaged parents are more pessimistic about their children's chances of higher education enrollment, those parents who believe they can make a difference tend to execute more proactive parenting (Crosnoe, R., Mistry, R. S., & Elder Jr., G. H. 2002).
- Those with an alternative family structure (i.e. not from married-biological-parent families) experienced lower rates of college enrollment and completion. Females from single-parent families have nearly similar postsecondary education outcomes as males coming from married-biological-parent family structures (Wu, Z., Schimmele, C. M., & Hou, F. 2015)

Research Questions

- Are individuals with parental nurturement during adolescence more likely to complete a postsecondary degree(s) than those without?
- Are these differences correlated to the family structure of parental figures?

Methods

Sample

- The data were drawn from the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (ADDHEALTH), a longitudinal study representing adolescents from grades 7-12 in the United States (n=2,581).

Measures

- Level of education was measured with the question "What is the highest level of education that you have achieved to date?". This variable was coded in terms of having a GED or less or some higher education completed (0) and fully completed higher education (1).
- The relationship with one's mother in adolescence was measured with the statement "Your mother encourages you to be independent." Participants were asked to rate the statement on a five-point scale from 1 ("strongly agree") to 5 ("strongly disagree").

Results

Bivariate

- A total of 53% of the sample that completed higher education experienced independence from the mother during adolescence.
- Chi-Square analysis revealed that independence during adolescence allowed by mothers was *not* significantly associated with higher education completion ($p = .119$).

Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that completing higher education is less likely to occur as independence from the mother increases (OR 0.772, $p = 0.1304$).
- Gender does significantly moderate the relationship between higher education completion and nurturement from the mother during adolescence ($p < 0.0001$) (Fig. 2).
- No matter if they were or were not allowed independence from their mothers, females are more likely to have completed a higher education degree than males.

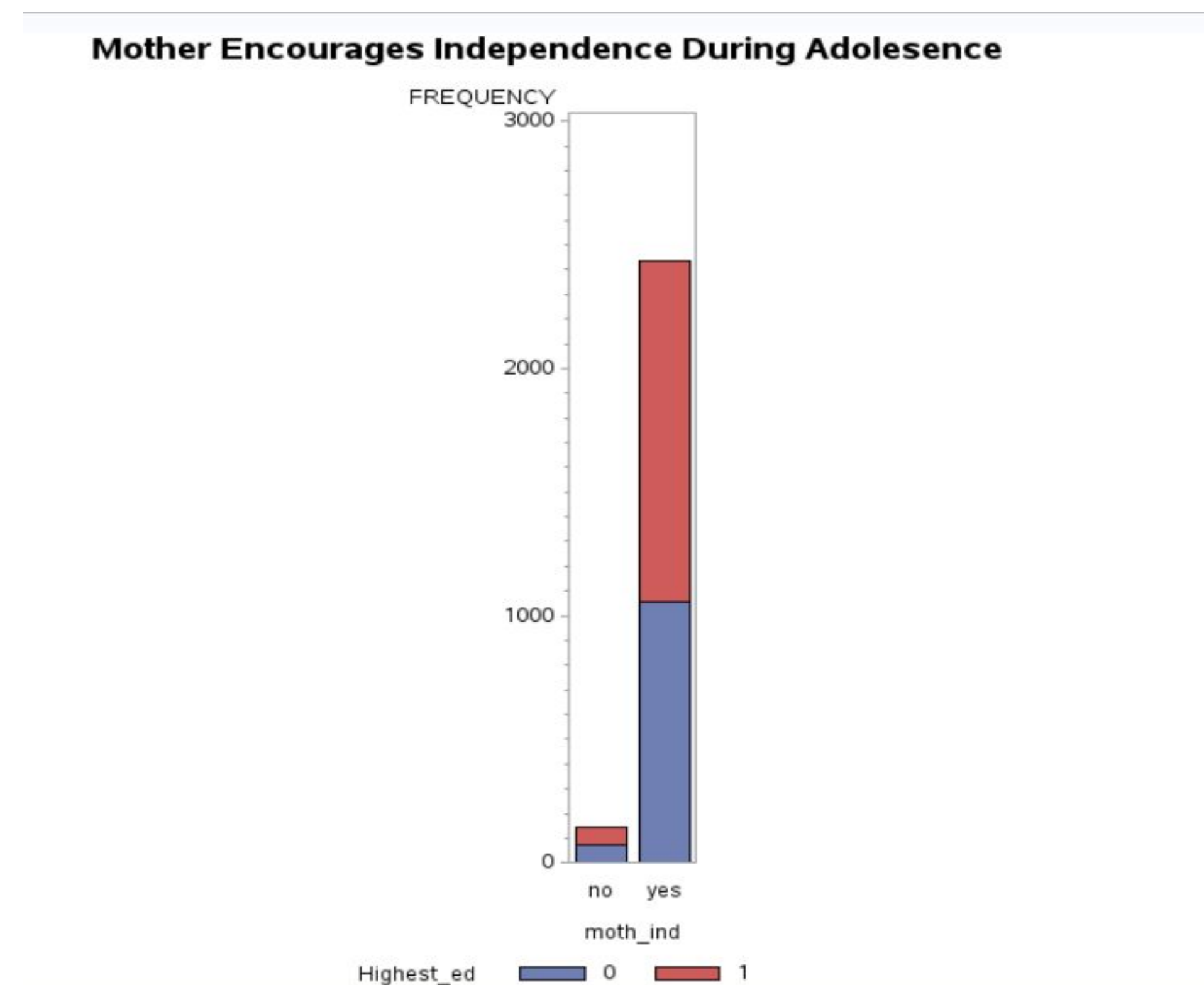


Figure 1: Proportion of Mother Encourages Independence During Adolescence and Higher Education Completion in Adulthood

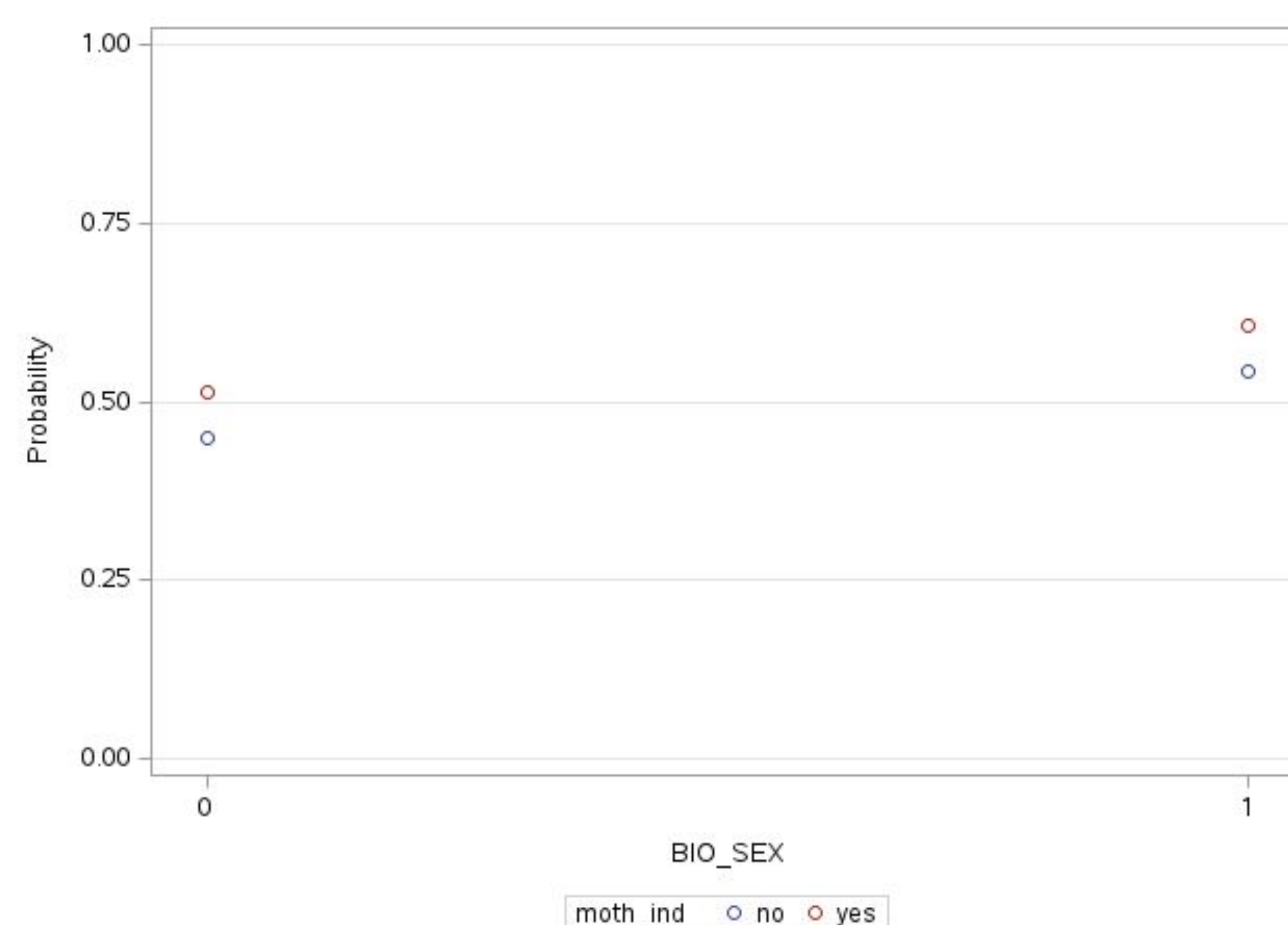


Figure 2: Likelihood of Obtaining Higher Education Degree by Mother Nurturement during Adolescence Based on Gender

Discussion

- While most respondents in the sample completed higher education, nurturement directly from the mother during adolescence does not have a significant impact on degree attainment in adulthood.
- The present findings do not reflect single-parent or married-parent status as part of family structure during adolescence.
- Further research is necessary to learn more about stressors experienced by parents and whether or not they predict attitudes toward higher education onto offspring.

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