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Jonathon J. Beckmeyer

West Virginia University, jonathon.beckmeyer@mail.wvu.edu

Luke T. Russell

Illinois State University, ltrusse@ilstu.edu

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Current Author Affiliations / Contact information:

Jonathon J. Beckmeyer, West Virginia University, Jonathon.beckmeyer@mail.wvu.edu

Luke T. Russell, Illinois State University, ltrusse@ilstu.edu

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Family structure and family management practices: Associations with positive aspects of youth well-being

Jonathon J. Beckmeyer¹

Luke T. Russell²

1. Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, IN, USA
2. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO USA

Corresponding Author:
Jonathon J. Beckmeyer, Department of Applied Health Science, Indiana University
Bloomington, School of Public Health, School of Public Health Building, Room 133, 1027
East, Seventh Street, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA.
Email: jbeckmey@indiana.edu

Abstract

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3 Using data from a national sample of 15-year olds (N = 681) we tested if four family
4 management practices (parental knowledge, behavioral control, parental academic involvement,
5 and unsupervised time with peers) differed between family structures (i.e., biological-parent,
6 stepfather, or single-mother family). We then identified the family management practices
7 associated with positive youth well-being (psychosocial maturity, positive friendship networks,
8 and school bonding) within each family structure. Parental knowledge, academic involvement,
9 and behavioral control were greater in biological-parent than single-mother families. Stepfather
10 families only differed from biological-parent and single-mother families on parental academic
11 involvement. Although family management practices were associated with youth well-being in
12 all family structures, the specific family management practices associated with each aspect of
13 youth well-being varied across structures. Results have implications for how family-based
14 interventions might be adjusted to better account for the specific characteristics of biological-
15 parent, stepfather, and single-mother families.

16 *Keywords:* Family structure, family management practices, youth well-being, stepfamilies,
17 single-mother families

1 Family Structure and Family Management Practices: Associations with Positive Aspects of
2 Youth Well-Being

3 In 1960 an estimated 27% of children in the United States resided in households headed
4 by remarried, single, cohabiting, or non-biological parents, by 2014 that estimate had grown to
5 53% of children (Pew Research Center, 2015). Given this trend, determining the impact of
6 family structure on family processes and youth well-being has become a pressing need (Ganong,
7 Coleman, & Russell, 2015). Family management practices (i.e., parents' management of
8 children's behavior and/or provisions of warmth and support) are critical family processes that
9 can promote youth well-being by creating family environments that limit risk-taking
10 opportunities and support youth development (Wang, Dishion, Stormshak, & Willet, 2011).
11 Family systems researchers (see Cox & Paley, 1997) have theorized that families who experience
12 family structure transitions and/or have fewer caregivers residing in the home, may encounter
13 difficulties enacting effective family management practices (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Fisher,
14 Leve, O'Leary, & Leve, 2003). Divorce, remarriage, and single-parenthood may lead to fewer
15 parental resources (e.g., time, energy, finances; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008), conflict or
16 incompatible parenting across households (Jamison, Coleman, Ganong, & Feistman, 2014), and
17 the (re)negotiation of post-transition relationships (Emery, 2012; Kinniburgh-White, Cartwright,
18 & Seymour, 2010), all of which could disrupt family management. Those challenges may lead to
19 family management practices that have a greater, or lesser, impact on youth well-being in distinct
20 family structure contexts (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Wang, et al., 2011; but see Amato &
21 Fowler, 2002). In this study we tested if family management practices (i.e., parental knowledge,
22 behavioral control, parental academic involvement, and unsupervised time with peers) differed
23 between biological-parent, stepfather, and single-mother families. We then determined which

1 family management practices were associated with positive aspects of youth well-being (i.e.,
2 psychosocial maturity, positive friendship networks, and school bonding) in each structure.

3 **Family Management Practices**

4 The term family management practices encompasses a broad range of parental efforts,
5 rooted within the parent-child subsystem, to shape children's developmental outcomes (Wang et
6 al., 2011). Generally, family management practices can be divided into parental efforts to a)
7 regulate children's behaviors or b) provide them with warmth and support (Darling & Steinberg,
8 1993; Wang et al., 2011). Appropriate and effective family management allows parents to create
9 environments and experiences that promote positive development and minimize negative
10 outcomes (e.g. drug use, social maladjustment, poor academic performance; Amato & Fowler,
11 2002; Wang et al 2011). Although a variety of parenting behaviors and aspects of parent-youth
12 relationships fit within the broad definition of family management practices, in this study we
13 focused on four related to the regulation of youth behavior: parental knowledge, behavioral
14 control, parental academic involvement, and unsupervised time with peers. We focused on these
15 family management practices because prior research has shown they play important roles in
16 shaping youths' developmental outcomes (e.g., Kerr, Stattin, & Burk, 2010; Wang et al., 2011;
17 Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014), are particularly likely to be impacted by family structure as they
18 involve coordination among youths' caregivers, and because each are modifiable, they are
19 appropriate targets for family-based intervention efforts aimed at improving youth well-being.

20 *Parental knowledge* (i.e., how much parents are perceived to know about youths' daily
21 activities, interest, and friends; Kerr et al., 2010) is expected to lead to parenting practices and
22 family environments that support youth development (Abar, Jackson, & Wood, 2014). Parental
23 knowledge may help parents react to youths' needs, communicate to youth that they are being

1 cared for, and help parents identify where to intervene in youths' lives (Hamza & Willoughby,
2 2011). Because parental knowledge is largely due to youths' self-disclosures to their parents
3 rather than parental efforts to solicit information from their children (Crouter, Bumpus, Davis, &
4 McHale, 2005; Keijers, Branje, VanderValk, & Meeus, 2010), previous researchers have
5 considered parental knowledge to be distinct from parents' use of behavioral control, monitoring,
6 or supervision (Kerr et al., 2010). *Behavioral control* reflects parental efforts to regulate youth
7 activities and whereabouts, typically through rules, setting limits, and guiding youth decision
8 making (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Wang et al., 2011). By setting appropriate limits and rules
9 on adolescents' activities and whereabouts parents can prevent or reduce opportunities for risk-
10 taking and communicate expected behavioral standards (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Wang et
11 al., 2011). *Parental academic involvement* refers to activities parents engage in, at home or at
12 school, that support youths' academic success (Hill & Tyson, 2009). For example, parents may
13 assist with homework, studying, and/or completing school projects, or they may communicate
14 and meet with teachers and other school personal, and/or attend school programs and athletic
15 events (Hill & Tyson, 2009). *Unsupervised time with peers* increases over the course of
16 adolescence as youth begin to expect and receive greater autonomy over their daily activities
17 (Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Daddis, 2004). Those trends can create a developmental dilemma
18 (see Allen & Loeb, 2015). On the one hand it is normal and healthy for youth to desire control
19 over activities with peers (Trost, Biesecker, Stattin, & Kerr, 2007). Researchers have consistently
20 recognized, however, that unsupervised time with peers also has the potential to promote risk-
21 taking (Siennick & Osgood, 2012). Therefore, allowing greater unsupervised time with peers
22 may be a family management practice that undermines youth well-being, particularly if youth
23 spend time with peers who engage in risk-taking.

1 **Family Structure and Management Practices**

2 The present study was guided by a family systems framework (see Cox & Paley, 1997).
3 Within this framework, family structure is innately tied to the organization of family
4 relationships and subsystems, boundaries, and hierarchies that are expected to influence
5 individual family members' well-being (Cox & Paley, 1997; Demo & Buehler, 2013). The
6 unique family tasks and stressors faced by biological-parent, stepfather, and single-mother
7 families (described below) may set the stage for how parents in different family configurations
8 engage in family management (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Fisher et al., 2003). Thus parents
9 living in some family structures being better able to, or choose to, employ some family
10 management practices than others. Resulting in youth in different family structures benefiting
11 from some, but not other, family management practices.

12 Single-mother families, by virtue of having a single caregiver in the home, may face
13 particular challenges in supervising, regulating, and being involved in youths' lives (Simons,
14 Chen, Simons, Brody, & Cutrona, 2006; Ziol-Guest & Dunifon, 2014). Single-mother families
15 also tend to be economically disadvantaged compared to two-parent families (Prom-Wormley et
16 al., 2014; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). Economic strain has been shown to undermine
17 parenting behaviors such as warmth and involvement (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Additionally,
18 demographers have shown that single-mothers have increasingly had to adopt longer working
19 hours in order to maintain similar economic incomes as their historic peers (Fox, Han, Ruhm, &
20 Waldfogel, 2013). As these changes in work hours do not appear to be offset by adjustments in
21 single-parent's use of professional childcare services, youth in these family may experience less
22 parental and adult-supervised time than their peers in two-parent families (Fox et al., 2013).

1 Stepfather families must navigate the development of step-relationships and redefine
2 boundaries between parent-child, coparenting, and romantic subsystems (Coleman, Ganong, &
3 Russell, 2013). Mothers in stepfamilies often report role conflicts and parenting challenges as
4 they cope with difficulties in communication, differing expectations, and loyalty binds among or
5 between their children from their previous relationship(s) and a new romantic partner (Weaver,
6 & Coleman, 2010). Stepfathers may also have parental obligations for non-residential children,
7 dividing their attentions or resources (Manning, Stewart, & Smock, 2003). Furthermore, some
8 stepfathers may avoid active parenting (or be ineffective at it) if stepchildren do not accept them
9 as parental figures (Kinniburgh-White et al., 2010).

10 Finally, family management practices in stepfather and single-mother families may both
11 be impacted by ongoing interactions and relationships with youths' nonresidential parents. Most
12 divorced parents coparent with their ex-spouses but many do not do so cooperatively
13 (Beckmeyer, Coleman, & Ganong, 2014). Divorced parents often report struggling to come to
14 terms with coparenting partners in regards to differing parenting strategies and beliefs (Jamison
15 et al., 2014). In addition, conflict between residential and non-residential parents is associated
16 with less optimal parenting techniques such as harsh discipline (DeGarmo, Patras, & Eap, 2008).
17 Married parents may also disagree about childrearing, but such quarrels rarely rise to the level of
18 legal action as often as they do in post-divorce families (Emery, 2012).

19 Prior research on family structure and management has focused on comparing family
20 management practices across family structures and has produced mixed findings. Though some
21 researchers have found that parents in post-divorce families have less parental knowledge than
22 those in biological-parent families (Bumpus & Rodgers, 2009; Wang et al., 2011) others have
23 found no differences (Henry, Plunkett, & Sands, 2011; Jones-Sanpei, Day, & Holmes, 2009;

1 Padilla-Walker, Harper, & Bean, 2011). Likewise, investigations of behavioral control in
2 different family structures have also yielded mixed findings, with some studies suggesting
3 biological-parent and stepfather families use more behavior control than single-mothers (Jones-
4 Sanpei, et al., 2009) and others finding no significant differences (Henry et al., 2011; Longmore,
5 Manning, & Giordano, 2001; Simons et al., 2006). Prior research on parental academic
6 involvement has generally found that biological-parent families are often more involved than
7 other family structures, however, these differences appear to mostly be the result of disparities in
8 other family resources (e.g., economic, social, and cultural capital; Myers & Myers, 2015). There
9 has been little research on unsupervised time with peers across family structures, but previous
10 research suggests that parental supervision in single-parent families is generally less than that in
11 biological-parent families or stepfamilies (Astone, & McLanahn, 1991; Demo & Acock, 1996).

12 Although researchers have previously tested if parenting is differentially associated with
13 youth outcomes (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Wang et al., 2011), most studies have focused on
14 youth problem behaviors. In response, scholars have called for increases in research on
15 determinates of positive youth outcomes, particularly among those living in structurally diverse
16 families (Amato, 2010; Ganong, et al., 2015). In the current study, we addressed this gap in the
17 literature by investigating the impact of family management techniques on positive aspects of
18 youth well-being in an effort to inform family programming that not only mitigates risks, but
19 also promotes positive youth development.

20 **Current Study**

21 In the current study we used data from a national sample of 15 year-olds to examine the
22 impact of family structure on family management practices and then tested their associations
23 with youth well-being. This exploratory study had two distinct aims. The first study aim was to

1 test if four family management practices (parental knowledge, behavioral control, parental
2 academic involvement, and unsupervised time with peers) differed between biological-parent,
3 stepfather, and single-mother families. Prior studies using similar between-groups analyses (e.g.,
4 Jones-Senapi et al., 2009; Henry et al., 2011) have not included the comprehensive set of family
5 management practices we included in this study. The second study aim sought to address recent
6 calls for additional within family structure analyses (Amato, 2010; Ganong et al., 2015).
7 Therefore, we tested associations between family management practices and three positive
8 indicators of youth well-being (psychosocial maturity, positive friendship networks, and school
9 bonding) separately for youth living in each family structure. Our purpose with this aim was to
10 identify family management practices associated with better positive youth development within
11 each specific family structure context, rather than to make comparisons across contexts.

12 **Method**

13 **Participants**

14 Study data came from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development
15 (SECCYD; NICHD ECCRN, 2001; United States Department of Health and Human Services,
16 National Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and
17 Human Development, 2010). The SECCYD is a 15-year longitudinal study of a cohort of
18 children born in the United States in 1991 (see NICHD ECCRN, 2001 for recruitment and
19 original sample demographics). Originally, 1,364 children and their mothers were enrolled in the
20 study and data were collected annually, as part of three study waves, until study children were in
21 the sixth grade. There was an additional fourth wave of data collection when study children
22 were 15 years old. The current study is based on the 979 families that provided family structure
23 data at the Wave-IV assessment. The sample for the current study was limited to youth who had

1 complete data on the study variables and were living with both biological parents (i.e.,
2 biological-parent families), living with a stepfather (i.e., stepfather families), or living with a
3 single-mother (i.e., single-mother families). The final sample consisted of 681 15-year old
4 adolescents (see Table 1 for demographics and descriptive statistics).

5 (Table 1 about here)

6 **Measures**

7 **Parental knowledge.** Youth reported how much their parents' knew about their
8 whereabouts, activities, and peers using a 6-item scale ($\alpha = .82$) created for the SECCYD based
9 on the work of Steinberg and Lamborn (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, Dornbush, 1991;
10 Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Items were rated on a 4-point scale
11 (1 = *doesn't know at all* to 4 = *knows everything*) and scores were computed by averaging the
12 available items (Enders, 2010), for youth who completed at least 5 of the 6 items (i.e., when
13 youth only completed 5 items we averaged the items they completed). Higher scores reflect
14 adolescents perceiving their parents' knew more about their daily activities and experiences.

15 **Behavioral control.** Youth reported parents' use of behavioral control using 7-items ($\alpha =$
16 $.69$) from the Making Decisions questionnaire, which was developed for the SECCYD based on
17 prior research by Brody, Moore, and Glei (1994) and Eccles, Buchanan, Midgley, Fuligni, and
18 Flanagan (1991). Specifically, youth were asked to rate how decisions were made in different
19 areas of their lives (e.g., how late youth can stay up at night, which friends they can spend time
20 with, how youth dress, and what they watch on TV). Each item was rated on a 5-point scale (1 =
21 *my parent(s) decide* to 5 = *I decide all by myself*). Behavioral control scores were computed by
22 averaging the available items (Enders, 2010), after first reverse coding the items, for youth who
23 completed at least 5 of the 7 items (i.e., when youth completed only 5 or 6 items we averaged the

1 items they completed). Higher scores reflect adolescents' perceived parents' exercised greater
2 control over how they spend their time, who they spend it with, and their appearance.

3 **Parental academic involvement.** Parental academic involvement was measured with a
4 scale ($\alpha = .83$) developed by Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch (1996). Items assessed mothers'
5 and fathers' involvement in youths' schooling (e.g., assisting with homework, attending school
6 events, talking with teachers). Youth reported maternal (5-items) and paternal (5-items)
7 academic involvement separately using a 3-point scale (0 = *never* to 2 = *always*). Parental
8 academic involvement scores were computed by averaging across the items; higher scores reflect
9 greater parental involvement in their schooling and academic activities.

10 **Unsupervised time with peers.** Unsupervised time with peers was assessed with two
11 items developed specifically for the SECCYD (see also Meldrum, Barnes, & Hay, 2015).
12 Unsupervised time during the school week was assessed by asking youth: "During a typical
13 week, how many days do you spend at least 30 minutes in the afternoon or evening after school
14 with other kids such as friends or neighbors (not your brothers or sisters), without an adult
15 around?" Youth could select between 0 to 5 weekdays. Unsupervised time over the weekend was
16 assessed by asking youth: "During a typical weekend (Saturday and Sunday), how much time do
17 you spend with other kids such as friends or neighbors (not your brothers or sisters), without an
18 adult around?" Youth responded to this item using a six point scale: 0 = *none at all*, 1 = *less than*
19 *1 hour*, 2 = *1 to 3 hours*, 3 = *3 to 5 hours*, 4 = *5 to 7 hours*, and 5 = *More than 7 hours*. Scores
20 for unsupervised time with peers were computed by averaging the two items together; higher
21 scores reflecting spending more time in the company of peers without adult supervision.

22 **Psychosocial maturity.** Youth completed the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory (30-
23 items; $\alpha = .87$; Greenberger & Bond, 1976). Items assess youths' capacity for self-management,

1 responsibility, and work orientation. Each item was rated with a 4-point scale (1 = *strongly*
2 *disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*). Psychosocial maturity scores were computed by averaging
3 across the items; higher scores reflect youth perceiving they are more mature in their self-
4 management, responsibility, and work orientation.

5 **Positive friendship network.** Youth rated the characteristics of their friendship network
6 using a 15-item measure ($\alpha = .84$) developed for the SECCYD based on the work of Olivieri &
7 Reiss (1987). The items captured behavioral characteristics of youths' friendship group. There
8 were seven positive (e.g., reads books for fun, work hard at school, and respectful of teachers)
9 and eight negative (e.g., they cheat on tests, mean to other kids, and get into trouble) behaviors.
10 Youth rated each item using a 5-point scale (1 = *none of them* to 5 = *all of them*). Positive
11 friendship network characteristics scores were computed by summing across the items, after
12 reverse coding the negative behavior items. Higher scores reflect youth perceiving greater
13 positive behavior in their friendship network.

14 **School bonding.** Youth rated their attachment to their school using a 5-item scale ($\alpha =$
15 $.76$) developed for the SECCYD based on prior studies of school bonding (e.g., Crosnoe,
16 Johnson, & Elder, 2004). Each item was rated on a 4-point scale (1 = *not at all true* to 4 = *very*
17 *true*). Sample items include: "I am happy with my school," "I feel close to others at my school,"
18 and "I feel like I am a part of my school." School bonding scores were computed by averaging
19 across the items; higher scores reflect stronger and more positive connections to their school.

20 **Control variables.** On the basis of previous research suggesting associations between
21 various demographic and family characteristics and youth wellbeing (see Ben-Arieh, 2006),
22 analyses controlled for *adolescent sex* (male = 1, female = 0), *race/ethnicity* (white non-Hispanic
23 = 1, others = 0), and *family income-to-needs ratio* (<1 = income is below needs, ≥ 1 = income is

1 at or greater than needs). Based on research demonstrating parenting behaviors are in part a
2 reaction to children's current behaviors and characteristics (see Kerr & Stattin, 2003) we also
3 controlled for *depressive symptoms* (Children's Depression Inventory-Short Form; 10-items; $\alpha =$
4 $.81$; Kovacs, 1992), and *youth impulse control* (Weinberger Adjustment Inventory; 7-items; $\alpha =$
5 $.82$; Weinberger & Schwartz, 1990). Youth exhibiting greater depressive symptoms, compared to
6 those who do not, may elicit different types of family management from parents. Similarly,
7 youth who show themselves more capable of regulating impulsive behavior may be parented
8 differently than those who appear more impulsive.

9 **Analysis Plan**

10 We first used MANCOVA to determine if family management practices differed between
11 family structures. The MANCOVA controlled for youth sex, race/ethnicity, household income-
12 to-needs ratio, youth depressive symptoms, and youth impulsiveness. We used hierarchical
13 multiple regression (HMR) to examine the within family structure associations between the
14 family management practices and youth well-being. HMR models for each outcome
15 (psychosocial maturity, positive friendship network, and school bonding), were computed for
16 each family structure (biological-parent, stepfather, and single-mother). In each HMR the first
17 step included the control variables and the second step included the family management
18 practices. For ease of presentation, we only provided the final regression model coefficients in
19 the in-text results tables. The online supplemental materials include full regression tables.

20 **Results**

21 **Family Structure Differences in Family Management Practices**

22 We used MANCOVA to determine if family management practices differed between the
23 family structures. The multivariate effect for family structure was significant, Wilk's $\lambda = 0.93$, F

1 = 5.86, $p < .001$, partial- $\eta^2 = .034$. There were significant family structure differences for
2 parental knowledge, $F = 4.33$, $p = .014$, partial- $\eta^2 = .013$, behavioral control, $F = 4.09$, $p = .017$,
3 partial- $\eta^2 = .012$, and parental academic involvement, $F = 21.18$, $p < .001$, partial- $\eta^2 = .059$.
4 However, unsupervised time with peers did not differ between family structures, $F = 0.69$, $p =$
5 $.504$. To identify the specific significant differences in parental knowledge, behavioral control,
6 and parental academic involvement between family structures, we conducted ANCOVAs,
7 controlling for the same variables noted above, for each family management practice.

8 For *parental knowledge*, youth in biological-parent families reported greater parental
9 knowledge than those in single-mother families, but did not differ from those in stepfather
10 families. Parental knowledge also did not differ between stepfather and single-mother families. A
11 similar pattern was found regarding *behavioral control*, wherein youth living in biological-parent
12 families reported their parents used greater behavioral control than those living in single-mother
13 families, but did not differ from those in stepfather families, and no differences were found
14 between stepfather and single-mother families. For *parental academic involvement*, youth in
15 biological-parent families also reported greater parental academic involvement than those in both
16 stepfather and single-mother families, but again, parental school involvement did not differ
17 between stepfather and single-mother families (See Table 1 for group comparisons).

18 **Family Management Practices and Youth Well-Being**

19 **Biological-parent families.** Results of the HMRs for biological-parent families are
20 provided in Table 2. Family management practices accounted for approximately 3% of the
21 variance in *psychosocial maturity*, $F(4, 476) = 5.61$, $p < .001$. Parental knowledge, $\beta = .09$, $p =$
22 $.040$, and parental academic involvement, $\beta = .14$, $p < .001$, were associated with greater
23 psychosocial maturity but the other family management practices were not. Family management

1 practices accounted for approximately 10% of the variance in *positive friendship networks*, $F(4,$
2 $476) = 18.82, p < .001$. Parental knowledge, $\beta = .18, p < .001$, behavioral control, $\beta = .09, p =$
3 $.027$, and parental academic involvement, $\beta = .16, p < .001$, were each associated with more
4 positivity in friendship networks, but unsupervised time with peers was not. Finally, family
5 management practices accounted for approximately 6% of the variance in *school bonding*, $F(4,$
6 $476) = 8.98, p < .001$. Parental knowledge, $\beta = .13, p = .007$, and parental academic involvement,
7 $\beta = .19, p < .001$, were associated with greater school bonding but the other family management
8 practices were not.

9 (Table 2 here)

10 **Stepfather families.** Results of the HMRs for stepfather families are provided in Table 3.
11 Family management practices accounted for approximately 9% of the variance in *psychosocial*
12 *maturity*, $F(4, 84) = 3.02, p = .022$. Parental academic involvement, $\beta = .24, p < .019$, was
13 associated with greater psychosocial maturity but the other family management practices were
14 not. Family management practices accounted for approximately 13% of the variance in *positive*
15 *friendship networks*, $F(4, 84) = 4.30, p = .003$. Parental knowledge, $\beta = .26, p = .014$, and
16 parental academic involvement, $\beta = .23, p = .019$ were associated with more positivity in
17 friendship networks but the other family management practices were not. Finally, family
18 management practices accounted for approximately 13% of the variance in *school bonding*, $F(4,$
19 $84) = 4.25, p = .004$. Parental academic involvement, $\beta = .33, p = .001$, was associated with
20 greater school bonding but the other family management practices were not.

21 (Table 3 here)

22 **Single-mother families.** Results of the HMRs for single-mother families are provided in
23 Table 4. Family management practices did not account for significant variance in *psychosocial*

1 *maturity*, $F(4, 91) = 0.43, p = .785$. Family management practices accounted for approximately
2 11% of the variance in *positive friendship networks*, $F(4, 91) = 3.76, p = .007$. Unsupervised
3 time with peers, $\beta = -.25$, was associated with less positivity in friendship networks but the other
4 family management practices were not. Finally, family management practices accounted for
5 approximately 14% of the variance in *school bonding*, $F(4, 91) = 4.97, p = .001$. Parental
6 knowledge, $\beta = -.27, p = .015$, was associated with less, but behavioral control, $\beta = .36, p < .001$,
7 was associated with greater school bonding. The other family management practices were not
8 associated with school bonding.

9 (Table 4 here)

10 Discussion

11 We believe the results from this study make several important contributions to the
12 literature on family structure, family management practices, and youth well-being. First, we
13 found family structure differences in family management practices primarily appear to be
14 between biological-parent and single-mother families. Stepfather families only differed from
15 biological-parent and single-mother families on parental academic involvement. Second, we
16 found evidence that family management practices are associated with positive youth well-being
17 across family structures. Finally, we provided evidence for how family management practices
18 were associated with positive youth well-being within specific family structure contexts.

19 Parents appear capable of establishing some level of protective family management
20 regardless of their family configuration, and differences we observed in family management
21 practices between family structures were small rather than large. Still, implementing family
22 management practices may be easier when two caregivers are in the home (see Simons et al.,
23 2006). The similarity in family management practices between biological-parent and stepfather

1 families may suggest having two caregivers in the home allows for greater opportunities to
2 obtain knowledge about youths' daily activities, enact rules to regulate their activities, and be
3 involved in academics (Padilla-Walker et al., 2011; Simons et al., 2006). Conversely, single-
4 mothers may have fewer opportunities for family management, a situation exacerbated by
5 experiencing greater economic strain (Fox et al., 2013). Interestingly, family management
6 practices in stepfather families, besides parental academic involvement, were also similar to
7 single-mother families. Stepfather families may share characteristics with both biological-parent
8 and single-mother families. Some remarried couples may try to recreate a nuclear family norm,
9 while others establish distinct family boundaries, with mothers acting as primary caregiver for
10 their children and stepfathers establishing a more supportive role (Coleman et al., 2013).

11 Family management practices appear to support positive youth development in
12 biological-parent, stepfather, and single-mother families, however, our results illustrate within
13 specific family structures some family management practices may be more promotive than
14 others. Such variation may reflect the challenges present (e.g., economic strain, negotiating roles
15 and boundaries, managing relationships with nonresidential parents) or absent in each family
16 structure, as parents work to manage youth experiences. As biological-parent families are likely
17 experiencing fewer challenges than stepfather and single-mother families, they may be best
18 positioned to obtain information about their youth and use it to promote positive development.
19 This may explain why parental knowledge, academic involvement, and behavioral control were
20 associated with youth well-being in biological-parent families. Youth well-being in stepfather
21 families was primarily associated with parental academic involvement. We speculate that
22 parental academic involvement may be an unambiguous way, compared to parental knowledge
23 and behavioral control, for parents to communicate to youth that they are being cared for,

1 without overstepping potentially delicate stepfamily boundaries (Coleman et al., 2013). Finally,
2 family management practices appear to be less consistently associated with youth well-being in
3 single-mother families, which may reflect the challenges of having fewer caregivers in the home
4 and a greater likelihood of economic strain. Interestingly, in our sample, parental knowledge in
5 single-mother families was associated with *less* school bonding, but behavioral control was
6 associated with *more*. Parental knowledge is primarily due to youths' self-disclosure to parents
7 (Kerr et al., 2010), perhaps this negative association reflects that youth who are experiencing
8 problems at school are disclosing those experience to mothers, leading to greater perceived
9 parental knowledge. In contrast, single mothers who exert more control over their children's
10 daily activities may be directing youths' attention towards academics and extracurricular
11 activities at school. Success in those areas may lead to feeling a stronger connection with their
12 school community. Future longitudinal research is needed to replicate these findings and
13 determine the direction of effect.

14 **Implications for Family-Based Interventions**

15 A central focus of family education is to provide programs that address the needs of
16 parents and youth in their specific family contexts. Many post-divorce parent education
17 programs, however, tend to focus on interpersonal relationships (e.g., coparenting between ex-
18 spouses) more than family management practices (Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 2011). As
19 family management practices appear less common in single-mother compared to two-parent
20 families, single-mothers may benefit most from a programmatic focus on how to enact family
21 management practices in the context of shifting economic, emotional, and parental resources.
22 Our results also support the inclusion of information regarding parental academic involvement in
23 programs for stepfather families. Programs developed specifically for families with adolescents

1 (Kumpfer & Hansen, 2014), which commonly do focus on family management practices, could
2 also benefit from tailoring for specific family structures. Based on our results, family
3 programmers should recognize implementing specific family management practices (e.g.,
4 parental academic involvement) may be more difficult or less effective in some family types
5 (e.g., single-mother families) compared to others (e.g., biological-parent families).

6 **Limitations**

7 The results of this study must be considered within the context of its limitations. First, the
8 study is cross-sectional, precluding us from testing if family structure transitions lead to changes
9 in family management practices or that family management practices lead to changes in youth
10 well-being. For example, youth behavior may influence parents' family management, though we
11 attempted to account for this by controlling for two youth characteristics, depressive symptoms
12 and impulse control, which may affect family management practices. Second, we lacked
13 information regarding how long youth had lived in stepfather and single-mother family
14 structures. Family management practices within these families may be influenced by the length
15 of time since they experienced their family transition, with families with more recent transitions
16 facing more challenges than those who experienced the transition years ago (Amato, 2010;
17 Ganong et al., 2015). Third, the youth in this study were all 15 years old. Developmental stage
18 may thus influence the associations found between family structure and management practices.
19 We also rely on youth reports of family management practices. Although youth and parents may
20 perceive family management differently, researchers (e.g., Brannstetter & Furman, 2013) have
21 suggested that youths' perceptions of parenting are the most proximal influence on their well-
22 being. Additionally, the reliability of our measure of behavioral control is rather low, which can
23 reduce our ability to find significant associations between behavioral control and youth well-

1 being (Card & Barnett, 2015). Finally, we note that the family management practices and family
2 structures included in this study are not exhaustive measures of these constructs.

3 **Future Directions and Conclusion**

4 The results from our study contribute to an already mixed set of findings regarding family
5 structure, family management, and youth well-being. Perhaps now is the time for a systematic
6 review of the exigent literature on family structure and management practices, with a particular
7 emphasis on how sample and methodological characteristics may be contributing to these mixed
8 findings. Applying systematic and meta-analytic review techniques to the research on family
9 structure and management practices may help clarify the associations between these constructs
10 and provide researchers with information regarding where continued research is needed. Future
11 research should also continue focusing on within group studies of specific family structures. That
12 is, studies specifically on biological-parent, stepfather, and single-mother families, as well as
13 other family structures not included in the current study, can identify specific processes and
14 experiences associated with family management practices and may also shape how they are
15 associated with youth well-being. In such studies it may be particularly beneficial to integrate a
16 person-x-content perspective (see Rosa & Tudge, 2013) in order to capture the complex
17 interactions between family processes, youth and parent characteristics, and youth well-being.
18 Scholars and public officials continue to discuss if family structure or family processes are the
19 primary determinate of youth well-being (Ganong et al., 2015). Our results suggest both are
20 important but in different ways. Ultimately, growing our understanding of how structure may
21 inform or impact processes within families can allow family scientists and practitioners to both
22 better understand family dynamics and target interventions.

23

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Table 1.

Sample Demographics and Descriptive Statistics by Family Structure.

	Full Sample (N = 681)	Biological-parent (n = 486)	Stepfather (n = 94)	Single-mother (n = 101)	
	% or <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	% or <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	% or <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	% or <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>F</i> (2, 680) or χ^2 (2)
Male youth	51.2%	49.4% _{0a}	68.1% _{0b}	44.6% _{0a}	13.15**
White non-Hispanic youth	85.2%	89.1% _{0a}	78.7% _{0b}	72.3% _{0c}	22.31***
Family income-to-needs ratio	5.69 (5.66)	6.40 (5.90) _a	4.51 (5.22) _b	3.35 (3.76) _b	15.13***
Youth depressive symptoms	1.96 (2.63)	1.78 (2.53) _a	1.96 (2.52) _{ab}	2.78 (3.02) _b	6.02**
Youth Impulse control	3.55 (0.90)	3.62 (0.90) _a	3.19 (0.94) _b	3.57 (0.83) _a	8.89***
Parental knowledge ^a	2.99 (0.53)	3.04 (0.51) _a	2.90 (0.57) _{ab}	2.85 (0.55) _b	4.33*
Behavioral control ^a	2.11 (0.63)	2.15 (0.63) _a	1.99 (0.61) _{ab}	2.03 (0.62) _b	4.09*
Unsupervised time with peers ^a	2.25 (1.52)	2.17 (1.51)	2.54 (1.51)	2.35 (1.58)	0.69
Parental academic involvement ^a	1.40 (0.38)	1.47 (0.34) _a	1.26 (0.42) _b	1.20 (0.42) _b	21.18***
Psychosocial maturity	3.35 (0.34)	3.38 (0.33) _a	3.30 (0.34) _{ab}	3.26 (0.37) _b	7.26**
Positive friendship network	57.74 (7.32)	58.43 (7.17) _a	55.02 (7.95) _b	56.95 (6.81) _{ab}	9.49***
School bonding	3.32 (0.56)	3.40 (0.52) _a	3.09 (0.62) _b	3.21 (0.61) _b	15.64***

Notes. ^aResults of ANCOVA controlling for youth sex, race/ethnicity, income-to-needs ratio, depressive symptoms, and impulsivity. Percentages and means in the same row with different subscripts are significantly different. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Biological-Parent Families (N = 486).

	Psychosocial maturity			Positive friendship network			School bonding		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Male	-0.07	0.03	-.11**	-2.22	0.54	-.16***	-0.11	0.04	-.10*
White, non-Hispanic	0.02	0.04	.01	-0.67	0.85	-.03	0.16	0.07	.10*
Income-to-needs	0.01	0.00	.08*	0.05	0.04	.04	0.01	0.00	.06
Depressive symptoms	-0.04	0.01	-.30***	-0.33	0.11	-.12**	-0.07	0.01	-.32***
Impulse control	0.13	0.02	.35***	2.48	0.33	.31***	0.04	0.03	.06
Parental knowledge	0.06	0.03	.09*	2.49	0.61	.18***	0.13	0.05	.13**
Behavioral control	-0.03	0.02	-.05	0.98	0.44	.09*	0.00	0.04	-.00
Unsupervised time with peers	0.00	0.01	.02	-0.34	0.19	-.07	0.01	0.02	.03
Parental academic involvement	0.13	0.04	.14**	3.42	0.85	.16***	0.28	0.07	.19***
<i>F</i> (df) – step 1	54.70(5, 480)***			39.46(5, 480)***			24.27(5, 480)***		
ΔR^2 – step 1	.36			.29			.20		
<i>F</i> (df) – step 2	5.61(4, 476)***			18.82(4, 476)***			8.98(4, 476)***		
ΔR^2 – step 2	.03			.10			.06		

Notes. For ease of presentation only coefficients from the final models are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Stepfather Families (N = 94).

	Psychosocial maturity			Positive friendship network			School bonding		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Male	-0.06	0.07	-.08	-1.87	1.52	-.11	-0.23	0.12	-.17
White, non-Hispanic	-0.06	0.07	-.07	-0.50	1.70	-.03	0.08	0.14	.05
Income-to-needs	0.00	0.01	.02	0.04	0.14	.02	0.01	0.01	.12
Depressive symptoms	-0.02	0.01	-.18	-0.26	0.30	-.08	-.06	0.02	-.24*
Impulse control	0.13	0.04	.36**	2.50	0.85	.30**	0.13	0.07	.19
Parental knowledge	0.04	0.06	.07	3.59	1.44	.26*	0.05	0.11	.04
Behavioral control	0.05	0.05	.09	-0.70	1.22	-.05	0.11	0.1	.11
Unsupervised time with peers	0.03	0.02	.13	-0.02	0.49	-.00	0.04	0.04	.10
Parental academic involvement	0.19	0.08	.24*	4.43	1.85	.23*	0.48	0.15	.33**
<i>F</i> (df) – step 1	6.36(5, 88)***			5.65(5, 88)***			4.88(5, 88)**		
ΔR^2 – step 1	.27			.24			.22		
<i>F</i> (df) – step 2	3.02(4, 84)*			4.30(4, 84)**			4.25(4, 94)**		
ΔR^2 – step 2	.09			.13			.13		

Notes. For ease of presentation only coefficients from the final models are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses for Single-Mother Families (N = 101).

	Psychosocial maturity			Positive friendship network			School bonding		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Male	-0.16	0.07	-.21*	-2.27	1.28	-.17	-0.23	0.12	-.18
White, non-Hispanic	-0.07	0.07	-.09	-0.61	1.40	-.04	0.13	0.12	.10
Income-to-needs	-0.01	0.01	-.07	-0.26	0.17	-.14	0.00	0.02	.00
Depressive symptoms	-0.05	0.01	-.43***	-0.17	0.21	-.08	-0.07	0.02	-.36***
Impulse control	0.20	0.04	.46***	3.26	0.75	.40***	0.12	0.07	.16
Parental knowledge	-0.05	0.07	-.08	-0.42	1.31	-.03	-0.30	0.12	-.27*
Behavioral control	-0.04	0.06	-.06	1.13	1.08	.10	0.35	0.10	.36***
Unsupervised time with peers	-0.01	0.02	-.05	-1.08	0.43	-.25*	0.01	0.04	.03
Parental academic involvement	0.06	0.08	.07	2.27	1.53	.14	0.26	0.14	.18
<i>F</i> (df) – step 1	13.76(5, 95)***			6.19(5, 95)***			4.62(5, 95)**		
ΔR^2 – step 1	.42			.25			.20		
<i>F</i> (df) – step 2	0.43(4, 91)			3.76(4, 91)**			4.97(4, 91)**		
ΔR^2 – step 2	.01			.11			.14		

Notes. For ease of presentation only coefficients from the final models are presented. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$