



Laying the Groundwork for Resilience and Success: How a Supportive Community Can Protect Against the Effects of Poverty



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INTRODUCTION

- Poverty is defined as lack of income and financial resources, but it also includes housing instability, hunger and malnutrition, limited educational opportunities, lack of basic services and healthcare, and social discrimination and exclusion (Chambers, 2006).
- The negative effects of poverty include increased risks for developmental delays, low academic achievement, poor physical and mental health, and impairments in social functioning (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2015), with evidence that impairments continue into adulthood (Duncan, Magnuson, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2012).
- The existing literature suggests that children can overcome adversity associated with poverty with the help of protective factors such as having a community mentor, a caring teacher, receiving encouragements and motivation from peers, and having parental involvement (Brody et al., 2014; Gizir & Aydin, 2009).
- The current study examines supportive community factors during childhood that may have buffered against the negative impact of on overall stress and academic achievement in college students.

Hypotheses:

1. Poverty-related factors will be associated with high levels of stress and impaired academic performance in college.
2. Individuals who grew up with more supportive community factors will have lower levels of stress and higher academic performance.

METHOD

Participants:

- Participants included 89 college students enrolled at a large Midwestern University, $M = 19.92$ years, $SD = 3.23$.
- The students were predominantly female (76.5%) and white (72.2%).

Procedures and Measures:

- Participants completed the following questionnaires:
- **Community Risk and Resilience Measure** assesses risk and resilience related to poverty, discrimination, community disruption, lack of opportunity, housing, and violence.
- **Life Stress Scale** assesses the degree of stress on multiple life contexts (Ashing-Giwa et al., 2004; 2012).
- **Grade Point Average (GPA)** assess a person's academic achievement through their current grade point average in college.

Figure 1. Moderation Effects of Mentorship

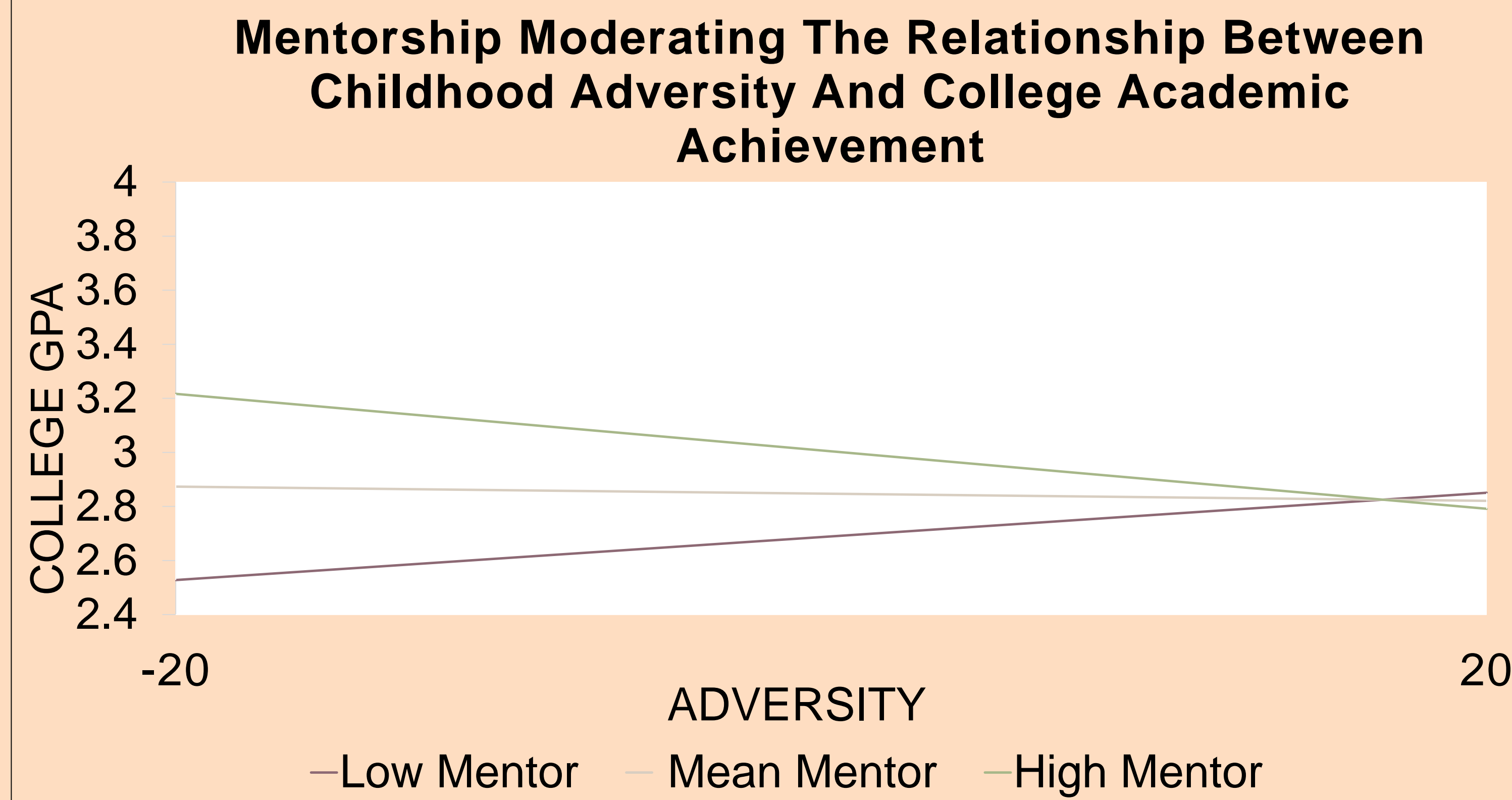


Figure 2. Moderation Effects of Community Supportive Factors

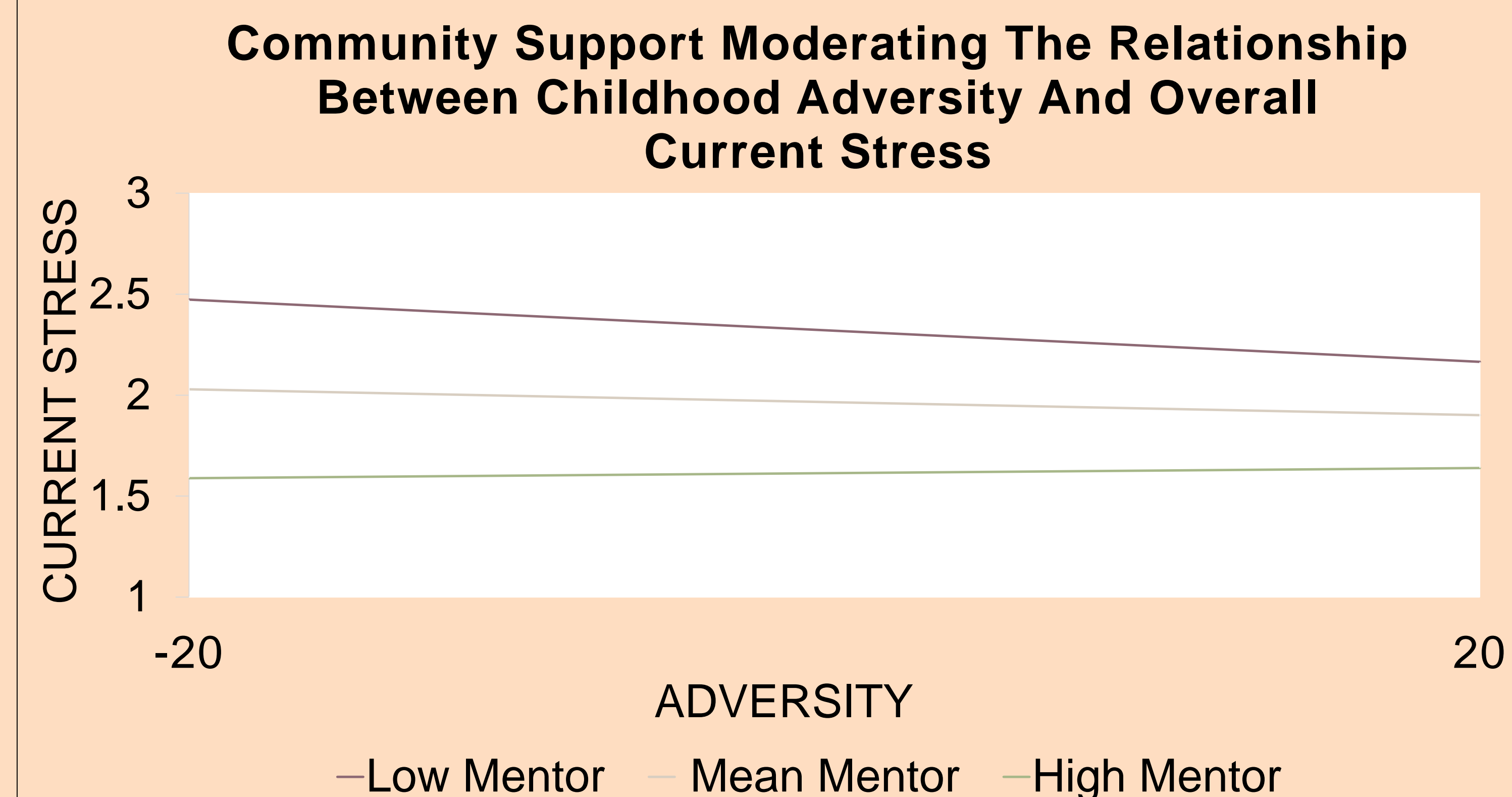


Table 1. Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Childhood Adversity	44.65	15.23	-		
2. Community Mentorship	25.63	4.36	-.64**	-	
3. College GPA	2.93	.62	-.17	.21*	-
4. Overall Life Stress	1.91	.67	.23*	-.44	-.18**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

RESULTS

Analyses:

- Moderation analyses with bootstrapping procedures (Hayes, 2017; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008) were conducted to examine the moderating role of supportive community mentorship on the association between childhood poverty and college achievement (GPA).
- A second moderation analysis with bootstrapping procedures examined the moderating role of supportive community mentorship on the association between childhood poverty and overall stress.

Results:

- Childhood adversity was negatively related to mentorship, $r^2 = .64$, $p < .001$, and positively related to overall current stress, $r^2 = .23$, $p < .05$.
- Mentorship significantly moderated the relationship between childhood adversity and college academic achievement (GPA) ($\Delta R^2 = .11$, $F(3,84) = 3.72$, $p < .05$).
- Follow-up conditional analyses indicated that mentorship was associated with higher GPAs, but only at low levels of adversity (see Figure 1).
- A second moderation analysis was conducted in which mentorship was a significant moderator in the relationship between childhood adversity and overall life stress ($\Delta R^2 = .2104$, $F(3,84) = 7.46$, $p < .001$).
- Follow-up conditional analyses indicated that mentorship was associated with lower levels of stress for students coming from all levels of poverty (see Figure 2).

DISCUSSION

Conclusion:

- Results indicate that individuals with high community support factors have higher academic performance and lower stress levels in college when they experience lower levels of adversity.
- Although these community factors are found to be helpful, however, it may not be enough to overcome the risks associated with high levels of poverty.

Implications:

- These findings have implications for further studies to identify other related protective factors that may help overcome the risks associated with high levels of poverty.