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Introduction

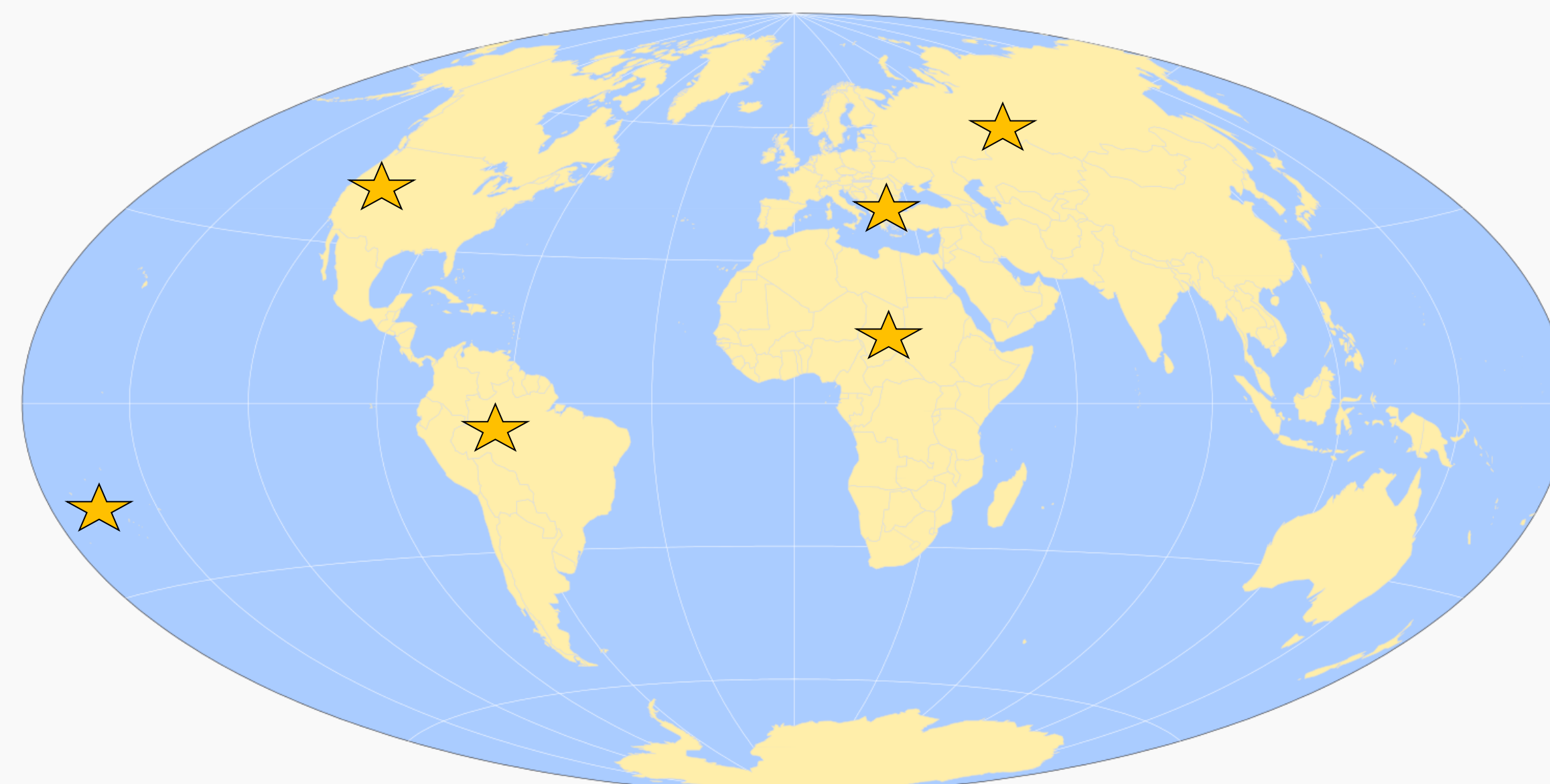
The purpose of this project is to define whether paternal sleeping proximity is positively associated with father involvement in infancy. The majority of mammalian species are characterized by a pattern of maternal care for infants: fathers play no direct role in caring for offspring in 90% of mammalian species (Storey et al., 2000). In humans, males show cultural variation in the amount of paternal care given the offspring, and cross-cultural work has demonstrated that men in about 40% of societies show moderate to high levels of contact with their infants (Barry and Paxton, 1971). Previous research suggests that paternal sleeping proximity may be related to fathers' involvement in child care (Ball et al., 2000; Lev-Wiesel, 2000; Whiting and Whiting, 1975). Recent work has raised the possibility that co-sleeping may be physiologically important for infants (McKenna et al. 1993; Mosko et al., 1993; Trevathan and McKenna, 1994). This manuscript presents cross-cultural research examining the hypothesis that paternal co-sleeping is positively associated with paternal involvement in infant care. Analyses performed on the 186-society Standard Cross-Cultural Sample (Murdoch and White 1969) revealed that paternal co-sleeping did correspond with an increased role of the father in infancy.

Methods

We ran a total of four models: Model 1, a bivariate model, was created to assess how well parental sleeping position could predict the role of the father in infancy. Model 2 also included controls. Model 3 included weaning age in a multivariate analysis using the variables for Model 2. The final model was created to assess the possibility of the interaction of polygyny and weaning age.

The Standard Cross-Cultural Sample Database (SCCS)

The SCCS database is a series of data based on ethnographic work done in 186 primarily pre-industrial societies. This large, global data set currently contains 1400 variables and is frequently used by social scientists to test hypotheses when a large, cross-cultural, global perspective is required.

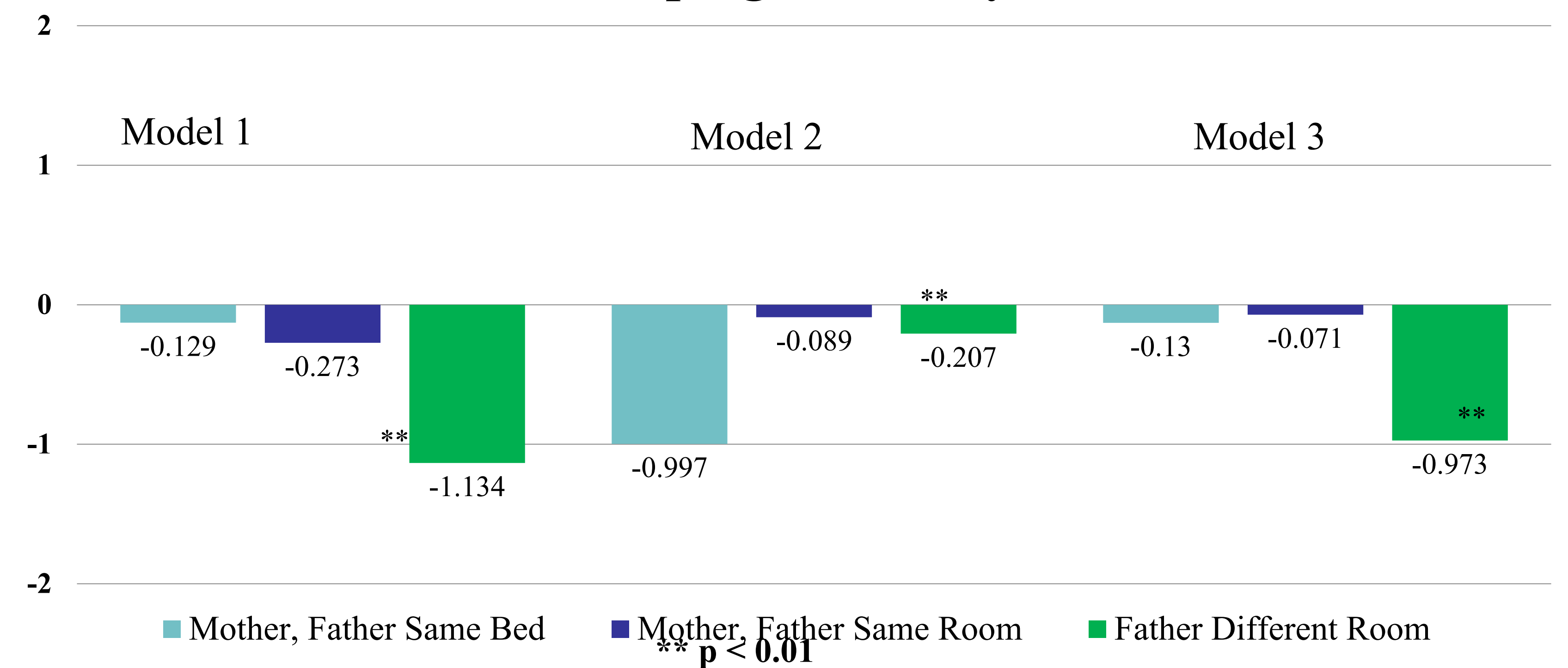


Sampled Regions:
Africa • Circum-Mediterranean • East Eurasia • Insular Pacific • North America • South America

Results and Discussion

This analysis found that societies in which fathers sleep in a different room than their infants, as opposed to those in which fathers sleep in the same room as their infants, were associated with significant decreases in the role of the father in infancy (see figure 1). Further, of the four dichotomous variables measuring paternal sleeping position, only fathers who slept in a different room were found to be significant in any of the models (see table 2). The tests conducted revealed that paternal-infant co-sleeping proximity is significantly positively related to the role that fathers play in infancy. Analysis revealed that societies in which fathers sleep in a different room, as opposed to societies in which fathers sleep in the same room, have a significant decrease in the role these fathers play in infancy. This result bolsters support for the view that paternal contact may increase the role that fathers play in their infants' lives.

Role of Father, Infancy, by Parental Sleeping Proximity



Conclusions

This research adds additional data in support of the hypothesis developed by Whiting and Whiting (1975). In the current study, fathers who slept with their children were found to be more intimately involved in the lives of their children during the day even after biome type, polygyny, indulgence level, and weaning age were controlled, than were fathers who slept in a different room. These data have important implications for policy and public health campaigns promoting healthful co-sleeping.

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