

The Relationship Between Perceived Sense of Care As a Child and Future Success in Parenting

Sadie Cook, Applied Data Analysis, Wesleyan University

Introduction

- Relationship with one's parents impacts a variety of facets within adulthood. (Nelson et. al, 2010).
- Guilt-proneness and shame-proneness as a parent indicate a correlation to negative parenting experiences as a child. (Mintz, Etengoff, & Gryzman, 2017).
- Children entering adulthood who reported lower levels of negativity with their parents felt more to 'be adults' than those who possessed helicopter-parenting style of parents. (Lindell et. al, 2017). Vocational identity and perceived competence were similarly impacted depending on the relationship style. (Lindell et. al, 2017).
- Prior research exploring the association of parenting style on child outcomes found authoritative and inconsistent mothers relating to more positive outcomes of emerging-adult children. Controlling-indulgent mothers linked to children with the most negative child outcomes. Authoritative fathers harbor the highest level of parent-child closeness, self-worth, kindness, and low struggles with depression. (Nelson et. al, 2011).
- While preexisting research indicates differences in impact by a person's mother versus father, but this study will not delve into the specifics of father vs. mother impact (Danielsbacka et al., 2015).
- Perceived sense of care by one's parent figures as it relates to future ability to both construct closeness to their own child and find happiness in a parental role remains largely unclear. Studying this relationship may shed important light on newfound areas of social and developmental psychology.

Research Questions

- Is there a significant relationship between perceived sense of care by one's parents and future success as a parent to one's own children?
- Does sex at birth moderate a possible relationship between perceived sense of care as a child and future success as a parent?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=4,095) were drawn from the US National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (AddHealth), a nationally representative sample tracking adolescents aged 12-16 through adulthood's well-being and development through various factors. The survey was conducted in five waves between 1994 to 2017.

Measures

- Variables studied are categorical, numerically coded on a 1-5 scale with "1" indicating "not at all" and "5" "very much."
- An overall parent success score "overallfitgroups" was created combining the answers of two variables. "happyinroleasparent" and "closenesstochildren". A score of one indicates the strongest level of success in happiness/closeness, while five being the least. This is an ordinal categorical variable.
- The potential moderating variable, "sex at birth," is an additional categorical binary variable: "male" coded as 1 and "female" coded as 2.

Results

Univariate

- Close to Child(s): 56.12%, felt that they "strongly agree". Almost thirteen percent of respondents said they "agree" with feeling close to their children. The categories of "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," and "not applicable" stayed within ranges of 0.59% - 1.78%.
- Happy in Role as a Parent: 54.43% responded that they "strongly agree[d]" with the statement. Those indicating "agree," held 15.87%. A little over two percent "neither agree nor disagreed" with the statement. "Disagree," "strongly disagree," and "not applicable," all ranged from 0.48% - 0.88%.
- Perceived Sense of Care as a Child: Majority of respondents answered, "very much" (84.56%). 10.84% of respondents selected "quite a bit." Almost three percent of respondents selected "somewhat." The other categories - "not at all," "very little," "does not apply," "refused," and "don't know" - each made up less than one percent of respondents.

Bivariate

- A binary categorical variable "fitscore" was created specifically to run a chi-square test of independence, in which "0" held "overallfit" scores of 1-5, while 2 indicated overall fit scores of 6-10.. It was revealed that there was not a statistically significant relationship between perceived sense of care as a child and "overallfit" success as a parent ($p = 0.062$) - no post-hoc test was necessary. (Figure 1).
- Additionally, "overallfit" (i.e. success of parents with their children in fostering close relationship and personal happiness) (Beta (level 2)= $-.227$, CI $-1.24 - .783$, $p=0.659$, Beta (level 3) = $-.2$, CI $-1.123 - .723$, $p = 0.671$, Beta(level 4)= $-.23$, CI $-1.12 - .66$, $p = 0.612$, Beta (level 5)= $-.411$, CI $-1.29 - .47$, $p=0.361$) was not statistically significantly associated with one's perceived sense of care by parents when they were a child, by a simple regression.

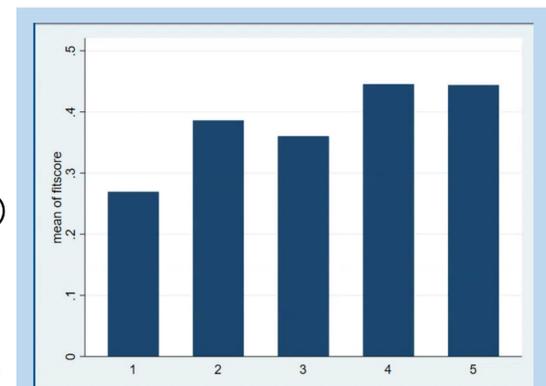
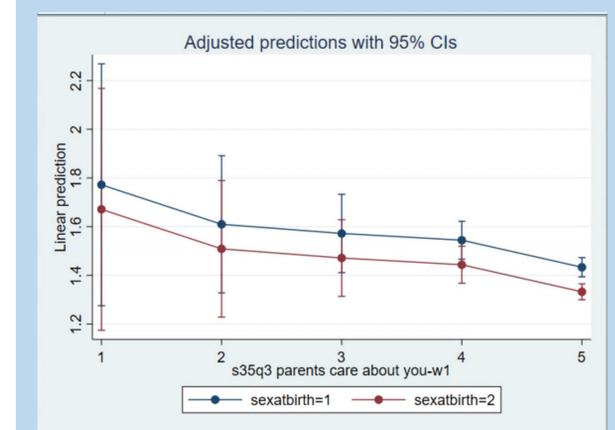


Figure 1. Mean of "fitscore" by "parentscore", bivariate cross tabs graph.

Multivariate

- Sex at birth is not a moderator for the association between perceived sense of care by parents as a child and future overall success in parenting (Figure 2).
- When controlling for sex at birth, "overallfitgroups" (Beta (level 2)= $-.16$, CI $-.73 - .41$, $p=0.577$, Beta(level 3)= $-.199$, CI= $-.72 - .32$, $p=0.452$, Beta(level 4)= $-.23$, CI= $-.73 - .274$, $p=0.374$, Beta(level 5)= $-.338$, CI $-.83 - .159$, $p=0.181$) was not significantly and positively associated with one's perceived sense of care by parents when they were a child.

Figure 2. Perceived Sense of Care vs. Overall Fit Groups of Parental Success by Sex at Birth



Discussion

- One's sense of care received by their parents, on a broad scale, may not impact one's future ability to both connect with their own children and be happy in their role as a parent.
- Family counselors, psychiatrists, and other developmental medical professionals might use this information when advising clients. This may prove similarly useful for social and other care workers.
- While research supports other relationships of impact by parents on one's future, this is one area in which the idea of impossibility to unlearn behavior may not need to be harbored.
- Research is needed still to determine if variables specific to upbringing, such as family unit type, number of siblings, socio-economic class, mental health and addiction, level of education, and others may confound or moderate this relationship. Delving deeper into these specific elements may prove useful for similar reason to child and family psychologists, researchers, counselors, social workers, and more.