

The Association between Lenient Parenting Styles and Parent-Child Relationships in Adulthood

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Applied Data Analysis: Section 3

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Introduction

- Adolescents are known for chafing under their parents' rules. As a young child begins to enter teenagehood and take a few steps closer to becoming an independent adult, they butt up against new expectations and often desire greater independence. Many adolescents find themselves fighting with their parents more often as they enter a new phase of their mental development and their relationship with their families.

- The goal of this study is to examine how the parents' strict or lenient treatment of the child is associated with the closeness of the parent-child relationship long-term. When the child grows up and becomes an adult, would a stricter parenting style lead them to resent their parents? Could leniently-raised children be more likely to run wild and become distant from their parents?

- Most people want to have a close, loving relationship with their family if they can (Hess, 2000). Which parenting style is associated with closer, more loving parent-child relationships down the line?

Do your parents let you make your own decisions about...



How close are you to your parents?



[Graphic art used with license from Canva.com]

Research Question: Is parental strictness associated with close parent-child relationships in adulthood? Does gender affect this association?

Method

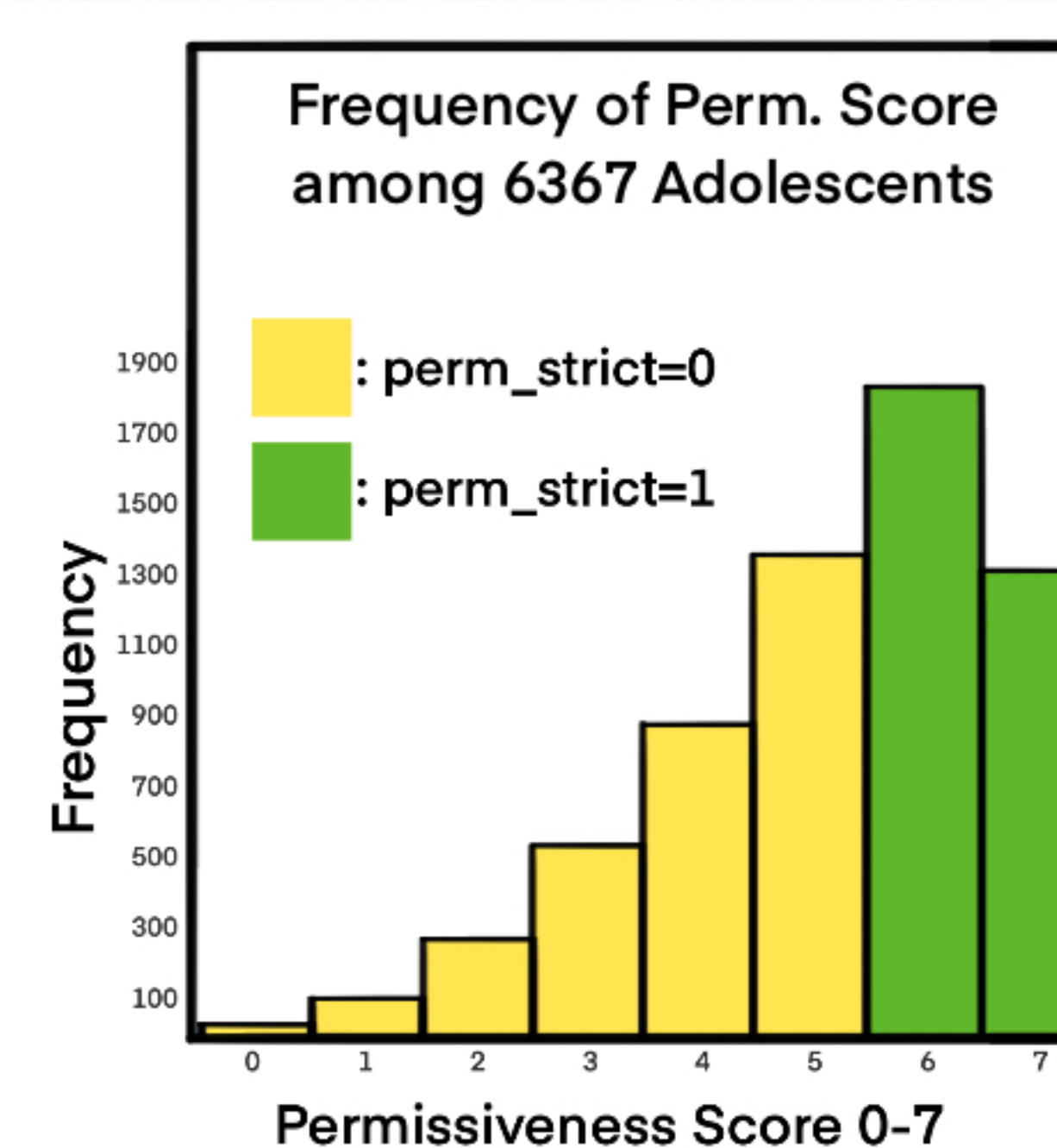
- The data is taken from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, a nationally-representative sample of over 20,000 people which spanned several decades.

- This study uses Wave 1 (6,504 adolescents in grades 7-12, in 1994-95) and Wave 5 (4,196 individuals, now adults, 21-24 years later).

- The data covers a wide range of information about these people, with over 4500 questions related to daily life, health, family, and more.

First, a "permissiveness score" from 0-7 was constructed based on 7 yes-or-no questions.

The higher 50.5% were given a "perm_strict" value of 1, indicating a more permissive parenting style. The lower 49.5% were given a perm_strict value of 0. Perm_strict is the explanatory variable.



"Relationship," the response variable, is a score that reflects how close the child, now a full-grown adult, is to their parents. It's the summation of several different questions relating to how close the adult child feels to each of their parents and how often they contacted them.

An Anova Regression was run between perm_strict and relationship, using gender as a third variable.

Results

Univariate:

- 50.5% of the sample adolescents were raised with a permissive parenting style.
- 49.5% of the sample adolescents were raised more strictly.
- The mean relationship score, on a scale from 1 to 22, is 14.49.

Bivariate:

When an Anova test was run between permissiveness and relationship, a statistical test suggested that any relationship found was **not significant**.

There is a 9% chance the variation in the graph below is random chance.



Multivariate:

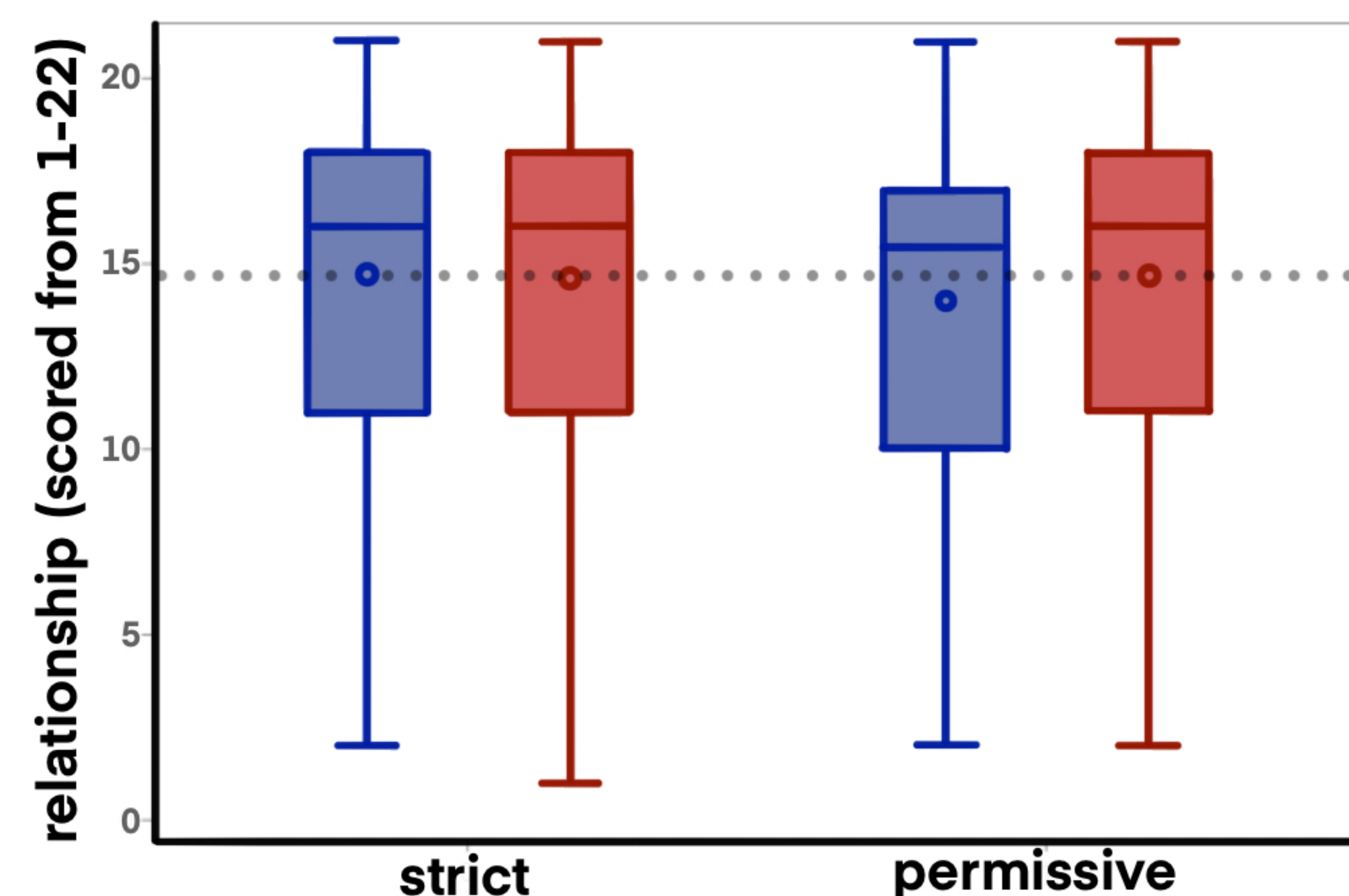
When an Anova Regression was run using gender as a third interacting variable, the data now indicated significant results.

Then, gender is a moderator between permissiveness and relationship.

Notably, three of the four groups are still extremely similar:

Strict/M
Strict/F
Permissive/F

with Permissive/M as the only one with a significant difference from the others.



Conclusions

The data suggests that we can conclude with 99% confidence that there is an association between parental boundaries and the closeness of the parent-child relationship later in life, taking gender into account. (This is NOT necessarily causation.)

Three of the four groups here are very close to each other: strict/M has a mean of 14.71, strict/F has a mean of 14.62, and permissive/F has a mean of 14.68. The significantly different group is permissive/M, which has a mean of 13.99.

Men who were raised with lenient parents, then, are on average 0.68 points less close to their parents at this age than the other 3 groups.

However, even the group which is significantly different from the others varies by quite a small amount. It seems that both parenting styles can and often do lead to good familial relationships down the line.

References

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