Effects of Parental Conflict Styles on Their Childrens' Ability to Foster Young Adult

Relationships

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Abstract

The following study investigates the parent-child relationship post adolescence. The goal of the study is to determine the effects parenting styles have on the adult child's ability to foster and keep relationships with their parents and peers. The literature review outlines the different types of parenting styles and the connotations associated with each one. After conducting the initial research, the researchers plan on analyzing this relationship in nearby college campuses. In order to collect the information, the researchers will stop young adults outside of the colleges' libraries and ask them to complete an online survey. Once this stage is complete, the researchers will follow up and schedule in-person interviews with each participant. We predict that the adults whose parents utilized a positive parenting approach will have an easier time fostering connections with their parents and peers. Likewise, the students whose parents utilized negative parenting styles will have a strained relationship with their parents and a harder time forming friendships. Ultimately, this study illustrates the importance of parental communication. As seen in our preliminary research, the parenting style that a child grows up with impacts their ability to foster connections in their adult life.

Literature Review

For our research project, we are investigating the relationship between a parent's parenting style and the effects it has on the young adult's behavior towards their parents and peers. Our preliminary research focused on common parenting styles. Some of these include authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. From here, we found sources pertaining to the effects these parenting styles have on young adults behavior. For instance, we researched the parenting styles that inflict happiness and positivity onto the child. On the other hand, we found that some parenting styles negatively impact a child's emotional development. One example of this is helicopter parenting, a term used to describe parents who insist on controlling the child's life. After studying parenting styles and their effects on a child's behavior, we turned our attention to the child's ability to foster relationships with their parents and peers. We wanted to see which parenting styles lead children to maintain better relationships. The independent variable in our research is parenting styles. The dependent variable is the effects of parenting styles on the young adults behavior. There are many studies about the importance of parenting styles and early childhood development. However, few scientists focus on the long term effects a parenting style has on the child. Therefore, our group intends to find out how a parent's parenting style impacts a young adult's development.

In academic research, the idea of parenting styles was established by Diana Baumrind in the 1960's. She noted that functionality, cohesion (togetherness), and flexibility were all impactful markers of different parenting techniques and used those to measure and create Baumrind's theory of the three parenting styles (Baumrind, 1966). As described by Matejevic et al. (2014), the authoritative parenting style is cohesive, flexible, and highly functional. Overall, this style is classified as "healthy and normal" (p. 432). The second style is authoritarian, which

is cohesive but lacks flexibility and has a rigid level of functionality. In these families, "parents primarily demand obedience and loyalty from their children" (p. 432). The final parenting style established by Baumrind is the permissive parenting style. In this style there are high levels of cohesion and flexibility to the point of constant chaos. There are low levels of stability, meaning that "roles and rules are either unclear or constantly chang[ing]" (p. 432). Matejevic et al. (2014) has found within their research that the most functional parenting styles are in line with authoritative, in that parents work towards general satisfaction and have open communication. These parenting styles lead to children who have healthy emotional connections, a capacity for recognizing change, and are able to openly communicate.

Helicopter Parenting

While parental involvement is often associated with positive outcomes for children, that is not always the case. This is established within the parenting method of helicopter parenting, which Odenweller et al. (2014) defines as "overly involved and protective parents who constantly communicate with their children, intervene in their children's affairs, make decisions for their children, personally invest in their children's goals, and remove obstacles their children encounter". Helicopter parenting contributes to high levels of neuroticism, where one often feels intense negative emotions, interpersonal dependency, needing to consistently rely on another, and coping efficacy, the inability to regulate emotions (Odenweller et al., 2014). These traits prevent young adults from developing healthy interpersonal relationships by impairing their physical, social, and emotional wellbeing (Odenweller et al., 2014).

Due to the prevalence of helicopter parenting in today's society, we conducted more research on this parenting technique. In the article "The Association Between Overparenting, Parent-Child Communication, and Entitlement and Adaptive Traits in Adult Children", the

authors analyze the relationship between helicopter parenting and a child's behavior. The researchers had three sets of questions to ask the parent-child duos. First, they crafted questions about the communication styles between the parent and child. Next, they asked the child questions pertaining to their level of entitlement. The last set of questions analyzed the parenting styles' affect on a child's social abilities. The survey was conducted with a Likert scale, and the participant's answer was coded to match a parenting style. So, at the end of the survey, each participant was given a score. That score provided insight into what type of parenting style they grew up with and the effect it had on their social development.

The results of this study concluded that helicopter parenting weakens communication between parent and child (Bauer et al., 2012). Specifically, a child was less likely to voice their concerns because they felt overpowered by the parent (Bauer et al., 2012). Next, the authors found a strong association between over-parenting and a child's sense of entitlement (Bauer et al., 2012). Helicopter parents tend to control situations in order to ensure that only good comes their child's way. Thus, researchers hypothesized that children of helicopter parents would feel entitled to things in life since they are accustomed to getting their way. This was proven to be true. Lastly, the authors found little association between over-parenting and a child's ability to socialize with others (Bauer et al., 2012). This surprised the researchers; they hypothesized that helicopter parenting and the increased sense of entitlement would prevent the children from formulating healthy relationships (Bauer et al., 2012). However, the study proved otherwise.

Positive Parenting Styles

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is often met with uncertainty. As individuals move from one stage of life to the next, higher levels of emotional intelligence prove to be useful (Batool & Lewis, 2020). Among adolescents aged 14-16, positive parenting has a

positive effect on prosocial behavior and friendship quality. According to Batool & Lewis (2020), the middle adolescent stage is a pivotal moment in development as more time is spent with peers and less time is spent with parents. As friendships are formed and children become more independent, it is important to recognize the potential correlation between parenting styles and the strength of relationships formed. Much like the adolescent stage, college aged individuals are also experiencing a lot of change and are spending even less time with the family and more time with peers. With this further distance from the familial unit, the impacts of how one was raised compared to how they form and maintain friendships into adulthood has the potential to shape parenting styles moving forward.

Along with friendship quality increasing due to positive parenting styles, higher levels of happiness are also found within young adults whose parents were more involved in their upbringing (Asici & Sari, 2021). When mothers are more involved in their children's lives and refrain from utilizing strict control, happiness levels in college aged students are higher. The ideas presented by both Asici & Sari (2021) and Batool & Lewis (2020) lead to the question surrounding the strength and quality of college aged friendships based on the type of parenting style those college aged individuals experienced. When it comes to adolescents, positive parenting leads to higher friendship quality (Batool & Lewis, 2020), and the same thing goes for higher levels of happiness amongst college aged students (Asici & Sari, 2021). Increasing the target age demographic and focusing more closely on strength of relationships rather than the inherent quality will direct further research surrounding the association between parenting styles and the level of confidence one has with their interpersonal skills into adulthood. As high levels of emotional intelligence are associated with higher levels of empathy, and subsequently a stronger sense of self (Batool & Lewis, 2020), it is important to investigate how that emotional

intelligence is developed and if that emotional intelligence stretches into the realm of relationship building.

Parenting Style and Adult Child Behavior

Before evaluating *how* parenting styles directly affect young adults' ability to foster relationships, one must confirm that parent-child relationships undoubtedly affect the child's friendships. Achterhof et al. (2022) explains the correlation between parenting styles and a child's social development. This article focuses specifically on this relationship during a child's adolescent years. Because children develop most of their social skills during adolescence, parents have a significant impact on this part of their life. Rather than studying parenting styles or conflict styles, the article of Achterhof et al. (2022) focused on the effects of parental care and control on the child's psychopathology and social skills. As defined in the article, parental control most closely relates to the avoiding and competing conflict styles. In each of these styles, the individual holds near complete control over the situation by choosing one extreme. The article also evaluates adaptive parenting styles, which involves changing their ways in order to meet the needs of the child. This concept is similar to the compromising conflict style, which also involves sacrifice. Achterhof et al. (2022) goes on to state that "potential buffering effects of positive parenting behaviors on the emotional reactivity of (young) adolescents to negative, daily-life experiences (e.g., a disagreement with a friend)." Therefore, because the child is not accustomed to conflict, it will seem more extreme in every-day situations. This emotional reaction from the child may result in struggle with fostering new friendships.

In order to understand how a parent's parenting style directly impacts a young adult's ability to foster relationships, one must first evaluate these relationships independently. College groups of friends specifically experience five different types of conflict: "collaborating,

competing, avoiding, harmonizing, and compromising (Adkins, 2006)," as cited by Antonio (2021). These perceived conflict styles affect the individual's happiness and emotional regulation. For example, students who reported using the reappraisal style reported being happier than others. Additionally, students using collaborative skills to resolve conflict reported being happier than those who reported being avoidant. Understanding the effects of college students' conflict styles is essential to seeing why a parent's parenting style holds any significance in regards to the child's well-being. Other research proves that parents' conflict style has a strong impact on their children's styles. Therefore, the parents have a direct impact on their child's ability to foster relationships.

An individual's conflict style has a strong correlation to their ability to foster new relationships. Therefore, studying conflict management styles is crucial. The definition of conflict is an expressed struggle between two people who have a difference of opinions and goals. Parents of young adults have a significant amount of influence on their styles of communication and conflict. The communication competence of their parents can shape their kids' beliefs on how they view communication (Wang et al., 2019). For example, if the home of the family has a high conformity they may be using the conflict management style of avoiding. On the other hand, the more positive skills that the parents show to their kids throughout their lives, their social skills will grow and develop into positive communication skills that will be useful for them in college, with their parents, and beyond (Wang et al., 2019). This emphasizes the parents' styles having a huge amount of effect on their children. The theory that goes with this topic is the social learning theory. In this article, it states, "Children tend to develop social skills that are similar to those of their parents. Social learning theory posits that individuals' behaviors can be learned through direct experiences and/or observation"(Wang et al., 2019).

These behaviors can be modeled into communication by learning from parents in a positive or negative way (Wang et al., 2019). In conclusion, the communication patterns and conflict styles are learned very early from their parents and can have a huge impact in their lives positevely and negatively depending on what they witnessed.

Overall, these sources illustrate the correlation between parenting styles and young adult behavior. We plan on furthering our research throughout the semester.

Methods

Participants

The sample of participants are college-aged students from St. Norbert College, the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, and the College of Menominee Nation. Interviewers will utilize convenience sampling in order to collect information from a variety of young adults, including various areas of study, genders, and personal backgrounds. Researchers will be stationed outside of each colleges' libraries, inviting passersby to submit their information in order to receive a virtual survey. After completion of the online survey, interviewers will conduct an in-person follow-up interview. Convenience sampling is most effective because researchers maintain control in terms of choosing the specific locations for collecting respondents. There is, however, randomness in selecting each individual participant. Therefore, the researchers gathered data from their desired demographic of college-aged students while remaining unbiased in the selection process.

Procedures

Part I: Survey

Hello! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this survey. We are researchers from St. Norbert and we are looking for participants to fill out a survey for our research regarding parenting style and your overall communication with your parents. There will be 19 questions to fill out on the survey. There will be demographic questions, multiple choice questions, and Likert scale questions. We ask you to answer these honestly and to the best of your ability. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you can refrain from writing a response. Your responses will be anonymous. Thank you for your willingness and participation in this survey. We value your response and appreciate your time.

Survey Questions:

1. What is your age?
    a. 18-20
    b. 21-23
    c. 24+
2. What type of higher education do you attend?
    a. 2-year technical college
    b. 4-year public college or university
    c. 4-year private college or university
3. How do you identify your race?
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    b. Asian
    c. Black or African American
    d. White
    e. Other
4. How do you identify your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Genderqueer or Nonbinary
    d. Rather not say
    e. Other
5. How many siblings do you have?
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2

      d. 3

      e. 4+

6. How often do you initiate communication with your parents via text, phone call or email?

    a. Multiple times a day

    b. Multiple times a week

    c. One time a week

    d. Once time a month

    e. Never

7. How often do your parents initiate communication with you via text, phone call or email?

    a. Multiple times a day

    b. Multiple times a week

    c. One time a week

    d. Once time a month

    e. Never

8. How far is your parents home from your college campus?

    a. Less than an hour

    b. 1-2 hours

    c. 3-5 hours

    d. 5+ hours

9. How many co-curricular activities are you involved in on campus?

    a. 0

    b. 1-2

    c. 3-4

    d. 5+

10. Did you take initiative and build your own academic and social schedule?

    a. Yes

    b. No

How strongly do you identify with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I often feel homesick.	○	○	○	○	○
I miss my parents.	○	○	○	○	○
I visit my family at home often.	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoy the independence of living on my own.	○	○	○	○	○
I had an easy transition to college.	○	○	○	○	○

How strongly do you identify with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly agree
My parents are supportive of my plans for my future	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My parents encourage me to take risks	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My parents treat me as an equal rather than inferior	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My parents expect me to consult them before making a decission	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My parents track my activities and academic progress	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! We greatly appreciate your participation and value the information you have provided us with. If you have any questions you can contact us at communicationteam3@gmail.com

Thank you again,

The Research Team

Part II: Interview

Hello! Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this interview. We are researchers from St. Norbert and we are looking for participants to complete an interview for our research regarding parenting style and your overall communication with your parents. This is a post-survey interview to learn more details about your relationship with your parents. We will be asking in-depth questions regarding your relationship with your parents. There will be 7 questions. We ask you to answer these as honestly as possible and to the best of your ability. Please answer with what you are comfortable with. The responses to this survey will be confidential, and no identifying characteristics will be included in the research. Thank you for

your willingness and participation for this interview. We value your response and appreciate your time.

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me a little bit about your first semester at college

    a. Guiding questions: Where did you live? How did you make friends?

2. Do you go home on the weekends?

    a. Guiding question: Tell me about how you spend your breaks and time off from classes?

3. Have your parents ever visited you at school or have they been on your campus?

    a. Follow up: If so, tell me about that experience.

4. How would you describe your parents and their parenting style?

5. What types of things do you talk to your parents about while you're away from home?

6. What are some adjectives that describe your childhood?

7. Can you tell me about a time when you got in trouble when you were younger?

    a. Guiding questions: What did you do? How did your parents react?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview! We greatly appreciate your participation and value the information you have provided us with. As a reminder, your responses will remain confidential. If you have any questions you can contact us at communicationteam3@gmail.com.

Thank you again,

The Research Team

Anticipated Results

Through our survey design, we are hoping to gain an understanding of the parenting style one received growing up. The questions are written to show us whether or not one was raised with a more attached or detached parent. Gaining a quantitative understanding of how people were raised, we will be able to connect the number of positive parenting recipients to the number of individuals who had a smooth transition into adulthood. We are anticipating that our hypothesis will be confirmed, that yes, positive parenting styles lead to smoother transitions and continued communication with one's family post adolescence. The previous literature shows that positive parenting contributes to higher levels of emotional intelligence, and that higher emotional intelligence helps individuals through transition periods. Additionally, if one has a stronger relationship with their parents during their childhood, it can be concluded that that relationship will continue into adulthood. On the other hand, we anticipate individuals who experienced negative parenting to have a smooth transition into adulthood but will not continue a strong relationship with their parents. Individuals who experience negative parenting styles develop a sense of hyper independence, which can be beneficial when transitioning to college. However, if a relationship is not strong nor sustainable during adolescence, it can be concluded that one will not be heavily motivated to continue that relationship with their familial unit into adulthood.

With our interview design, we are hoping to gather more in depth and detailed responses. The survey acts as a surface-level type step in the research to determine how common different parenting styles are in comparison to independence levels in college aged individuals. The interview is then being used to obtain a deeper understanding of how respondents navigated that transition. We anticipate that the results from the interviews will be quite similar to those from

the survey— positive parenting styles will lead to an easier transition and a motivation to remain in contact with parents, while negative parenting styles will lead to an easier transition with no motivation to remain in contact with parents. The questions are worded in a way to obtain qualitative data to gain an understanding of how individuals go about transitioning to college, and if parenting styles have an impact on that transition. Based on how respondents answer the questions, we will be able to determine the type of parenting style they received and their experiences moving into adulthood.

Conclusion

Our research was to explore young adults' behaviors and how they communicate based on their parents' parenting styles. There are many different parenting styles that are crucial to the research and can lead to a positive or negative relationship for the children in their lives. Types of communication and parenting styles are strong forces that can not go unnoticed in young adulthood. As more information is collected surrounding how one is raised, parents are able to make informed decisions on how they are communicating with their children in order to adequately prepare them for their futures. In addition, through our questions, survey, and interview we have focused on the children's point of view through their education path which is important to learn both perspectives. Overall, our research concluded that the parent's styles have a great influence on their children throughout their young adulthood whether that be positively or negatively.

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    family communication patterns. *Communication Research*, *46*(8), 1171–1196.

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Appendix

Group Work Log

Group Member	Tasks Completed
Gracie	Updated document, recapped 2nd article, attended Wednesday 4/19 group meeting, helped with editing, did Friday 4/21 work, took notes, edited introductory paragraphs, attended Wednesday 4/26 group meeting, wrote demographic questions, edited document, fixed citations, attended Thursday 5/4 meeting
Jamie	Recapped 2nd article, discussed paragraph set-up, attended Wednesday 4/19 group meeting, did Friday 4/21 work, talked with Dr. Smith, completed Participants paragraph, 4/26 group meeting, aided with questions, wrote participants section, attended Thursday 5/4 meeting
Caroline	Led discussion, recapped 2nd article, took notes, formatting, attended Wednesday 4/19 group meeting, did Friday 4/21 work, turned in document, attended Wednesday 4/26 group meeting, made Likert scale questions, wrote survey questions, added to first document, wrote the Abstract, helped edit final copy, attended Thursday 5/4 meeting, turned in assignment on Moodle
Ellie	Recapped the second article, took notes, discussed essay set-up, attended Wednesday 4/19 group meeting, did Friday 4/21 work, talked with Dr. Smith, took notes, attended Wednesday 4/26 group meeting, wrote interview questions, talked with Dr. Smith 5/1, wrote week 3 tasks, wrote anticipated results section, fixed document formatting, attended Thursday 5/4 meeting
Nell	Setting up shared document, recapped 2nd article, discussed paragraph set-up, attended Wednesday 4/19 group meeting, did Friday 4/21 work, completed introductory paragraphs, attended Wednesday 4/26 group meeting, built Likert scales, did conclusion, helped look at editing citations, attended Thursday 5/4 meeting