

Parenting and Personality
Psychology

Abstract

In the study of parenting and personality, I will be replicating Hildreth's study on adulthood shyness in college students to discover if I will get the same results. The role of childhood inhibition and parenting styles will be explored to learn if adulthood shyness is correlated with parent-child interaction who are already not on the extreme levels of inhibition. Child temperament is correlated with the parental relationship and suggests that behavior inhibition is correlated with biological matters and environmental factors such as parenting styles. I also will be expanding the study and explore fears and how fears could correlate with adulthood shyness if the adult is not on the extreme level of shyness by the age of seven. I hypothesize that participants who are not on the extreme level of inhibition and experienced low warmth and or high strictness in their parents will experience adult shyness. I also hypothesize that participants who are fearful also experience adult shyness.

Introduction

Infants arousal to stimuli predicted inhibited and uninhibited temperaments. Reactivity such as motor activity, crying, and fretting, to various stimuli to determine fearfulness highlighted levels of arousal that linked to behavioral inhibition. Infants starting at four months who were more aroused and had a high reactivity were fearful and infants who were less aroused and had a low reactivity were fearless (Kagan, 1994). The fearful infants with high reactivity showed greater EEG activation in the right frontal areas and the fearless infants with low reactivity showed greater EEG activation in left frontal areas (Arcus & Kagan, 1995; Calkins, Fox & Marshall, 1996). Minimal pigmentation of the iris, reflected in a higher prevalence of blue than brown eyes found in inhibited children (Rosenberg & Kagan, 1989). Craniofacial morphology and temperament were examined and found that facial width is strongly correlated to levels of temperament and inhibition. High reactive infants had narrower faces than low reactive infants from fourteen to twenty-one months. Infants with smaller bizygomatic ratios, narrower faces, were more fearful (Arcus & Kagan, 1995). Initially internal and or physical biological markers do not determine child temperament, but it has had strong correlation with and strengthens the argument that biology can contribute to temperament.

Another contribution to temperament is environmental factors. It is suggested that exposure to the environment such as parenting styles and exposure to interaction can correlate with childhood inhibition. Children who refrain from associating with unfamiliar people and events and have an avoidance personality correlates with having an inhibited temperament. Parenting styles and their influence on their child's social and emotional development are one factor of parent-child relationships (Guyer et. al., 2015). Hane et. al., (2008) found that the absence of maternal positivity contributes to a child's shy temperament and socially withdrawn behavior in middle childhood. If the parent does not improve their parent to child interaction then

these children tend to withdraw later in life from social peer interactions and developing positive behaviors for new experience opportunities. Parenting styles that have high levels of strictness and do not allow the child to explore new concepts or goals have limited their child's opportunities to gain social independence and explore new experiences (Rubin & Nelson, 1999).

Most people have specific fears that they carry on from childhood to adulthood and others are presumed to not be afraid at all. In extreme cases fear can lead to high levels of anxiety and depression. Subtypes of specific phobias include animal type; natural-environmental type; blood-injection-injury type; and situational type. These are fears are pertaining to height, blood, darkness, lightening, bridges, spiders, and snakes; not all are listed (Kim et al., 2010). The excess of fears can cause daily stress which can put a strain on daily activities and inhibit one's behavior from being social (Sue et al., 2010). Guillemette (2012), investigated the role of fear in socioemotional functioning in late adolescents. Guillemette found that participants with childhood fears that transcribed to adulthood fears and reported low levels of parental support were associated with having a lower wellbeing. Participants with high levels of parental support had no relation to childhood and late adolescent fears (Guillemette, 2012).

In 2000, Kathleen Hildreth, explored the aspects of parenting styles and child temperament and how it is correlated with adult shyness, for her requirements of the Honors College at University of Massachusetts, Lowell. She studied one hundred and thirty-one undergraduates from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell and tested their inhibition based on reports of the parenting style they experienced, recognition of their temperament as a child, and their adult personality now. Hildreth asked the participants to reflect on their own inhibition as a child, parent-child interactions that indicated parental involvement and strictness, and to observe their own personality in adulthood. Hildreth found a significant relationship between reported

parenting styles and adult shyness for participants in midrange for childhood inhibition. Hildreth found that participants who were likely to be shy as adults if their parents were rated low in warmth but were more likely to be shy if their parents were high in supervision. Also, participants who were extreme for shyness or for no shyness had no association with parental styles based on the levels of reported current shyness (Hildreth, 2000).

In my study I will be doing a revision of Kathleen Hildreth's study on parenting and personality. As Hildreth did, I will also explore parenting styles and child temperament and how it is correlated with adult shyness. I hypothesize that participants who are not already on the extreme ends of inhibition and who are midrange will experience adult shyness if their parents are low in warmth and or high in strictness. I will use the same scales; Retrospective Self-Report of Inhibition (Reznick, 1992), Index of Parenting Style (Lamborn et. al., 1991), and Cheek & Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1990), to investigate if I will get the same results as Hildreth ten years later. In expansion to the study I will be exploring the specific phobias such as, animal type; natural-environmental type; blood-injection-injury type; and situational type in relation to childhood to adulthood fears in correlation to adult shyness. I hypothesize that adults how are midrange of shyness will also experience certain fears and phobias.

Methods

Participants

In this study, I will survey as many undergraduates from University of Massachusetts, Lowell that are willing to participate. Respectfully, there will be a broad age range from 18-50 years old that includes participants from different races, class, and gender. I will roughly have a sample size of 240 participants. Demographics from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell

handbook of fall 2015 according to race/ethnicity show 62.9% White; 10.1% Hispanic/Latino; 9.7% Asian; and 5.8% African-American/Black. Demographics according to gender show 63.1% women and 36.9% men (Office of Institutional Research, 2016). To encourage participation, all students who have participated in the study will be entered in to a drawing where four students will be able to win a gift card.

Materials

Participants will give informed consent then be presented several scales. There will be several validity checks throughout the survey. The questionnaires I will use are as follows: Retrospective Self-Report of Inhibition (Reznick, 1992), Index of Parenting Style (Lamborn et al., 1991), and Cheek & Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1990).

The Retrospective Self-Report of Inhibition scale has 30 questions and uses a 5-point Likert Scale. This scale will examine participants' behaviors in inhibition from their elementary school aged experiences. The scale will measure childhood inhibition in response to adulthood inhibition and associated health problems.

The Index of Parenting Style scale has 24 questions that examines the relationship between the parent and child. The scale will be based on the participants' reported responses to the ratings of their parents' acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision. This scale will be able to reflect the four parenting styles.

The Cheek & Buss Shyness Scale has 25 questions and observes the participants' level of shyness and their characteristics to social behaviors. This scale will examine the participants' preference of being with others versus being alone and the reported behaviors that will categorize the behavior as inhibited or uninhibited.

I will also be using a fear questionnaire from “Brief standard self-rating for phobic patients” (Mark, 1979), that will demonstrate avoidance of situations based on fear and unpleasant feelings. The Brief standard self-rating for phobic patients scale has 18 questions and uses a 5-point Likert Scale. I will also be incorporating a list of fears that are commonly feared from other literature.

Procedure

I will use a Qualtrics, an online survey tool, to administer an online survey. Completing the survey will require approximately 30- 45 minutes. Participants will receive an email that will be sent to their student email where they can click on a link that will administer the survey. Students will only be allowed to use their student email address to participate. Participants will read the informed consent and then be presented a few scales. Participants will answer questions in order based on the scale. The scale order will be as followed; Retrospective Self-Report of Inhibition (Reznick, 1992), Index of Parenting Style (Lamborn et. al., 1991), and Cheek & Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1990), and Brief standard self-rating for phobic patients (Mark, 1979). Participants will communicate the sibling birth order. Participants will be asked to state who they lived with during childhood to freshman year in college. They will also be asked which parent/guardian had the closest relationship to them and if applicable which parent/guardian had little to no relationship with them. Questions pertaining to parents’ education level and personality will be asked. Participants will be asked to recall where they lived freshman year. There will be questions that are fear related and participants will have to recall how fearful or unfearful they are to the certain phobic item.

Data Analysis Plan

I will be collecting data from the scales; Retrospective Self-Report of Inhibition (Reznick, 1992), Index of Parenting Style (Lamborn et. al., 1991), Cheek & Buss Shyness Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1990), and Brief Standard Self-Rating for Phobic Patients (Marks, 1979). The data from these scales will help me analyze the correlation between reported parental styles and adulthood inhibition. I will also be collecting data from other questions about fearfulness in accordance to if the participant is likely or unlikely to be afraid of the specific phobia. I will take the results from the study and analyze them in SPSS. The data will be represented in a series of graphs.

Discussion

According to Hildreth's study, I expect to find that there will be a significant relationship between parental style and adult shyness in college students who are not already in the extreme level of shyness. I will expect to find that participants who reported that their parents were low in warmth will more likely have adult shyness. Also, I will expect to find that participants who reported that their parents were high in strictness will more likely have adult shyness. In expansion to my study, I expect that participants who are not in the extreme levels of shyness, but are midrange and experience adult shyness, will experience fearfulness to the list of fears provided.

This study will have some limitations. One limitation is that this study only observes college students. Results may be different if participants did not have a college background. Not every age, race, and cultural background will be represented in the subject pool. People who are of a different culture and have diverse cultural perspectives could interpret the questions harshly

or less harshly. The data will be self-reported; therefore, error could occur if the participants' retrospectives are inaccurate.

The findings of this study can contribute to other findings related to behavioral inhibition. Also, the results can be further looked into to correlate with how parental styles may contribute to child and adulthood shyness. I suggest that the next step to further investigation will be to do a longitudinal study on childhood to adulthood inhibition to see if the same results will be reported.

References

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