

# TITLE: Is parenting style transmitted across generations

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**Abstract.** As the development of the influence of parenting style, what influence parenting style remains a question. Thinking of human's learning from experience and parents' role of children's first teachers, this study aims at examining the intergenerational transmission of parenting style by survey (n = 122). Linear regression is used to analyze the data collected. The results suggest that 1. parenting style can transmit to the next generation; 2. what parents think of their scale "rejection" and "over protection" is different from what children think, while parents' thought about their "emotional warmth" toward children and children' though are quite same. These finding have implication on further study and society.

**Keywords:** Parenting Style; Cross-generation; learning.

## 1. Introduction

In our life, most parents always treat their children in the same way through children's growth. For example, when a child did something wrong, even for a small thing, his or her mother or father always flew off the handle at the slightest thing. Or, a mother always control what her child wear every day. These are all real-life example about certain parenting style.

Parenting style is defined as the psychological construct that represent the strategies parents use in children raises. Previous research suggests parenting style can influence student's school performance (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987). Plus, authoritative parenting style is thought to positive correlate with children's life domain (Bibi, Chaudhry, Awan & Tariq, 2013). Moreover, social development of children may also influence by parenting style (Menash & Kuranchie, 2013). In summary, it has been shown from previous studies that parenting style is influencing people's whole life development. However, some poor parenting style can cause greater possibility of antisocial, even illegal, behavior.

It is always known that authoritative is the best parenting style for children. By contrast, study conducted in 2009 (Garcia F & Garcia E, 2009) suggests that authoritative parenting style is not always the optimum style, for which indulgent parenting style is associated with better outcomes. Thus, to solve the problem caused by parenting style, the root goal is to find the factor that cause certain parenting style, but not just follow the so-called "best" one.

This study focus on the cross-generation transmission of parenting style, using scale survey Short Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran Chinese version (s-EMBU-c) (Jiang Huo, 2010).

## 2. Literature Review

Previous researches suggest that parenting style, the psychological construct that represent the strategies parents use in children raises, is influencing confidence (Want & Kleitman, 2006), social development (Bornstein & Bornstein, 2007), emotion (Chan, Bowes & Wyver, 2009), self-efficacy (Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009), healthy habit (Arredondo, Elder, Ayala, Campbell, Baquero & Duerksen, 2006) and academic performance (Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009), which are all important factors for people's development.

In recent years, researchers have investigated a variety of approaches to the influence of parenting style but not the factors that influence one's parenting style. There have been several investigations into the causes of different levels of parenting style. For example, in 2006, Ferguson and his co-workers (2006) demonstrate that certain leadership style can applicate certain parenting style in parenthood. Previous study also find that culture shape the reported different parenting style

(Niemeier, Duan, Shang & Yang, 2017). However, except these, little evidence has been found associating parenting style with its causes, for which the fundamental problems caused by certain parenting style cannot be solved from root. Also, most studies of parent-child relationship were conducted in Western culture (Trommsdorff & Kornadt, 2003). There are comparatively lack of researches about it in China, where parenting style is associated with authoritative and a lack of social support (Xu, et al, 2005).

As a result, the question that what influence people's parenting style need further discussion. From a book published in 2000, people learn from experience, including their parents (National Research Council, 2000). In terms of this, the current study hypothesis that parenting style can transmit cross the next generation (hypothesis 1). The conceptual model is in figure 1 in Appendix. That is, the way 1st generation treat 2nd generation likely been passed to the 2nd generation when they treat the 3rd generation. Also, due to the always different perception of things for parents and their children (Reyes et al., 2012), it is hypothesized in this study that the way parents think of their parenting style toward children is different from the way children think (hypothesis 2).

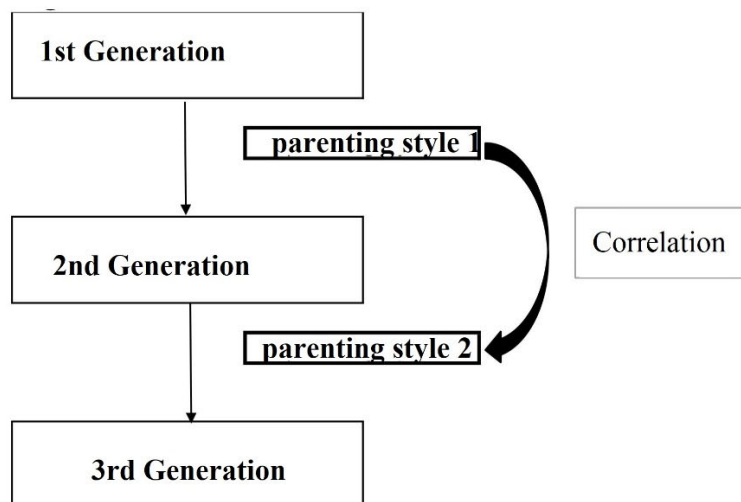


Figure 1. Conceptual Model: The transmitting of parenting style across generation. Parenting style 1: parents received parenting style from their parents (1st generation). Parenting style: children (3rd generation) received parenting style from their parents (2nd generation).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Overview

Aiming to test if parenting style transmit cross the next generation, student participants from China mainland were asked to fill in a questionnaire measuring the parenting style they received, while their parents were asked to complete another questionnaire measuring the parenting style they received and one questionnaire measuring the parenting style their children received. Note that students and parents are all one-to-one pairs but fill the scale back to back.

#### 3.2 Participants

This study's samples were from three high schools. 159 parents and 156 students participate in the study. 122 one-to-one pairs of parent and child valid questionnaires were gain, 76.73% effective for parents and 78.21% effective for students. 48.26% of students are male and 51.64% of students are female, age all under 18; 80.33% of parents are mothers and 19.67% of parents are fathers, age ranging from 31 to 60. For parents, the proportion that their fathers or mothers are the primary caregivers reaches 92.21%; for students, the proportion is 95.08%.

### 3.3 Measure

parenting style

Short Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran Chinese version (s-EMBU-c) (Jiang Huo, 2010) is a well-developed self-report used to measure parents' parenting style through recalling the way that parents treat us during our growth. The scale contains 21 items with three sub-scale (rejection 6 items, emotional warmth 7 items and over protection 8 items). Participants rate on 4-point scale, from "no, never" (1 point) to "yes, most of the time" (4 points). After published in 1980, the scale was revised and adjusted by several researchers for various time in different countries. The Chinese version of s-EMBU develops from 1993 to cater Chinese population and, in previous study, shows great validity and reliability on Chinese participants.

The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of this scale in current study is between 0.74 – 0.84.

### 3.4 Procedure

Told that they were conducted a study about parenting style, through online questionnaires platform "WenJuanXing", parents and students completed the assessment tool respectively: Short Minnen av Barndoms Uppfostran Chinese version (s-EMBU-c) is used to measure their parenting style. Note that parents were asked to conducted both s-EMBU-s about their parents' parenting style toward them and their parenting style towards their children; students were asked to conducted a s-EMBU-s about their parents.

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 represent the mean and standard deviation of each variable. Among the 122 one-one pairs of parents and children, in "warmth" sub-scale, the mean and standard deviation that parent received are 2.80 and 0.61, while children received ones are 3.22 and 0.71. In "over protection" sub-scale, the mean and standard deviation that parent received are 2.04 and 0.23, while children received ones are 2.12 and 0.53. In "rejection" sub-scale, the mean and standard deviation that parent received are 1.36 and 0.76, while children received ones are 1.38 and 0.18.

### 4.2 Cross-generation transmission

Table 2 represents the inter-correlation of parenting style parent received and parenting style children received, including emotional warmth, rejection and over protection. As for emotional warmth, parent received emotional warmth is statistically significantly correlated with children received emotional warmth ( $r = 0.26$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Plus, the rejection parent received is statistically significantly correlated with the rejection children received ( $r = 0.216$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ). Also, parent received over protection is also statistically significantly correlated with the over protection children received ( $r = 0.219$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ). All these results mean that hypothesis 1 is confirmed, which is that parenting style can transmit cross the next generation.

### 4.3 The difference between parents' perception and children's perception

The result of t-test of this study indicate that, according to table 4, there is significant difference between the "rejection" parents think they act toward their children and the "rejection" children perceive ( $t = 2.883$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). Another finding is that, according to table 5, there is also significant difference between the "over protection" parent think they act toward their children and the "over protection" children perceive ( $t = -2.461$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ). What surprisingly is that, there is no significant difference between "emotional warmth" parent think and the "emotional warmth" children perceive ( $t = 0.07$ ,  $p = 0.147$ ), which means that the result partially support hypothesis 2, the way parent think of their parenting style toward children is different from the way children think, but partially not.

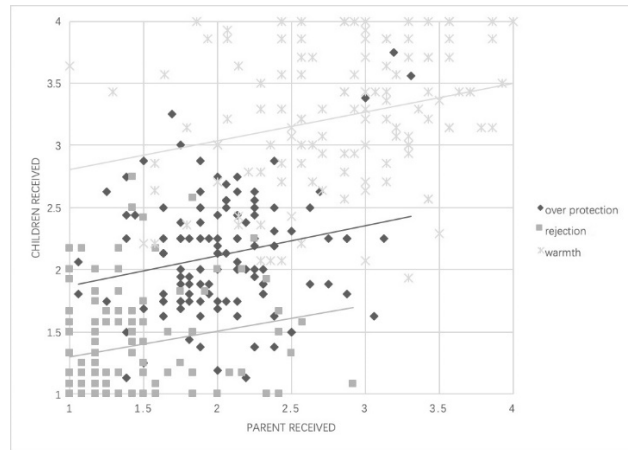


Figure 2. The cross- generation transmission of parenting style (The relation between the parenting style parent received and children received).

Table 1. Mean and Standard deviation

	Warmth		Over protection		Rejection	
	parent received	children received	parent received	children received	parent received	children received
Mean	2.80	3.22	2.04	2.12	1.36	1.38
standard deviation	0.61	0.71	0.23	0.53	0.76	0.18

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

children received	emotional warmth	over protection	rejection
parent received			
emotional warmth	0.260**	-	-
over protection	-	0.219*	-
rejection	-	-	0.216*

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Summary

This research studies about the cross-generation of parenting style. According to the data provided, it can be inferred that parenting style can transmit cross the next generation, which confirm hypothesis 1. Also, the result provides further support for the hypothesis that the way parents think of their parenting style toward children is partially different from the way children think. In general, it can be concluded that what parents think of their scale “rejection” and “over protection” is different from what children think, while parents’ thought about their “emotional warmth” toward children and children’ though are quilt same.

In reviewing the literature, no data was found on the relationship between parenting style in generations. This study makes a novel contribution to our understanding of the factors that impact parenting style. Consistent with the literature that suggested people learn from experience (National Research Council, 2000), such as unconsciously imitate what others do, the current study found that participants in the study also show learning pattern from their parents through their experience. Also, this study supports evidence from previous observations that parents and children have different perceptions (e.g. De Los Reyes et al, 2016; Hesketh et al, 2005), which is what parents think of their scale “rejection” and “over protection” is different from what children think.

To interpret the result of this study, co-creative transactional analysis (Summers & Tudor, 2000) can be used. It emphasizes that people’s ability to influence others and to be influenced, which include

parent-child relation. As children's first teacher, parents have enough ability to influence a child's perception of parenting style. One day, when the child become father or mother while didn't have experience of parenting before, this person is likely to imitate his or her parents' parenting style, for the ability to be influenced.

When explaining the different thought about the way parent treat children from parents' perspective and children' perspective in this study, it is needed to be mentioned that, because of, the always different thinking way for parents and children (De Los Reyes et al, 2016). Plus, for parents always underestimate worries of children and overestimate optimum (Lagattuta, Sayfan & Bamford, 2012), while doing the questionnaire, they may selectively neglect some negative scenes that may be important for children.

This study give a new sight to the factor that cause certain parenting style while provide enough evidence to support the cross-generation factor of parenting style. As the important reason for a person's whole life development, parenting style's factor is needed to be known to improve people's life by interfering with certain parenting style.

## 5.2 Limitation

It is needed to be acknowledged that there are some limitations in current study. First, this study didn't control the influence of environmental factors, such as economic conditions for students, which may play an essential role in transmitting parenting styles. To avoid problems caused by this, further study is needed to ask participants' important family factors, such as family income.

Also, though the participants are scattered in different province in China, they are all from schools that have higher educational level than average in China (Pengzhi, Liu, 2013), which means that these students are more likely from higher-level families with good parenting style that are more likely to be transmitted.

Second, the participants in current study are all in Chinese mainland, where traditional parenting style is quilt different with other Western countries, for which they may not able to represent the whole human population. For this, further researches is needed to measure this with participants from all over the world.

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