

The D.U.C.K study

# Do children see themselves through their parent's eyes?

Meganlyn Delaney, T. Caitlin Vasquez-O'Brien, Ph.D., & Elizabeth Rellinger Zettler, Ph.D.



## Background

One of the most influential factors in child development is the parent-child relationship (Kiel & Kalomiris, 2015). In the current study, we examined how the parent-child relationship influenced the child's self-perception.

### Hypotheses

1. Positivity in the parent-child relationship would create higher levels of self-perception and lower levels of depression in the child.
2. Negativity in the parent-child relationship would create lower levels of self-perception and higher levels of depression in the child.
3. The sibling experiencing more parent positivity would have greater self-perception and fewer symptoms of depression, compared to the other sibling.

## Method

### Procedures and Participants

- Families included two siblings (49.2% female) ages 4-12 and a primary caregiver (95.1% female) observed during a laboratory visit.

### Measures

- Parent-child relationship was measured using the Gameboy Task (Brody et al., 1992).
  - Positivity: Initiated from parent to child, from child to parent, and parent praise of the child.
  - Negativity: Initiated from parent to child, from child to parent, and parental verbal threats, shaming, and ignoring.
- Child self-perception was child-report on Harter's (1985) self-perception profile, self-worth and self-esteem subscales (Cronbach's alpha = .70).
- Child depression was child-report on the CES-DC (Cronbach's alpha = .83; Friedrich et al., 1990)

## Results

Children reported significantly higher levels of depression when there was observed negativity in the parent-child relationship than when there was not;  $F(1,208) = 6.87, p = .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ . **(Figure 1)**

When there was observed negativity children reported marginally lower self-perceptions than when there was not;  $F(1,205) = 3.14, p = .08, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ . **(Figure 2)**

Figure 1

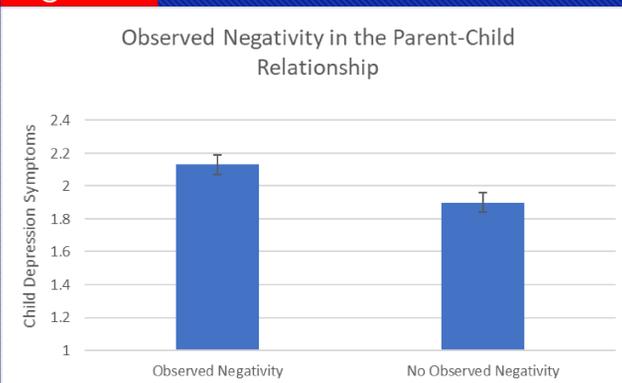
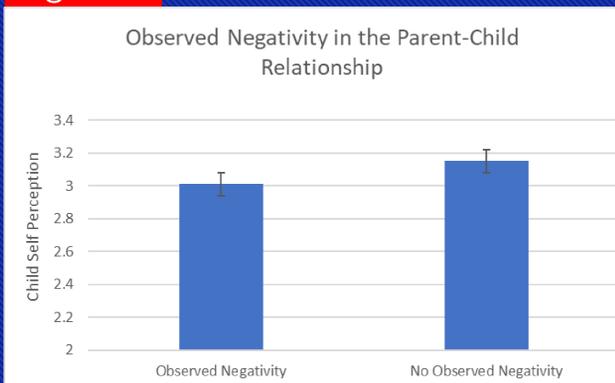


Figure 2



- The child receiving more parent-child negativity reported marginally lower self-perception than the child receiving less parent-child negativity;  $F(2,204) = 2.50, p = .09, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$ . **(Figure 3)**
- When contrasting siblings within a family, the child who experienced more parent-child negativity within the pair did not have higher levels of depression. In families with differential negativity, children reported significantly more symptoms of depression than in families without differential negativity;  $F(2,207) = 4.08, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .04$ . **(Figure 4)**

Figure 3

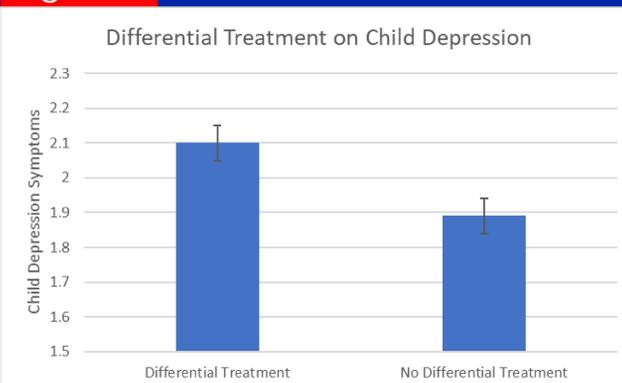
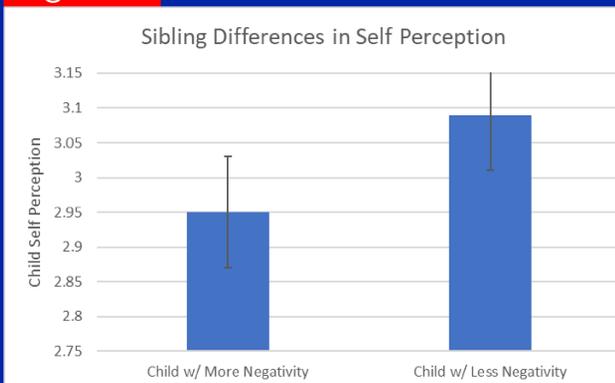


Figure 4



## Conclusion

In the current study, parent-child negativity (but not positivity) was related to more symptoms of depression in children and lower self-perceptions. For depression, it appeared that differential parenting equally affected both children (relating to increased symptoms of depression). For self-perception, there was a marginal trend such that the child receiving more negativity reported a lower self-perception. This fits with the literature implicating differential negative parenting as a within-family predictor of maladjustment for both children (e.g., Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001).

These findings highlight the importance of studying siblings in the context of parenting and child depression and self-perception.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

A strength of this study was the measurement of the constructs. Observed parenting related to child-reported depression and self-perception.

A limitation of this work is that the data is all concurrent, which does not allow us to draw causal conclusions. Additional longitudinal research is necessary

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