The Effects of Parental and Child Gender on Parental Worry and Parental Restrictiveness

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Recommended Citation
http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2003/3
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The present research examined the effects of gender on actual and perceived parental restrictions placed upon children. This research was conducted via two separate surveys: Parents' reports of current restrictions on their children and adults' retrospective accounts of past restrictions during their childhoods. Variables examined in the parent survey included: the effect of parental gender on restrictiveness and worry about harm from strangers, the effect of child gender on parental worry and the effect of parent gender on the parents' feeling of safety as it relates to restrictiveness. Variables examined in the adult retrospective survey included the effect of participant gender on perceived parental restrictiveness. Upon analysis, both surveys revealed significant results concerning parental worry, restrictiveness and gender. Specifically, parents worried more about daughters being harmed by strangers than sons. Parents who are more restrictive worry more about their children being harmed by strangers. In the survey of adults recalling childhood restrictiveness, women reported higher levels of parental restrictiveness than did men. Overall, there appeared to be discrepancies between actual parent restrictions on daughters and sons and retrospective perceptions of parental restrictiveness. Explanations for this discrepancy will be discussed.