



Intergenerational stability in parenting across two generations:

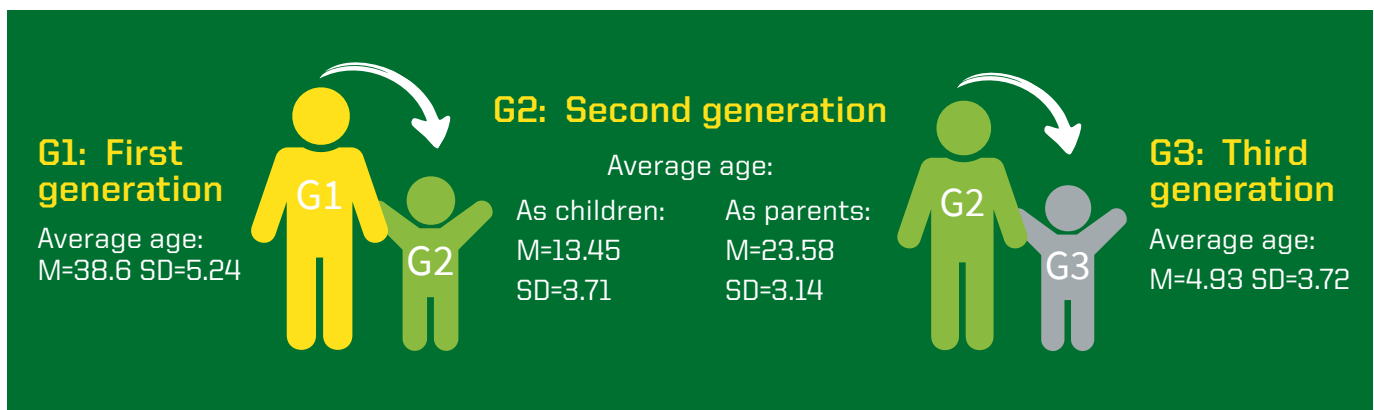
A multilevel meta-analytic review

Geeraerts and colleagues, 2025

A large body of literature explores how parenting practices relate to child outcomes, including social, emotional, physical, mental, and academic outcomes.

But how do parents learn how to parent and to what extent are parenting practices transmitted across generations? This meta-analysis looked across 24 longitudinal three-generation studies to unpack these questions.

Studies in this review included three generations: generation one (G1) who parented generation two (G2), and G2 who parented generation three (G3).



Overall, findings showed that parenting practices are passed down across generations.

Findings showed significant but modest stability: $r = .12$, 95% CI [.09, .16], $p < .001$

Studies in this review specifically focused on four aspects of parenting:

Acceptance:

includes the quality of the emotional bond between parents and children and parents' expression of positive feelings towards their children

Negativity:

includes behaviors that may harm children and parental feelings of anger and resentment towards their children

Autonomy Support:

parents guiding or managing children with a lack of pressure, intrusiveness, and dominance

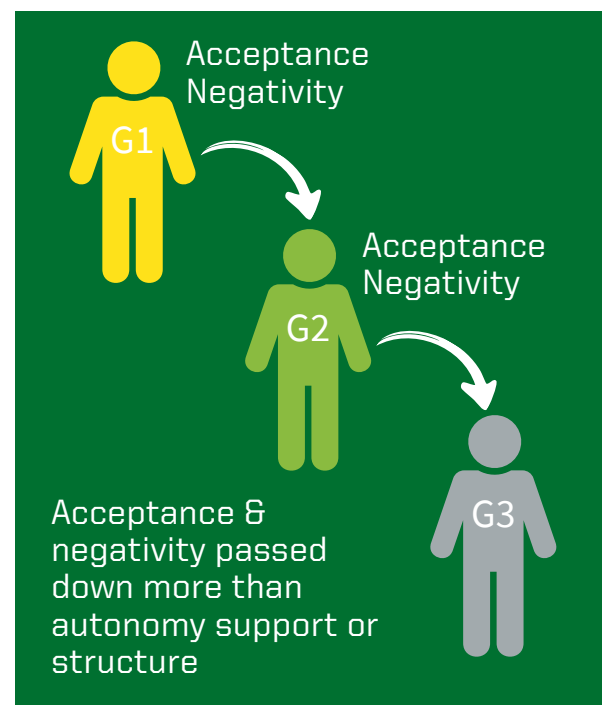
Structure

parents monitoring and setting rules for their children in a way that encourages positive behavior and discourages dangerous behavior

Differences emerged based on parenting practices and child age.

G1 acceptance and negativity were more strongly related to G2 parenting than G1 autonomy support and structure.

There was no evidence of differences based on parents' age, the ethnic composition of study samples, the number of years between assessments of parenting practices, and other sample characteristics such as risk status.



The bottom line: promoting high-quality parenting may have broad and long-lasting effects over multiple generations.

Focusing on promoting acceptance and reducing negativity, which were most predictive of future generation parenting, may extend the impact of programs aiming to support parents and children.

Sample characteristics

24 data sets published between 1984 and 2021 (median year: 2013), with data collection beginning between 1958 and 1998 (median start year: 1989).

5,063 studies screened

546 full text screened

24 unique datasets included

Study locations

United States: 17



New Zealand: 2



Australia: 1



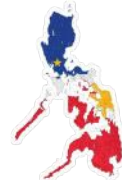
England: 2



Finland: 1



Philippines: 1



Average time between the assessments of G1 and G2 parenting was 14.81 years (SD = 6.52; range = 6.00–34.10 years).

Most studies (80%), had samples that were comprised of mostly majority racial/ethnic groups (ranging from 5%–100%).

For full study details, see: Geeraerts, S. B., Spitzer, J., Schulz, S., Capaldi, D. M., Kerr, D. C. R., & Branje, S. (2025). Intergenerational stability in parenting across two generations: A multilevel meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*.

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<https://hedcoinstitute.uoregon.edu/reports/intergenerational-parenting>