

Chapter 1 : New PDF release: Mothering and Ambivalence - Song Liao Wu Library

Mothering and Ambivalence brings together authors from therapeutic, academic and social work backgrounds to discuss dependency, anxiety and gender relations within families. Drawing on extensive professional experience the contributors combine a psychoanalytic and feminist approach to mothering which transcends the polarized and simplistic.

Advanced Search Abstract Theory suggests that aging parents and their adult children experience ambivalence conflicting emotions as a result of unclear norms governing the tie between them. This study investigated personality differences and relationship context differences in ambivalence, as well as the reactions of parents and offspring to each other. As part of the Adult Family Study, individuals from family triads consisting of a mother, father, and son or daughter aged 22 to 49 years completed telephone interviews, in-person interviews, and questionnaires. Multilevel models revealed that poor parental health and neuroticism in parents and offspring were associated with greater ambivalence. Surprisingly, investment in competing roles was associated with less ambivalence. Parents also experienced greater ambivalence when offspring scored higher on neuroticism, rated the parent as less important, or were less invested in their own spousal role. The latter approach may be helpful in the study of intergenerational ambivalence. For example, studies examining intergenerational ambivalence have focused on gender e. However, two individuals who occupy a similar status e. Psychological factors may contribute to these individual differences because a these social structures may have different subjective meaning to different individuals, and b individuals may bring different predispositions to their relationships. Further, we extend current knowledge by considering interpersonal processes and examining parents and offspring within the same family. Subjective Investment in the Relationship The value that parents and offspring place on their relationship sets a psychological context for their emotional reactions toward one another. Further, individuals who highly value a role may experience heightened positive and negative emotional reactions in that role. Appraisal theories of emotions e. Thus, these theories suggest that parents and offspring who greatly value one another may experience more ambivalence in their relationship. In addition, we anticipated that adults who are strongly invested in multiple roles e. Investment in many roles may generate conflicting feelings because it is unclear how the parentâ€™offspring tie fits in with the other roles. For example, adults who work long hours, have small children, and value their own spouses may feel torn in their efforts to connect with parents. Personality and Ambivalence Individuals may also hold predilections to experience positive or negative emotions in their relationships as a result of their personality traits. We expected higher neuroticism to be associated with increased ambivalence between parents and offspring for two reasons. For example, certain individuals may experience ambivalence in situations with few norms such as the parentâ€™offspring tie , because they have a difficult time regulating their reactions to these situations. Other researchers argue that individuals bring predispositions in both personality and relationship style to their ties, and these researchers find that ambivalent relationship style and neuroticism are linked Carver. Second, measurement issues may contribute to associations between neuroticism and ambivalence. Individuals who score higher on measures of neuroticism are more likely to report negative sentiments in relationships than are individuals who score low on neuroticism. Thus, we expected to find associations between neuroticism and ambivalence toward parents or offspring in this study. Family Processes in Ambivalence Prior studies of intergenerational ambivalence have relied on reports from either parents or offspring Fingerman et al. Nonetheless, studies suggest that parents and offspring respond to characteristics of the other party. Parents and offspring may react with greater ambivalence when the other party is higher in neuroticism or is less invested in their relationship. Finally, we examined variability in ambivalence within dyads. Nevertheless, parents may experience ambivalence toward offspring, despite positive feelings. Pillemer and Sutor found that over half of the mothers in their study experienced some ambivalence toward their offspring. Similarly, our prior research revealed that nearly half of middle-aged and young-old adults classified ties to offspring as ambivalent Fingerman, Hay, et al. Nonetheless, we examined possible generational differences in ambivalence. Other Factors Associated With Ambivalence The basic premise of this study is that the experience of intergenerational ambivalence partially reflects the value that

individuals place on this relationship relative to other roles and relationships and the predispositions that individuals bring to their relationships. Yet the experience of intergenerational ambivalence also reflects structural factors that may generate unclear norms and that also may be associated with the value that individuals place on the relationship. We considered these variables here. Age differences in ambivalence also may be evident. We anticipated age differences with regard to ambivalence. We considered several additional variables without generating hypotheses. For example, family size may be associated with qualities of intergenerational relationships; parents with more offspring may be less invested in any given offspring.

Fingerman, The total sample included families who participated in telephone interviews. These families did not differ from the larger sample on background or relationship characteristics. Participants who had a listed address received a prenotification letter. We supplemented this approach to recruitment by using snowball and convenience sampling. To ensure participation in the face-to-face interviews, we picked those parents and offspring who resided in separate households within 50 miles. No parents or offspring were engaged in caregiving relationships. Table 1 includes background information for offspring and parents. Participants described their ethnicity as African American or European American, except for two parents who described their ethnicity as both Hispanic and African American. For simplicity, we grouped these individuals in the African American category.

Procedures Each family member completed a telephone interview. We counterbalanced in-person interviews, with mother interview first for half the sample, and father interview first for the other half. We derive the data in this study from the telephone interviews and written questionnaires. Throughout the study, offspring responded to questions concerning their mothers and their fathers, and each parent responded to questions about the target offspring. For the telephone interviews we used Computer Assisted Telephone Interview software, permitting the random order of administration of sections pertaining to mother and to father across offspring.

Background information Participants provided their age, gender, and ethnicity during initial telephone screening. In the telephone interviews, participants also provided their education in years, marital status, and work information, and they rated their health.

Relationship characteristics Offspring identified the persons they considered to be their mother and their father during screening. Importance of relationship Participants rated the importance of the parent or offspring relative to other social partners, using 6 categories: In prior studies Fingerman, , this item was associated with emotional qualities of relationships. We reverse coded this item, so that higher numbers equal greater importance of relationship.

Investment in roles Using a modified version of the role centrality measure by Martire and colleagues , we had participants rate the importance of their roles as parent, romantic partner or spouse, and worker on a scale from 1 not at all important to 10 very important. We examined these items for each role separately spouse, parent, and worker , and we also combined them to obtain a total score total roles. In this sample, offspring and parents rated all three roles. Some individuals who were unemployed, retired, and on leave still rated the importance of the worker role. To illustrate, one parent might greatly value the parenting role, but rate the target child as only within the top 10 people in his or her life because the target child is one of many children ; another parent might rate the parenting role as important and the child as important; and still another parent might rate the role as unimportant, but the child an important social partner.

Control Variables Family variables Offspring reported number of sisters and brothers, and parents reported number of children. Offspring also indicated the number of children they had. Frequency of contact Participants reported frequency of telephone or electronic contact, using a scale from 1 every day to 7 less often than once a month. They also reported face-to-face contact on a scale from 1 every day to 6 less than twice a year. Thus, in analyses, we used frequency of contact by phone or e-mail.

Measurement of Ambivalence We assessed positive and negative feelings by using four items from prior studies of parent-offspring ties Umberson, ; Willson et al. Social psychologists have derived several formulas for calculating ambivalence scores from ratings of contradictory feelings see, e. As in prior studies of intergenerational ties e. Because the calculations may result in negative numbers, we then added a constant of 1. This formula has several advantages: Table 2 presents means and standard deviations of the independent variables and the ambivalence scores.

Analysis Strategy Bivariate associations Our preliminary analyses focused on bivariate associations between independent variables. Correlations between psychological

variables neuroticism, role investment, and importance of the relationship were all less than. We then considered potential covariates. Multilevel models Mothers and fathers responded to questions about the target offspring, and offspring responded to questions about each parent. Multilevel models allowed us to treat family as an upper level unit, with parent, offspring, and relationship characteristics as lower level units. Ambivalence scores served as the dependent variable. Lower level psychological variables included importance of the relationship, investment in roles, and neuroticism. Because members of the same family might have correlated responses, we included a random term for family effect in the model. Multilevel models see Table 3 revealed that individuals who scored higher in neuroticism had higher ambivalence scores. Individuals who were highly invested in a number of roles spouse, parent, and worker had lower ambivalence scores. Further, when parents were in poorer health, parents and offspring had higher ambivalence scores. The family variance component was significant, supporting the use of mixed models. We estimated post hoc analyses to explore these findings. Because offspring have higher neuroticism scores on average than parents, we estimated the models separately for parents and offspring; significant effects for neuroticism emerged in both models. Thus, low ambivalence was synonymous with high positivity and low negativity. High ambivalence was associated with moderate positive and moderate negative feelings.

Chapter 2 : Mothering And Ambivalence by Wendy Hollway

Mothering And Ambivalence has 4 ratings and 0 reviews. This text brings together authors from therapeutic, academic and social work backgrounds to discuss.

It is the suffering of ambivalence: Her book was inspired by social science research findings that reveal that parents are actually less happy than nonparents. She cites a study that found working women ranked child care sixteenth out of nineteen in terms of which activities gave them the most pleasure. How Children Change Your Life , she writes: Houston, we have a problem. What these books and articles reveal is the profound ambivalence of motherhood, the potent mixture of joy and misery and love and anger that accompany the experience of being a mother. It is not the problem. Ambivalence is often assumed to mean indifference, or not caring. To be ambivalent means we are conflicted. We have passions that pull us in opposite directions. It is anything but passivity. The word itself conveys strength and value: People who are ambivalent are not dispassionate, but ambi-passionate, equally attracted to two seemingly opposing entities. It is, in fact, a rather complicated and skilled manner of relating to the world. Our ability to function is impacted, and we may suffer from depression, anxiety, panic attacks, or worse. Our culture really only tolerates one answer from mothers: And as we all know, that usually just makes things worse. As a culture, we need to honor the ambivalence of motherhood. I mean that for the longest time, I felt that me-time and kid-time were fundamentally separate. Adrienne Rich, in *Of Woman Born* , writes about her early years of motherhood in the s. Their voices wear away at my nerves, their constant needs fill me with despair at my own failures, despair too at my fate, which is to serve a function for which I was not fitted. And I am weak sometimes from held-in rage. And yet, at other times, I am melted with the sense of their helpless, charming and quite irresistible beauty their ability to go on loving and trusting. Every culture has an ideal of motherhood; motherhood has its own history and ideology. We laugh with Louis C. For good measure, we add a self-deprecating hashtag motheroftheyear! Mothers are still expected to be patient and self-sacrificing. As a culture, we have a hard time legitimating female anger, especially from mothers, and most especially, if that anger is directed toward their children. We fear the anger will overpower the love. Rozsika Parker describes it perfectly and clinically: Being able to tolerate both kinds of feelings, at different times, without having one feeling destroy the other, is a sign of good mental health. I think we can find a way to embrace our maternal ambivalence in the Buddhist concept of equanimity, which means mental and emotional stability. Equanimity, like ambivalence, combines two important concepts: Can we be of two minds, merging the even-spiritedness of equanimity with the dual strength of ambivalence? It may not become a viral tweet.

Chapter 3 : Mothering and Ambivalence: 1st Edition (Paperback) - Routledge

Mothering and Ambivalence brings jointly authors from healing, educational and social paintings backgrounds to debate dependency, anxiousness and gender family members inside families.

Understanding Maternal Ambivalence December 27, 9: I love my children. But I hate motherhood. It actually makes me feel deviant and anti-mother to say that. Barbara Almond, psychiatrist and author of "The Monster Within: She argued that mothers have very limited room for expression and processing of the inevitable maternal ambivalence , both on cultural and societal levels, and internally, because of our extreme idealization of mothers. Parker emphasized how becoming a mother inevitably entails dissonance and tension between lived subjective experiences of mothering and normative ideals of motherhood. Interested in different takes on dealing with that split? A recent question on the Green generated a number of suggested readings on ambivalence about motherhood. When does THAT feeling kick in? Did they not love their own parents, their friends, or even the partner that they created that child with? Do they just not know how to express themselves very well, and trying to express that they feel immense love for their child ends up coming out sounding like "I was dead inside before this event"? This is the stuff that seriously has me scared shitless about becoming a parent. We obviously talked about all of this in length before getting married, but I also feel like my mind has drastically swung in favor of the child free camp since. I know we would be great parents, but during those really low points, would I be able to live with faking it until I make it for 18 years?! I wish there were an easier way to figure it all out. Until then, no kids. I find my own ambivalence decreases directly in proportion to the amount of outsourcing I do - a weekly cleaner who folds the laundry was life-changing. The less guilt we can force on women for having actual feelings of ambivalence, the better our society is going to be. My children are neither necessary nor sufficient to make me a happy person. If anything, the fact that motherhood is so unbelievably effing draining means I need other methods of fulfillment now more than ever. Nobody would ever think a father should be fulfilled entirely by fatherhood; of course dad needs to work, play golf, watch sports, have a drink with his friends, etc. Everything she writes is understandable, I think. I feel awful for her. My own were the first ones I could actually tolerate. But some are transcendent. Alia of the Bunnies at But the relationship I have and will continue to develop and maintain with him is important to me and deeply rewarding. The relationship is intensely rewarding, even when the job of monitoring location and enforcing homework is trying. Or, as with the little ones- merely being in the same room and responding to tens of interruptions per minute. My daughter will be 14 next week. If my parents had been in a position to get this kind of help, their experience of parenting would have been so much easier, especially for my mother. Having kids is hard and the more help that people can access the better. She said "Well, as your Granny used to say: Red in tooth and claw, but also in setting up insanity-making confrontations over teeth brushing. And the near-complete subjugation of your own needs and desires can be incredibly frustrating. Gotta go, dirty diapers to wash. That someone did not necessarily need to be overwhelmed with love feelings while doing so. I hugged and kissed him constantly but sometimes I was also crying from tiredness or blearily wondering if I would ever sleep again. Sometimes once he went to sleep I just stared at the wall, flattened by fatigue and feeling like I was in baby jail. And that was enough, it turns out. By the time he needed more sincere attention, he was sleeping more and I had more to give him. I got out of baby jail, gradually. And our relationship is good. But I never felt what I would describe as ecstatic love for him. Romantic love was like that, but love for my kid was not. If I needed to. I suspect that the idea that motherhood is inherently and inevitably a wonderful experience goes a long way towards excusing and normalizing a lot of miserable, regressive social policies. Why does society need a social safety net for families, if motherhood is inherently wonderful? Do women really need access to birth control or safe abortions if motherhood is inherently wonderful? I hate new motherhood, hate the sleep deprivation, hate breastfeeding. I will get through it, but this time I know: I am more emotionally open, more interested in the future. But for me, motherhood really made me think about my priorities and the world I live in in a new way, which has been painful and scary but very interesting. I lucked out in that my daughter is temperamentally very much like me, at least so far. I guess it also helps that I have a

lot of very child-friendly interests. Not every mom owns lots of DVDs with archival Disneyland footage or knows all the words to a dozen kid-appropriate musicals or builds Lego models on her own for fun. Look at pretty much any story or YouTube video featuring a small child, and then go look at the comments. There is almost always someone calling the parents unfit, and threatening to call social services. Give your baby a lemon or a pickle? They should take away your kid! Does your child have a name someone disapproves of? Are they playing stupid video games? And never even mind the heads I win tails you lose situations with things like breastfeeding and sleeping arrangements and levels of supervision and things where there are assholes on all sides who consider every choice other than their own to be negligence or abuse. You are guaranteed to be wrong no matter what you do. You will fuck up, probably many times, raising a kid. Your parents did, their parents did before them, everyone does. You will, I promise, say and do things you regret and feel guilty about. You will do something that traumatizes your child, and there is no predicting even what that will be. But you know, kids even learn from those. They learn that their parents are human, that they screw up, and ideally, they start learning a little empathy. And also ideally, when you do have kids and you do some of the things your parents did that you vowed never to do yourself, you learn a little empathy on your own. Your parents also sometimes regretted having you. You were an inconvenience and a pain in the ass and required sacrifices on their part that sometimes were more than they could bear. What a draining soul-sucking experience motherhood is. It would have been so much better for everyone had there been more parity. No discussion of maternal ambivalence is complete without including the socio-economic factors This, this, this--in spades. We always had health insurance and enough to eat, but there was never money for vacations or music lessons. The kids had one, usually beat up, pair of sneakers and their winter boots. Clothes always clean, but hand-me-down hand-me-downs. No extra to buy books thank dog for the library. Christmas was always on a shoestring. Birthdays were home-made cakes and a new t-shirt. It is not just the ambivalence towards the children but the father of the children, too. I was always the mean one, the one that pushed about homework and chores. He got to be the good guy. He resented that I could be home all day having fun with the kids, and I resented that he could talk to people over 4 feet tall. When the kids were finally in school, and I started working that sucked, too. Even with all that, I feel lucky we could afford to have me be a stay-at-home mom. And my spouse was one of the good ones. At least he changed diapers, got up at night, played with the kids, and cooked dinner fairly frequently. Pretty darn good, considering his generation and upbringing. Formal and informal teaching of others is another of the most important jobs. The problem is that our society turns that around and devalues the work of caring for others. Mothers have no respect for the work they do. Elder care work is scut work. My relationship with my older sister is fraught because my mom never taught her how to act like a human being and show me basic kindness, and my mother only ever thought and thinks of her own emotional needs, like a mother deserves deification. So much cognitive dissonance.

Chapter 4 : mothering and ambivalence | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

Mothering and Ambivalence ISBN 0â€•â€•â€•2 This edited book comprises 11 chapters, connected but freestanding, on the theme of feminism and mothering. The authors, who are academics, therapists and one journalist, seek to explore the nature of mothering and the relationship between mothers and their children, using insights from.

Chapter 5 : Editions of Mothering And Ambivalence by Wendy Hollway

Children's rights, lone motherhood and the breakdown of families are all issues at the forefront of current social debate in the West, with little agreement on what constitutes good parenting, or how the needs of both mother and child are best met.

Chapter 6 : Honoring the Ambivalence of Motherhood - Left Brain Buddha

Brings together feminist and psychoanalytic contributions to the good parenting debate. Authors discuss dependency,

anxiety and gender relations and examine what it feels like to mother amid the pressures of contemporary life.

Chapter 7 : Bad Mother: Understanding Maternal Ambivalence | MetaFilter

What these books and articles reveal is the profound ambivalence of motherhood, the potent mixture of joy and misery and love and anger that accompany the experience of being a mother. Ambivalence is normal.