



Article

Parent–Child Relationships from Adolescence to Adulthood: An Examination of Children’s and Parent’s Reports of Intergenerational Solidarity by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Socioeconomic Status from 1994–2018 in the United States

Xing Zhang ^{1,*} and Annaliese Grant ²¹ College of Health Solutions, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ 85004, USA² Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI 53706, USA; aegrant2@wisc.edu

* Correspondence: x.zhang@asu.edu

Abstract: Background: Parent–child relationships are increasingly central in family life due to the delayed transition to adulthood. Methods: Using data from Add Health and the Add Health Parent Study from 1994–2018, we examine changes in parent–child relationships reported by the child and the parent across gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) from ages 12–43 years old. We examine three broad categories of intergenerational solidarity: Affectual (closeness, relationship quality, and emotional support), associational (satisfaction with communication), and functional (financial and instrumental support). Results: For the overall sample, parent–child closeness remains high but decreases from ages 12–43. By gender, we find that daughters report lower relationship quality with their mothers and fathers in adolescence. By race and ethnicity, we find that parent–child closeness is highest among Black respondents. By SES, we find that respondents whose mothers attained less than a high school degree report the greatest mother–child closeness. Conclusions: Overall, parents remain an important source of emotional, instrumental, and financial support in the transition to adulthood, especially for Black and low-SES adolescents. It is important to pay attention to the intersectional nature of the parent–child relationship with regard to the timing of the life course and race, ethnicity, gender, and SES.

Keywords: intergenerational relationships; race and ethnicity; gender; socioeconomic status; transition to adulthood



Citation: Zhang, Xing, and Annaliese Grant. 2023. Parent–Child Relationships from Adolescence to Adulthood: An Examination of Children’s and Parent’s Reports of Intergenerational Solidarity by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Socioeconomic Status from 1994–2018 in the United States. *Social Sciences* 12: 266. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12050266>

Academic Editor: Nigel Parton

Received: 14 March 2023

Revised: 17 April 2023

Accepted: 26 April 2023

Published: 29 April 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The delaying transition to adulthood is marked by several key demographic changes. Young adults are finishing school later, are more likely to live with their parents as they age, and are less likely to find stable, long-term jobs (Furstenberg 2010; Fingerman et al. 2020). Due to the growing period of uncertainty among young adults, children are more likely to be dependent on their parents for emotional, instrumental, and financial support compared to previous decades (Fingerman et al. 2012). Parent–child relationships may be marked with challenges and conflict as young adults navigate normative expectations on the timing of leaving the parental home, finishing schooling, and experiencing transitions in and out of romantic relationships and jobs (Schulenberg and Schoon 2012; Fingerman et al. 2020). Moreover, increasing racial and ethnic diversity and growing economic inequality in the United States (Lichter 2013) serve as important contexts to consider a descriptive portrait of parent–child relationships over the life course. Given the increasing life span of parents, a substantial proportion of the parent–child relationship will be experienced beyond childhood and adolescence (Swartz 2009). Given the numerous changes to the timing of transitions to adulthood and the nature of parent–child relationships, it is critical to understand descriptively how these relationships vary by gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status at the turn of the 21st century.

In this study, we descriptively explore parent–child relationships over the life course from adolescence to adulthood. We explore three dimensions of intergenerational solidarity, including affectual (parent–child closeness, relationship quality, and emotional support), associational (satisfaction with communication), and functional solidarity (instrumental and financial support) across gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status from adolescence to adulthood accounting for the perspectives of both the child and parent. Using dyadic data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) and the Add Health Parent Study, we rely on intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson and Roberts 1991), life course (Elder 1998), and intergenerational stake (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971) theories to investigate whether parent–child relationships improve, worsen, or remain stable over the life course.

Understanding the role of parent–child relationships in the transition to adulthood from both the child’s and parent’s perspectives contributes to the literature in four novel ways. First, it provides a descriptive understanding of parent–child relationships that are measured at various timepoints over the life course from adolescence to adulthood, rather than retrospective reports of parent–child relationships asked at one point in time, for more accurate reports of parent–child relationships across the lifespan (Rossi and Rossi 1990; Hardie and Seltzer 2016; Fang et al. 2021; Umberson and Thomeer 2020). Second, it captures racially and ethnically diverse trends of parent–child relationships for a nationally representative, longitudinal sample to assess the dimensions of parent–child relationships among white, Black, Latinx, and Asian respondents, while a majority of studies focus on Black–white or Black, Latinx, and white comparisons due to limited sample sizes (Hardie and Seltzer 2016; Jayakody 1998). Third, it is one of the first studies to examine dimensions of parent–child relationships from both the child’s and parent’s perspective from adolescence and adulthood using dyadic, nationally representative data, to examine whether parents’ and children’s reports of their relationships are similar or diverge. Fourth, it captures parent–child relationships over a period of 24 years, providing insight into trends in family life for a cohort of adults who came of age in the 21st century.

Overall, we find that the parent–child relationship remains an important source of emotional, instrumental, and financial support from adolescence to adulthood. We also find that patterns of parental support vary across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, we find that affectual solidarity (maternal closeness) is highest among Black adolescents and adults, while Asian parents report providing the highest levels of functional solidarity (instrumental and financial support). Finally, similar to prior work (Schoeni and Ross 2005), we find that patterns of exchange remain unequal over the life course, with parents providing more functional solidarity (instrumental support) than children provide to parents.

1.1. Background: Intergenerational Solidarity, Life Course, and Intergenerational Stake Theories

Our study is motivated by three theories: The intergenerational solidarity theory (Bengtson and Roberts 1991), the life course theory (Elder 1998), and the intergenerational stake hypothesis (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971).

For our primary dimensions of parent–child relationships, we draw from intergenerational solidarity theory (Bengtson and Roberts 1991). We descriptively examine the following aspects of intergenerational solidarity: Affectual, associational, and functional solidarity over five time points from adolescence to adulthood among children and over two time points among parents (Bengtson and Roberts 1991). Affectual solidarity includes positive feelings towards other family members, including parent–child closeness, relationship quality, and emotional support. Associational solidarity includes communication quality between parents and children. Functional solidarity is defined as intergenerational exchanges of assistance, including financial support and instrumental support. We measure parent–child closeness, relationship quality, emotional support, satisfaction with communication, instrumental support, and financial support provided and received from parents to children across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.

In the life course theory, events, transitions, and trajectories define life pathways for individuals within and across developmental stages (Elder 1998). The principles that guide the life course approach include the principle of life-span development, agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives (Elder 1998). We use the principle of linked lives and expect that parent–child relationships are dynamic, interdependent, and change over the life course. In the principle of linked lives, shared relationships, such as with children and parents, and social contexts shape individual lives. Relationships with parents, as well as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, shape the parent–child relationship.

In the intergenerational stake hypothesis, parents are more invested in their children than children are invested in their parents, with the fundamental source of conflict in this relationship being parents' fear of discontinued relationships with children and children's desire for individuation from parents (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971). We therefore expect parents to report higher levels of dimensions of intergenerational solidarity provided to children than vice versa.

1.2. Changes in Parent–Child Relationships from Adolescence to Adulthood

It is important to ground our work in an understanding of what we already know about parent–child relationships, which is primarily from retrospective reports and research on the parent–child relationship in adolescence. As children age and parents and children start sharing more interests in common, parent–child relationships generally improve (Rossi and Rossi 1990). Parent–child relationships in adolescence tend to be characterized by conflict, as adolescents search for autonomy from their parents (Longmore et al. 2013). In adulthood, however, most adult children report positive and close relationships with their parents (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971; Fang et al. 2021; Steele and McKinney 2019; Swartz 2009; Thornton et al. 1995; Umberson 1992). Parents tend to report closer relationships to their children than children report to their parents (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971), but whether reports of parent–child closeness have been shaped by the delayed transition to adulthood, however, is unknown. Parent–child closeness is an important domain to study because of its links to adolescent and young adult health and well-being (Umberson et al. 2010; Umberson and Thomeer 2020).

In addition to tracing parent–child closeness, much of the research on parent–child relationships traces the satisfaction both parents and children have with parent–child communication. Those families with high parent–child communication have been shown to be closer and have higher satisfaction with family functioning (Barnes and Olson 1985; Currie and Levin 2010). Research on family communication and functioning also points to a complex understanding of the “kinscripts”, or social and emotional upkeep expected and negotiated within families (Stack and Burton 1993). This points to the importance of understanding multiple perspectives of the parent–child relationship and how it changes over time, about which we know little.

Instrumental and financial support generally flows from parents to children (McGarry and Schoeni 1997; Hardie and Seltzer 2016) and is offered to children when help is actually needed (Silverstein and Bengtson 1997). Children also receive more financial support if they were perceived to be more successful than other members of their family (Fingerman et al. 2009). Instrumental and financial support may be greater from parents to children in adolescence and decline as children age into adulthood, enter the labor market, and become more independent.

Much of the most recent research on the role of parents and parent–child relationships during the transition to adulthood has focused on the impact of different parenting styles on emerging adult children's mental health and emotional well-being (Padilla-Walker et al. 2021; Steele and McKinney 2019; Cui et al. 2019; Love et al. 2020). In this work, the role of parental warmth, parent–child closeness, and parenting strategies around finances all shape the ways young adults come to navigate everyday life (Serido et al. 2020; Padilla-Walker et al. 2021; Steele and McKinney 2019). Rather than centering around particular parenting styles in emerging adulthood, this work takes a holistic approach to understand how each

dimension of intergenerational solidarity transforms over the life course and differently by gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

1.3. Differences in Parent–Child Relationships by Race, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status, and Gender

There is variation in parent–child relationships across race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status with regards to intergenerational solidarity. Prior studies have found mixed results with regard to race and ethnicity. Black adolescents and adults reported the highest levels of affectual solidarity (maternal closeness and emotional support) relative to those from other racial and ethnic backgrounds (Hardie and Seltzer 2016; Zhang and Sassler 2019). In adolescence, maternal closeness was highest among Black adolescents, followed by Latinx, white, and Asian adolescents (Zhang and Sassler 2019). However, Hardie and Seltzer find that Black and Latinx young adults reported less emotional support from their parents relative to white young adults using the National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1979 cohort (Hardie and Seltzer 2016). Whether these patterns persist across race and ethnicity from adolescence into adulthood, however, is unknown.

Other factors, such as the gender of the parent and child, may impact relationships between parents and children. The relationship quality between mothers and children tends to be higher compared to the relationship quality between fathers and children (Shearer et al. 2005). Research shows that the gendered nature of the parent–child relationship begins at a young age, with parental affection greater for girls and discipline more salient for boys (Hughes et al. 1999). Mothers may provide more constructive interactions with children of any gender, while fathers are more likely to be involved with sons with a focus on discipline and instrumental support (Starrels 1994). In young adulthood, women report greater parental control than men with regard to curfew and activities outside of the home, which may lead to greater parental conflict between parents and daughters and less closeness (Sassler et al. 2008). There is also evidence that same-gender parent–child relationships in emerging adulthood are particularly close and salient (Steele and McKinney 2019). In sum, research shows that gender shapes the functioning and form of parent–child relationships from childhood to adulthood. Family instrumental functioning may also differ by gender, as research has found that girls on average may spend more time performing household labor in adolescence than boys, and even more in low-income families (Manke et al. 1994; White and Brinkerhoff 1981). There is also little research on differences in monetary support by gender, though some work has found that sons may expect more monetary support from their mothers than daughters (Goldscheider et al. 2001). Our study extends prior work by examining whether gender differences in parent–child relationships persist from adolescence to adulthood.

Research has shown that the flow of support may differ in low-income families. For example, qualitative work in central city Philadelphia with white low-income young adults shows that low-SES children provide greater levels of functional solidarity, including financial, home maintenance, and caregiving support, to families during the transition to adulthood (Napolitano 2015). Swartz’s qualitative research found that socioeconomic status significantly predicts flows of support between parents and children during the transition to adulthood, with high-SES parents providing greater financial support for their children’s living expenses, higher education, and insurance compared to low-SES parents (Swartz 2008). There is also evidence that the relationship between parents’ approach to financial teaching and young adults’ financial habits is shaped by SES and gender (Serido et al. 2020). Whether socioeconomic status shapes emotional support and closeness, however, is unknown.

Racial and ethnic differences in parent–child relationships continue within socioeconomic statuses. Patterns of parents providing financial support to their children are driven by financial resources available within the family (Berry 2006). Families with greater socioeconomic status may be able to provide greater financial support to their children relative to families with lower socioeconomic status (Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004), and often provide funds for

higher education, housing, and living expenses (Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2001). While parents from high socioeconomic backgrounds may be more likely to contribute larger sums of monetary support to their children, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to contribute their time towards childcare, transportation, and shared living, and may provide smaller sums of monetary support (Schoeni and Ross 2005; Swartz 2008). Black and Latinx young adults reported receiving less financial support from their parents relative to white young adults (Hardie and Seltzer 2016).

1.4. Hypotheses

Based on the literature, we expect the following hypotheses on parent–child relationships, organized by the timing of the life course, gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and the perspectives of both children and parents. Each hypothesis contains expectations on our three primary dimensions of intergenerational solidarity: Affectual, associational, and functional. Affectual solidarity includes closeness, relationship quality, and emotional support. Associational solidarity includes satisfaction with communication. Functional solidarity includes instrumental support and financial support.

1. We expect parent–child affectual solidarity and associational solidarity to increase over time as adolescents transition to adulthood, and as children become more like their adult parents (Rossi and Rossi 1990). We expect parent–child functional solidarity to decrease over time as children become increasingly independent.
2. We expect reports of parent–child affectual, associational, and functional solidarity to vary by race and ethnicity, with greater parent–child affectual, associational, and functional solidarity among Black, Latinx, and Asian children and parents compared to white children and parents (Hardie and Seltzer 2016; Zhang and Sassler 2019).
3. We expect parent–child relationships to vary by gender, with reports of affectual, associational, and functional solidarity being greater among daughters compared to sons, and mothers compared to fathers (Shearer et al. 2005).
4. We expect that parent–child relationships will vary by socioeconomic status, with functional solidarity (financial support) from children and parents being greater among respondents who have a higher SES (Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004), while instrumental support, associational solidarity, and affectual solidarity will be greater among children and parents who have a lower SES (Napolitano 2015; Swartz 2008).
5. We expect reports of affectual, associational, and functional solidarity will be higher among parents than children, in line with the intergenerational stake hypothesis (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971).

2. Materials and Methods

We used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a school-based sample of adolescents who were in the 7th–12th grades from 1994–1995 and re-interviewed until they were ages 32–43 years old in 2016–2018 (<https://addhealth.cpc.unc.edu/>, accessed on 17 April 2023). We used data from Waves I, II, III, IV, and the Wave V pre-sample to capture dimensions of parent–child relationships from adolescence to adulthood. At Wave I, 20,745 adolescents completed the survey, followed by 14,738 respondents in the 8th–12th grades in 1995–1996 at Wave II, 15,197 respondents from 2001–2002 at Wave III, 15,701 respondents from 2008–2009 at Wave IV, and 12,300 respondents at Wave V from 2016–2018.

We also used data from the Add Health Parent Study (AHPS), which interviewed the parents of the original Add Health respondents at Wave I in 1994–1995 and Wave II in 2016–2017. At Wave I of the AHPS, 17,670 parents of the original Add Health respondents were interviewed and were ages 27–67 years old. At Wave II of the AHPS, 2244 parents were interviewed and were ages 47–80 years old. A majority of the sample were women, as Add Health explicitly gave instructions to interviewers to give the Parent Questionnaire to a female member of the household (Add Health, 1994).

We limited our sample to respondents who completed all five survey Waves and had a parent who completed both Waves of the Add Health Parent Study to capture changing dimensions of parent–child relationships over time, which led to a reduced sample size of 2401 respondents. We included respondents who did not have missing survey weights for Wave V, which led to a decreased sample size of 2267 respondents. We limited our sample to respondents who were white, Black, Latinx, and Asian, due to small sample sizes for American Indians and other groups, thus reducing the sample to 2232. We did not include respondents with missing data on their mother’s educational attainment, decreasing the sample size to 2151. We also restricted the sample to respondents who did not have missing data on age ($n = 38$) and parental education ($n = 13$), and dropped respondents who were not white, Black, Latinx, or Asian ($n = 55$), reducing the sample size to 2141 respondents. Our sample sizes varied depending on missing data for certain measures of parent–child relationships for our descriptive statistics.

2.1. Methods

In order to assess changes in parent–child relationships over time, we took survey-weighted means of key dimensions of parent–child relationships across gender, race, ethnicity, and maternal education for the children’s sample as well as the parent’s sample. We ran Bonferroni corrections to assess whether the weighted means varied significantly within gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as socioeconomic status at the $p < 0.05$ level.

2.2. Measures

We broadly captured three dimensions of parent–child relationships: Associational solidarity, affectual solidarity, and functional solidarity. Due to inconsistent measures asked of parents and children, we briefly describe the specific constructs by the children’s and parent’s samples. The parent–child relationship dimensions measured among the children’s sample included affectual solidarity (parent–child closeness), associational solidarity (satisfaction with communication), and functional solidarity (financial support). Among the parent’s sample, parent–child relationship dimensions included affectual solidarity (relationship quality and emotional support) and functional solidarity (instrumental support and exchanges of financial support).

2.3. Demographic Variables

We examined parent–child relationships by gender, race and ethnicity, and maternal education, all of which were measured at Wave I. For children’s reports, gender was whether the respondent was male or female. The respondent’s race and ethnicity included four exclusive categories: White, Black, Latinx, and Asian, from the constructed race variable used in Wave I (Udry et al. 2003), and from Wave I of the Add Health Parent Study. We used maternal education as a proxy for socioeconomic status, from the respondent’s and parent’s reports of their mother’s and their own highest educational attainment at Wave I, which included the categories of less than high school, high school/GED, some college, college and more, and do not know.

2.4. Children’s Reports of Parent–Child Relationships

2.4.1. Affectual Solidarity: Closeness

Affectual solidarity is measured through the respondent’s reported closeness with their mother, and reported closeness with their father asked at Waves I, II, III, IV, and V: “how close do you feel to your [mother figure]?” and “how close do you feel to your [father figure]?” This could include a biological parent, adoptive parent, step parent, or foster parent. At Wave III only, the respondent was asked the question separately for each biological parent, previous residential parent, and current residential parent. We averaged the responses to these questions to come up with an overall measure of closeness for the mother and father at Wave III. Responses ranged from 1 (not close at all) to 5 (extremely close).

2.4.2. Associational Solidarity: Satisfaction with Communication

Due to inconsistent measures of communication across the five Waves, we included one broad measure of associational solidarity: Satisfaction with communication with the mother or father at Waves I, II, and IV. Satisfaction with communication within the relationship came from the following question: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? You are satisfied with the way your mother and you communicate with each other”. The same was asked of the respondent’s father. Responses ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) and were reverse-coded.

2.4.3. Functional Solidarity: Financial Support

Due to inconsistency in financial measures across the Waves, we included various measures of financial support from parents, including (i) allowance, (ii) whether the parent provided money, and (iii) whether the parent provided money for living expenses. At Waves I and II, respondents were asked about their allowance: “How much is your allowance each week? If you don’t receive your allowance weekly, how much would it be each week?” Responses ranged from \$0 to \$95. At Wave III, the measure of parental financial support came from the following question: “Has your mother given you any money or paid for anything significant for you during the past 12 months? Don’t include regular birthday or holiday gifts”. Responses from the previous residential, current residential, and biological mother were averaged. The same question was asked for fathers, which was also averaged. The responses on financial support received from mothers and fathers were averaged to create a broad measure of whether the respondent received any financial support from any parent. Responses ranged from no to yes. At Wave IV, the following questions were asked separately for the mother figure and the father figure: “How many times has your parent paid your living expenses or given you \$50 or more to pay living expenses during the past 12 months?” Answers ranged from 0 (never), 1 (yes), 2 (one to two times), to 3 (three to four times). At Wave V, the same question was asked, but only for a parent or parent figure, and responses ranged from 0 (never), 1 (one or two times), 3 (three or four times), and 4 (5 or more times). Due to inconsistent response categories across the Waves, we created a broad, dichotomous measure of whether the child reported receiving any financial support from their parent(s), ranging from no to yes.

2.5. Parents’ Reports of Parent–Child Relationships

We include various measures of parents’ reports of their relationships with their children, including affectual solidarity (relationship quality and emotional support) and functional solidarity (instrumental support and financial support) using Waves I and II of the Add Health Parent Study.

2.5.1. Affectual Solidarity: Relationship Quality and Emotional Support

At Wave I, aspects of emotional support came from the following four items, which were scaled to create a combined measure of parent–child relationship quality ($\alpha = 0.73$) (Kirkpatrick Johnson 2013): Whether the respondent could get along well with their son or daughter, make decisions about the son or daughter’s life together, feels like they can really trust their son or daughter, and whether the parent is satisfied with the relationship with their son or daughter. Responses ranged from 1 (always) to 5 (never) except for the question on relationship satisfaction, which ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and was reverse-coded to indicate higher levels of support for higher scores.

At Wave II, emotional support came from the following yes–no questions asked at Wave II, summed into an overall measure of emotional support from children: Whether the parent could open up to them if they needed to talk about their worries, whether they could rely on help if they had a problem, and whether they made too many demands or criticized them, which was reverse-coded. Responses ranged from 0 (no support) to 3 (full support).

2.5.2. Functional Solidarity: Instrumental Support and Financial Support

Instrumental support given and received from children came from the following question asked at Wave II or the Add Parent Study: “In the past 12 months, did you [or your spouse/partner] spend time helping one or more of your [spouse/partner’s] children?” This included helping with activities such as childcare, errands, transportation, chores, or hands-on care. Instrumental support received from children was whether the spouse or partner’s children helped the parent or spouse with activities such as errands, transportation chores, or hands-on care in the past 12 months. Responses for both questions ranged from no to yes.

Financial support given to and received from children came from the following yes-no questions asked at Wave II: “In the past 12 months, did you [or your spouse/partner] give any money, personal loans, or gifts of \$100 or more to one of your [or your spouse/partner’s] children?” The same question was asked of whether the parent received money from their children at Wave II.

3. Results

3.1. Summary Statistics

Table 1 shows summary statistics for the mother sample, father sample, and parent sample. Slightly over half of the sample was female for the mother and father samples, while 96% of the parent sample was female. A majority of the sample was white (72% for the mother sample, 77% for the father sample, and 74% for the parent sample), followed by Black (13% for the mother sample, 9% for the father sample, and 13% for the parent sample), Latinx (12% of the mother sample, 11% of the father sample, and 11% of the parent sample), and Asian (3% of the mother sample, 4% of the father sample, and 2% of the parent sample). The average age of the respondent was approximately 15 years old at Wave I, followed by 16 years old at Wave II, 22 years old at Wave III, 28 years old at Wave IV, and 37 years old at Wave V. For the parent sample, the average age of the respondent’s parent was 41 years old at Wave I and 63 years old at Wave II. Most respondents had mothers who completed a high school degree across the samples.

Table 1. Summary statistics for analytic sample.

Variable	Maternal		Paternal		Parent		Range	Alpha
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Gender—female	0.52	0.02	0.52	0.02	0.94	0.01	0 to 1	
Race/ethnicity							1 to 4	
White	0.72	0.03	0.77	0.03	0.74	0.01		
Black	0.13	0.02	0.09	0.02	0.13	0.01		
Latinx	0.12	0.02	0.11	0.02	0.11	0.01		
Asian	0.03	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.00		
Age of the respondent at Wave I	15.37	0.12	15.29	0.12	41.14	0.14	12 to 67	
Age of the respondent at Wave II	16.37	0.12	16.29	0.12	62.72	0.14	14 to 22	
Age of the respondent at Wave III	21.57	0.12	21.48	0.13	-	-	19 to 27	
Age of the respondent at Wave IV	28.36	0.12	28.28	0.12	-	-	25 to 34	
Age of the respondent at Wave V	36.46	0.12	36.35	0.12	-	-	34 to 80	
Family structure at Wave I								
Two bio parents	0.66	0.02	0.85	0.02	-	-	1 to 4	
Two parents	0.16	0.01	0.14	0.02	-	-		
Single parent	0.18	0.02	0.00	0.01	-	-		
Other	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	-	-		
Maternal/Parental education at Wave I							1 to 5	
<HS	0.14	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.13	0.01		
HS grad or GED	0.33	0.02	0.33	0.02	0.32	0.01		

Table 1. Cont.

Variable	Maternal		Paternal		Parent		Range	Alpha
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Some college	0.21	0.01	0.21	0.02	0.32	0.01		
Completed college+	0.28	0.02	0.30	0.03	0.23	0.01		
Don't know	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.01	-	-		
I. Affectual Solidarity								
Maternal closeness							1 to 5	
Wave I	4.55	0.03	-	-	-	-		
Wave II	4.34	0.03	-	-	-	-		
Wave III	4.46	0.02	-	-	-	-		
Wave IV	4.56	0.02	-	-	-	-		
Wave V	4.14	0.03	-	-	-	-		
Paternal closeness							1 to 5	
Wave I	-	-	4.35	0.04	-	-		
Wave II	-	-	4.11	0.04	-	-		
Wave III	-	-	4.23	0.04	-	-		
Wave IV	-	-	4.30	0.04	-	-		
Wave V	-	-	3.87	0.04	-	-		
Parents' relationship quality with child at Wave I	-	-	-	-	4.19	0.02	1 to 5	0.73
Parents' emotional support from child at Wave II					2.66	0.01	0 to 3	
II. Associational Solidarity								
Satisfaction with communication with mother							1 to 5	
Wave I	4.07	0.04	-	-	-	-		
Wave II	4.06	0.04	-	-	-	-		
Wave IV	4.49	0.02	-	-	-	-		
Satisfaction with communication with father							1 to 5	
Wave I	-	-	4.03	0.05	-	-		
Wave II	-	-	3.92	0.05	-	-		
Wave IV	-	-	4.28	0.04	-	-		
III. Functional Solidarity								
Parent helped children in the past year at Wave II	-	-	-	-	0.87	0.01	0 to 1	
Children helped parents in the past year at Wave II	-	-	-	-	0.69	0.01	0 to 1	
Parent can rely on children to help at Wave II	-	-	-	-	0.89	0.00	0 to 1	
Parental Financial Assistance								
Any allowance at Wave I	0.52	0.02	0.54	0.02	-	-	0 to 1	
Any allowance at Wave II	0.48	0.02	0.50	0.03	-	-	0 to 1	
Any money from parent at Wave III	0.70	0.02	0.71	0.02	-	-	0 to 1	
Any money from parent at Wave IV	0.38	0.02	0.38	0.02	-	-	0 to 1	
Parental financial support at Wave V	0.25	0.02	0.25	0.02	-	-	0 to 1	
Parent gave money to children at Wave II	-	-	-	-	0.65	0.01	0 to 1	
Children gave money to parents at Wave II	-	-	-	-	0.33	0.01	0 to 1	
N			1767–1780 for maternal sample 1231–1232 for paternal sample 2063–2086 for parent sample					

Note: Means of variables less than 1 are proportions of the sample.

In contrast to what we expected in Hypothesis 1, an aspect of affectual solidarity, parent–child closeness, generally decreased from adolescence to adulthood. Reported maternal closeness was highest at Wave IV (ages 25 to 34) followed by Wave I (ages 12–21), Wave II (ages 14–22), and Wave III (ages 19–27), and was lowest at Wave V (ages 34–43).

Paternal closeness, on the other hand, was highest in adolescence at ages 12–21, followed by adulthood at ages 25 to 34, emerging adulthood at ages 19–27, adolescence from ages 14–22, and adulthood at ages 34 to 43. Parents' relationship quality with their adolescent children was also relatively high, at 4.19 out of 5. Satisfaction with communication with the mother and father increased from Waves I (ages 12–21) to IV (ages 25–34) and was lowest at Wave II (ages 13–20).

One of the dimensions of functional solidarity, instrumental support, was unequal, with parents providing more instrumental support than children from 2016–2018. A majority of parents, 87%, reported helping their children with tasks such as chores and transportation in the past year, while 68% of parents reported that they received help from their children in the past year. Another aspect of functional solidarity, financial assistance, decreased from parents to children over the life course, with parental financial assistance being highest at Wave III when respondents were 19–27 years old (70%), followed by adolescence when adolescents reported receiving allowance at Waves I and II (52% and 48%), followed by Wave IV (38%) and V (25%). Financial assistance provided to children, reported by parents, was greater than the amount of financial support received from children—65% of parents reported giving gifts or money valued at \$100 or more to their children, while 33% of parents reported receiving gifts of money valued at \$100 or more from their children.

We examined parent–child relationships across gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to assess for which groups parent–child relationships were more important than for others.

3.2. Parent–Child Relationships across Gender

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of parent–child relationships by gender. Overall, an aspect of affectual solidarity, maternal closeness, was significantly lower among adolescent girls compared to adolescent boys. Across the life course, however, the only significant difference in reported closeness by gender was at Wave I, when respondents were 15 years old on average. Reported paternal closeness was significantly lower among daughters compared to sons at Waves I, II, and III, but not significantly different in young adulthood and adulthood, providing partial support for Hypothesis 3, that parent–child closeness would be higher among father–son dyads relative to father–daughter dyads. Satisfaction with communication with the respondent's mother and father was significantly lower among adolescent girls compared to adolescent boys.

From the Add Health Parent Study, there were no statistically significant differences in reports of parents' relationship quality with their adolescent children by gender. Similarly, at Wave II, there were no significant differences in the levels of emotional support the parent provided to the child.

For dimensions of functional solidarity, there were no differences in reported financial support received from parents among men and women from Wave I to V. However, with regards to instrumental support provided and financial support provided given in the Add Health Parent Study, there were gender differences, with female parents reporting they received more financial support from their children than male parents. In addition, among the parent sample, a greater proportion of women stated that they received help from a child (69%) than men (58%) in the past year.

In sum, the three primary descriptive findings that emerge from examining parent–child relationships by gender are the following: Parent–child closeness and relationship satisfaction are lower among girls than boys; children provide more instrumental and financial support to their female parental figures; and there were no differences found for the financial support received by gender.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of parent–child relationships by gender.

Variable Name	Child		Parent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
I. Affectual Solidarity				
Maternal closeness				
Wave I	4.63	4.48 *	-	-
Wave II	4.38	4.29	-	-
Wave III	4.48	4.44	-	-
Wave IV	4.55	4.57	-	-
Wave V	4.10	4.17	-	-
Paternal closeness				
Wave I	4.46	4.26 *	-	-
Wave II	4.32	3.92 *	-	-
Wave III	4.34	4.13 *	-	-
Wave IV	4.38	4.22	-	-
Wave V	3.90	3.85	-	-
Parents' relationship quality with children at Wave I	-	-	4.16	4.19
Parents' emotional support from child at Wave II	-	-	2.68	2.66
II. Associational Solidarity				
Satisfaction with communication with mother				
Wave I	4.17	3.98 *	-	-
Wave II	4.14	3.98 *	-	-
Wave IV	4.53	4.45	-	-
Satisfaction with communication with father				
Wave I	4.11	3.95 *	-	-
Wave II	4.05	3.80 *	-	-
Wave IV	4.33	4.24	-	-
III. Functional Solidarity				
Parent helped child at Wave II	-	-	0.86	0.87
Children helped parent at Wave II	-	-	0.58	0.69
Parental Financial Assistance				
Any allowance at Wave I	0.54	0.51	-	-
Any allowance at Wave II	0.48	0.48	-	-
Any money from parent at Wave III	0.70	0.70	-	-
Any money from parent at Wave IV	0.36	0.40	-	-
Parental financial support at Wave V	0.25	0.26	-	-
Parent provided money to children at Wave II	-	-	0.66	0.65
Children provided money to parent at Wave II	-	-	0.23	0.34
N	1767–1780 for maternal sample 1231–1232 for paternal sample 2127–2141 for parent sample			

Note: Means of variables less than 1 are proportions of the sample. *—indicates significant difference from men at the $p < 0.05$ -level.

3.3. Parent–Child Relationships across Race and Ethnicity

Table 3 shows reports of parent–child relationships across race and ethnicity, organized by affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, and functional solidarity.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of parent–child relationships by race and ethnicity.

Variable Name	White	Black	Latinx	Asian
I. Affectual Solidarity				
Maternal closeness				
Wave I	4.54	4.61	4.71	4.24 ^{bc}
Wave II	4.32	4.51 ^a	4.32	3.98 ^{ab}
Wave III	4.44	4.60 ^a	4.58	4.05 ^{abc}
Wave IV	4.53	4.75 ^a	4.63	4.32 ^b
Wave V	4.09	4.34 ^a	4.30	4.00
Paternal closeness				
Wave I	4.35	4.46	4.40	4.19
Wave II	4.10	4.30	4.10	3.88
Wave III	4.23	4.18	4.35	3.95
Wave IV	4.27	4.53 ^a	4.48	3.99 ^{bc}
Wave V	3.85	4.03	4.06 ^a	3.55 ^{bc}
Parents' relationship quality w/ child at Wave I	4.18	4.06 ^a	4.34 ^{ab}	4.38 ^{ab}
Parents' emotional support from child at Wave II	2.65	2.66	2.71	2.71
II. Associational Solidarity				
Satisfaction with communication with mother				
Wave I	4.09	4.06	4.14	3.67
Wave II	4.04	4.15	4.20	3.68 ^{bc}
Wave IV	4.47	4.66 ^a	4.52	4.13 ^b
Satisfaction with communication with father				
Wave I	4.01	4.29	4.04	3.96
Wave II	3.90	4.10	3.89	3.89
Wave IV	4.29	4.26	4.32	4.03
III. Functional Solidarity				
Parent helped child at Wave II	0.90	0.86	0.67 ^{ab}	0.96 ^{abc}
Child helped parent at Wave II	0.68	0.76 ^a	0.57 ^{ab}	0.80 ^c
Parental Financial Assistance				
Any allowance at Wave I	0.51	0.58	0.53	0.67
Any allowance at Wave II	0.46	0.58	0.44	0.66
Any money from parent at Wave III	0.70	0.68	0.68	0.77
Any money from parent at Wave IV	0.35	0.52 ^a	0.39	0.46
Parental financial support at Wave V	0.23	0.40 ^a	0.25 ^b	0.22
Parent provided money to child at Wave II	0.68	0.61 ^a	0.44 ^{ab}	0.81 ^{bc}
Child provided money to parent at Wave II	0.28	0.55 ^a	0.38 ^{ab}	0.51 ^a
N	1767–1780 for maternal sample 1231–1232 for paternal sample 2127–2141 for parent sample			

Note: Means of variables less than 1 are proportions of the sample. ^a—indicates significant difference from white respondents, ^b—from Black respondents, and ^c—from Latinx respondents at the $p < 0.05$ -level.

Overall, we found that maternal closeness, a dimension of affectual solidarity, was significantly higher among Black respondents relative to white respondents, and that these differences were significantly different from white respondents from Wave II to Wave V. Maternal closeness was also lowest among Asians, but these differences were not statistically significantly different from whites except for at Wave III. Paternal closeness, on the other hand, was significantly higher among Black adults at Wave IV relative to white adults, and was significantly higher among Latinx adults relative to white adults at Wave V.

Parents' reports of their relationship quality with their children and emotional support from their child showed that Black parents reported the lowest relationship quality with their children at Wave I relative to white, Latinx, and Asian parents. Asian and Latinx parents reported the highest relationship quality with their children in adolescence, which was statistically significantly higher from white and Black parents' reports of their relationship quality with their children. Emotional support at Wave II, however, was relatively high for parents and did not significantly vary by racial and ethnic group.

Satisfaction with communication with the mother, a dimension of associational solidarity, was significantly higher among Black adults compared to white adults, while there were no statistically significant racial and ethnic differences in satisfaction with communication with the father. There were no racial and ethnic differences in parents' reports of emotional support from the child at Wave II.

From the Add Health Parent Study, instrumental support provided and received, a dimension of functional solidarity, varied across racial and ethnic groups. Asian parents provided the most help to their children at Wave V (96%), followed by white (90%), Black (86%), and Latinx (67%) parents. Patterns of exchange were unequal, with children providing less help to their parents than parents provided to their children. Asian parents reported that they received the most help from their children (80%), followed by 76% of Black, 57% of Latinx, and 68% of white parents.

Parental financial assistance also varied across racial and ethnic groups—Black adults reported receiving the greatest levels of financial support from parents at Waves IV and V, and this was statistically significantly higher relative to white adults. From the Add Health Parent Study, parents' reports of how much money was provided and received varied across race and ethnicity. Asian parents provided the most financial support (81%), followed by white (68%), Black (61%), and Latinx (44%) parents. Similarly, the amount of money parents received from children was not equal to the amount of money parents gave to children. Over half (55%) of Black parents received any money from their child in the past year, followed by 51% of Asian parents, 38% of Latinx parents, and 28% of white parents.

In sum, the primary findings from Table 3 show that maternal closeness, paternal closeness, and satisfaction with communication with the mother are consistently higher among Black young adults; that Asian parents are the most satisfied with their relationship with their children, and that Black, Latinx, and Asian children gave the most money to their parents in adulthood. Therefore, we found partial support for Hypothesis 2, that affectual, associational, and functional solidarity were higher among Black, Latinx, and Asian respondents relative to white respondents.

3.4. Parent–Child Relationships across Socioeconomic Status

Table 4 shows reports of parent–child relationships across maternal education, organized by affectual solidarity, associational solidarity, and functional solidarity. Generally, maternal closeness was highest among respondents who had less than a high school degree, and these differences were especially apparent in adolescence at Wave II. Respondents whose mothers had less than a high school degree were significantly more likely to report greater maternal closeness relative to those who had a high school, some college, college or more, and did not know their mother's education. At Wave III, relative to respondents whose mothers had less than a high school degree, respondents whose mothers had some college reported lower maternal closeness. At Wave I of the Add Health Parent Study, parents' reported relationship quality with children was significantly higher among respondents whose mothers had a college degree or more, relative to respondents whose mothers had a high school degree and some college degree. At Wave II of the Add Health Parent Study, there were no statistically significant differences in reports of emotional support across socioeconomic status.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of parent–child relationships by maternal education.

Variable Name	<HS	HS	Some College	College+	Don't Know
I. Affectual Solidarity					
Maternal closeness					
Wave I	4.64	4.58	4.47 ^a	4.55	4.52
Wave II	4.57	4.37 ^a	4.22 ^a	4.31 ^a	4.03 ^a
Wave III	4.56	4.47	4.41 ^a	4.47	4.22
Wave IV	4.55	4.57	4.53	4.58	4.47
Wave V	4.25	4.06	4.07	4.23 ^b	4.12
Paternal closeness					
Wave I	4.32	4.41	4.32	4.31	4.60
Wave II	4.07	4.16	4.12	4.07	4.02
Wave III	4.36	4.26	4.17	4.21	3.96 ^a
Wave IV	4.25	4.28	4.34	4.29	4.38
Wave V	3.75	3.88	3.80	3.97	3.91
Parents' relationship quality with children at Wave I	4.20	4.20	4.10 ^b	4.28 ^{bc}	-
Parents' emotional support from child at Wave II	2.69	2.65	2.62	2.70	-
II. Associational Solidarity					
Satisfaction of communication w/mother					
Wave I	4.09	4.13	3.95 ^b	4.12	3.84
Wave II	4.23	4.13	3.88 ^{ab}	4.04	3.96
Wave IV	4.36	4.49	4.44	4.58 ^{ac}	4.49
Satisfaction of communication w/father					
Wave I	3.85	4.15	3.98	4.01	4.06
Wave II	3.78	3.99	3.89	3.93	3.78
Wave IV	4.27	4.30	4.23	4.30	4.31
III. Functional Solidarity					
Parent helped children in the past year at Wave II	0.80	0.86	0.87 ^a	0.92 ^{abc}	-
Child helped parent in the past year at Wave II	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.71	-
Parental Financial Assistance					
Any allowance at Wave I	0.56	0.51	0.48	0.55	0.56
Any allowance at Wave II	0.49	0.47	0.46	0.52	0.40
Any money from parent at Wave III	0.60	0.64	0.70 ^a	0.81 ^{abc}	0.81 ^{ab}
Any money from parent at Wave IV	0.40	0.43	0.30 ^b	0.36 ^b	0.45
Parental financial support at Wave V	0.30	0.22	0.26	0.26	0.26
Parent gave money to children at Wave II	0.40	0.61 ^a	0.66 ^a	0.84 ^{abc}	-
Child gave money to parents at Wave II	0.32	0.33	0.31	0.38	-
N	1767–1780 for maternal sample 1231–1232 for paternal sample 2127–2141 for parent sample				

Note: Means of variables less than 1 are proportions of the sample. ^a—indicates significant difference from <HS, ^b—from HS, and ^c—from some college, at the $p < 0.05$ -level.

Satisfaction with communication with the mother, a dimension of associational solidarity, was highest among respondents whose mothers had less than a high school degree at Wave II but was highest among respondents who had a college degree or more at Wave IV. There were no statistically significant differences in satisfaction with communication with the father at Waves I, II, and IV.

Instrumental support provided and received from adult children to their aging parents, a dimension of functional solidarity, varied by socioeconomic status. Approximately 92% of parents who had a college degree or more reported helping their parents in the past year at Wave V, followed by 87% of parents who completed some college, 86% who completed a high school degree, and 80% who had less than a high school degree. Parents who completed some college and college and more were significantly more likely to have

helped children in the past year relative to parents who completed less than a high school degree, parents who completed a high school degree, and parents who completed some college. Parents did not report receiving the same level of instrumental help from their children as children received from their parents, providing partial support for Hypothesis 5. Approximately 68% of parents who completed less than a high school degree and high school degree, 67% of mothers who completed some college, and 71% of parents who completed a college degree or more reported that they received help from their children in the past year when interviewed from 2016–2018. There were no significant differences across socioeconomic status in whether parents reported that their children helped them in the past year.

Generally, financial support, another dimension of functional solidarity, declined from adolescence to adulthood, and was highest at Wave III during the ages of 19–27 years old. Parental financial assistance was significantly higher among respondents whose mothers completed some college relative to those whose mothers had less than a high school degree at Waves III and IV, providing support for Hypothesis 4 that higher-SES parents would provide more money to their children than low-SES parents. Finally, there was variation in the patterns of providing and receiving financial support from the parent's perspective. In the Add Health Parent Study, a greater proportion of parents who had increasing levels of parental education provided more financial support to their adult children. While 40% of parents who had less than a high school degree gave any money to their children at Wave V, 61% of those who had a high school degree, followed by 66% of those who had some college degree, and 84% of those who had a college degree or more provided any financial support to their parent at Wave V. Patterns of financial exchange were not reciprocal, with parents providing more financial support than children, providing partial support for Hypothesis 5. Parents reported receiving less money from their children than children received from their parents across socioeconomic statuses, and there were no significant differences across these socioeconomic categories. Approximately 32% of parents with less than a high school degree, followed by 33% of those with a high school degree, 31% of those with some college, and 38% of those with a college degree or more reported receiving any money from their children in the past year from 2016–2018.

In sum, the three primary points of our descriptive results are that maternal closeness and satisfaction with communication with mothers are highest among low-SES adolescent children; that parents' relationship quality with children is highest among parents who have a college degree or more in adolescence; and that high-SES parents give the most instrumental support and financial support to their children in adulthood.

4. Discussion

In the context of the delaying transition to adulthood, parents are an important source of affectual, associational, and functional solidarity. However, it is not known whether and how parent–child relationships change over the life course. We aimed to address this gap in the literature by descriptively examining changes in parent–child relationships from adolescence to adulthood from 1994–2018, and examining differences by gender, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Our study gleaned three important themes: That parent–child relationships remain an important source of intergenerational solidarity from adolescence to adulthood; that important differences in patterns of support in parent–child relationships exist across race ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status; and that parents provide more instrumental and financial support to children than children provide to parents, even in adulthood.

The first theme that emerged from this study is that parents remain an important source of intergenerational solidarity from adolescence to adulthood, and that patterns of solidarity varied across race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Although parent–child closeness slightly decreased from adolescence to adulthood, most respondents felt either very close or extremely close to their parents from ages 12–43 years old. This suggests that parents remain an important relationship for individuals well into adulthood, and far past the

emerging adulthood stage that we know has changed the most drastically in recent decades. Black adolescents and adults reported being the closest to their mothers, something worthy of more investigation. It is clear from these results that affectual solidarity is an important piece of parent–child relationships into adulthood and deserves more focus on research on the life course and adult experiences. In addition, parents provided a substantial amount of instrumental and financial support to their adult children—87% of parents ages 47–80 years old reported providing help (childcare, chores, transportation, and hands-on care) to adult children ages 32–43 years old in the past year, and 65% of parents provided financial support of at least \$100 or more to their adult children in the past year. By race and ethnicity, Asian parents provided the highest levels of financial and instrumental support to their children. By socioeconomic status, respondents whose mothers completed college or more reported receiving the highest levels of instrumental support and financial support. This finding reinforces that parent–child relationships continue to matter beyond adolescence (Moretti and Peled 2004). Future work should consider the impact of parent–child relationships on young adult and adult children’s well-being across the life course, given that parents remain an important source of social support throughout the lifespan. While we often assume that adults live their lives largely autonomously, this work suggests that parents remain important well into adulthood, affectually, instrumentally, and financially.

The second theme is that important variations in parent–child relationships exist across gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Specifically, parents remain an important source of affectual solidarity for adolescent boys, low-SES adolescents, and Black adolescents and young adults. These results have important implications for the understanding of what constitutes “good” parenting in the United States. Given that much of the parenting literature has focused on how parenting styles vary across gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Lareau 2003; Pezzella et al. 2016), this descriptive finding sheds light on the importance of considering emotional support as an important domain of the parent–child relationship, and to consider that parents are an important source of support for low-SES and Black adolescents and young adults. The importance of emotional support from parents, in turn, may shape trajectories of well-being across the life course beyond adolescence. Future research should more closely explore the role of parental emotional support for low-SES and Black young adults, emphasizing the ways parents from marginalized families provide the support they can for children even in the face of systematic disadvantage. On the other hand, parents remain an important source of instrumental and financial support for high-SES adolescents and adults, even into adulthood, thus perpetuating intergenerational inequality. Given that a greater proportion of high-SES adults receive money from their parents relative to low-SES adults, future work should examine how greater economic support may shape adult well-being during transitions to adulthood across the life course, and how these outcomes vary by socioeconomic status.

The third theme is that parents report providing more instrumental and financial support to children than children provide to parents, confirming the Intergenerational Stake Hypothesis (Bengtson and Kuypers 1971). In this study, while 65% of parents provided money to adult children at Wave V, only 33% received money from adult children at Wave V. In addition, while 87% of aging parents provided instrumental help to their children at Wave V, only 68% of these same parents reported receiving help from their adult children at Wave V. The greater amount of financial support provided by aging parents to their adult children may have implications for understanding whether aging parents experience greater financial strain as they reach retirement ages as they continue to financially support their children (Schoeni and Ross 2005), and whether their children can serve as a source of financial support during this time period. This has implications for addressing the social safety net for aging parents in the U.S., as children cannot necessarily provide financial support to their parents due to rising levels of debt (Addo 2014). Future work should take into consideration how unequal exchanges of financial support may shape both adults and their aging parents’ well-being. What do long-term financial security and retirement look like in an era of extended parental financial support for young adult children? How do

young adults plan for their own financial futures while still relying on parental financial support into adulthood?

Although this paper illuminated important details in understanding the transition to adulthood, it was not free from limitations. We only examined respondents who reported having all five measures of maternal closeness and all five measures of paternal closeness, thus excluding mothers and fathers who died along the way, something we know is more likely among Black families (Umberson et al. 2017). In addition, the Add Health Parent Study was primarily women, which limited the reports from aging men in the sample, and was limited to two Waves, when respondents were adolescents and young adults. Further, due to data limitations, we did not have consistent measures of emotional support, instrumental support, and financial support throughout Waves I–V, thus leading to greater use of dichotomous measures across the Waves.

Despite popular media depictions that assume that parents and children are completely independent of each other after age 18, in a period of a delaying transition to adulthood, parents remain an important source of intergenerational solidarity from adolescence to adulthood. Our study illuminates that the parent–child relationship is dynamic and varies from both the child and the parent’s perspective. Parent–child bonds remain close throughout the life course, from both the child’s and the parent’s perspective, and vary by gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in important ways that have implications for understanding parent and child well-being across the life course. Affectual solidarity from parents is higher among low-SES adolescents and young adults relative to high-SES adolescents and young adults, which may have implications for understanding child well-being across the life span. Specifically, high-SES parents continue to serve as an important source of financial support for their children, which in turn may shape the level of parental support provided during key transitions to adulthood. This dichotomy by SES in the kinds of solidarity parents provide warrants future research about class differences in approaches to parental support in emerging adulthood, and what those class differences mean for larger inequality and approaches to daily life and relationships.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, X.Z. and A.G.; methodology, X.Z.; formal analysis, X.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, X.Z. and A.G.; writing—review and editing, X.Z. and A.G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This material is based on work supported by the National Institutes of Health under the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (T32-HD049302) from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and by a core grant (P2C-HD047873) to the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development or the National Institutes of Health. This research uses data from Add Health, a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations. Special acknowledgment is due to Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Information on how to obtain the Add Health data files is available on the Add Health website (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth> (accessed on 17 April 2023)). No direct support was received from grant P01-HD31921 for this analysis.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Add Health and Add Health Parent Study participants provided written informed consent for participation in all aspects of Add Health in accordance with the University of North Carolina School of Public Health Institutional Review Board guidelines that are based on the Code of Federal Regulations on the Protection of Human Subjects 45CFR46: <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

Data Availability Statement: The authors used the restricted use Add Health and Add Health Parent Study datasets. Information on access to Add Health and the Add Health Parent Study is here: <https://addhealth.cpc.unc.edu/data/> (accessed on 17 April 2023).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Addo, Fenaba R. 2014. Debt, Cohabitation, and Marriage in Young Adulthood. *Demography* 51: 1677–701. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Barnes, Howard L., and David H. Olson. 1985. Parent-Adolescent Communication and the Circumplex Model. *Child Development* 56: 438–47. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bengtson, Vern L., and Joseph A. Kuypers. 1971. Generational Difference and the Developmental Stake. *Aging and Human Development* 2: 249–60. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Bengtson, Vern L., and Robert E. L. Roberts. 1991. Intergenerational Solidarity in Aging Families: An Example of Formal Theory Construction. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53: 856–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Berry, Brent. 2006. What Accounts for Race and Ethnic Differences in Parental Financial Transfers to Adult Children in the United States? *Journal of Family Issues* 27: 1583–604. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Cui, Ming, Carol A. Darling, Catherine Coccia, Frank D. Fincham, and Ross W. May. 2019. Indulgent Parenting, Helicopter Parenting, and Well-Being of Parents and Emerging Adults. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 28: 860–71. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Currie, Candace, and Kate A. Levin. 2010. Family Structure, Mother-child Communication, Father-child Communication, and Adolescent Life Satisfaction: A Cross-sectional Multilevel Analysis. *Health Education* 110: 152–68. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Elder, Glen H. 1998. The Life Course as Developmental Theory. *Child Development* 69: 1. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fang, Shichen, Nancy L. Galambos, and Matthew D. Johnson. 2021. Parent-Child Contact, Closeness, and Conflict Across the Transition to Adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 83: 1176–93. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fingerman, Karen, Laura Miller, Kira Birditt, and Steven Zarit. 2009. Giving to the Good and the Needy: Parental Support of Grown Children. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71: 1220–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fingerman, Karen L., Meng Huo, and Kira S. Birditt. 2020. A Decade of Research on Intergenerational Ties: Technological, Economic, Political, and Demographic Changes. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82: 383–403. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Fingerman, Karen L., Yen-Pi Cheng, Lauren Tighe, Kira S. Birditt, and Steven Zarit. 2012. Relationships Between Young Adults and Their Parents. In *Early Adulthood in a Family Context*. Edited by Alan Booth, Susan L. Brown, Nancy S. Landale, Wendy D. Manning and Susan M. McHale. New York: Springer, pp. 59–85. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Furstenberg, Frank F. 2010. On a New Schedule: Transitions to Adulthood and Family Change. *The Future of Children* 20: 67–87. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Goldscheider, Frances K., Arland Thornton, and Li-Shou Yang. 2001. Helping Out the Kids: Expectations About Parental Support in Young Adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63: 727–40. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Hardie, Jessica Halliday, and Judith A. Seltzer. 2016. Parent-Child Relationships at the Transition to Adulthood: A Comparison of Black, Hispanic, and White Immigrant and Native-Born Youth. *Social Forces* 95: 321–53. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Hughes, Claire, Kirby Deater-Deckard, and Alexandra L. Cutting. 1999. ‘Speak Roughly to Your Little Boy’? Sex Differences in the Relations Between Parenting and Preschoolers’ Understanding of Mind. *Social Development* 8: 143–60. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jayakody, Rukmalie. 1998. Race Differences in Intergenerational Financial Assistance: The Needs of Children and the Resources of Parents. *Journal of Family Issues* 19: 508–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kirkpatrick Johnson, Monica. 2013. Parental Financial Assistance and Young Adults’ Relationships with Parents and Well-Being. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 75: 713–33. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Lareau, Annette. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lichter, Daniel T. 2013. Integration or Fragmentation? Racial Diversity and the American Future. *Demography* 50: 359–91. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Longmore, Monica A., Wendy D. Manning, and Peggy C. Giordano. 2013. Parent-Child Relationships in Adolescence. In *Handbook of Family Theories: A Content-Based Approach*. New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 28–50.
- Love, Hayley, Ross W. May, Ming Cui, and Frank D. Fincham. 2020. Helicopter Parenting, Self-Control, and School Burnout among Emerging Adults. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 29: 327–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Manke, Beth, Brenda L. Seery, Ann C. Crouter, and Susan M. McHale. 1994. The Three Corners of Domestic Labor: Mothers’, Fathers’, and Children’s Weekday and Weekend Housework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56: 657–68. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McGarry, Kathleen, and Robert F. Schoeni. 1997. Transfer Behavior Within the Family: Results From the Asset and Health Dynamics Study. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* 52B: 82–92. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Moretti, Marlene M., and Maya Peled. 2004. Adolescent-Parent Attachment: Bonds That Support Healthy Development. *Paediatrics & Child Health* 9: 551–55.
- Napolitano, Laura. 2015. ‘I’m Not Going to Leave Her High and Dry’: Young Adult Support to Parents during the Transition to Adulthood. *The Sociological Quarterly* 56: 329–54. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Padilla-Walker, Laura M., Daye Son, and Larry J. Nelson. 2021. Profiles of Helicopter Parenting, Parental Warmth, and Psychological Control During Emerging Adulthood. *Emerging Adulthood* 9: 132–44. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

- Pezzella, Frank S., Terence P. Thornberry, and Carolyn A. Smith. 2016. Race Socialization and Parenting Styles: Links to Delinquency for African American and White Adolescents. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 14: 448–67. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Rossi, Alice S., and Peter Henry Rossi. 1990. *Of Human Bonding: Parent-Child Relations across the Life Course*, 1st ed. New York: Routledge.
- Sarkisian, Natalia, and Naomi Gerstel. 2004. Kin Support among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization. *American Sociological Review* 69: 812–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sassler, Sharon, Desiree Ciambrone, and Gaelan Benway. 2008. Are They Really Mama's Boys/Daddy's Girls? The Negotiation of Adulthood upon Returning to the Parental Home. *Sociological Forum* 23: 670–98. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Schoeni, Robert F., and Karen E. Ross. 2005. Material Assistance from Families during the Transition to Adulthood. In *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Series on Mental Health and Development; Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood and Public Policy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 396–416. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Schulenberg, John, and Ingrid Schoon. 2012. The Transition to Adulthood across Time and Space: Overview of Special Section. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies* 3: 164–72. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Semyonov, Moshe, and Noah Lewin-Epstein. 2001. The Impact of Parental Transfers on Living Standards of Married Children. *Social Indicators Research* 54: 115–37. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Serido, Joyce, Ashley B. LeBaron, Lijun Li, Emily Parrott, and Soyeon Shim. 2020. The Lengthening Transition to Adulthood: Financial Parenting and Recentering during the College-to-Career Transition. *Journal of Family Issues* 41: 1626–48. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Shearer, Cindy L., Ann C. Crouter, and Susan M. McHale. 2005. Parents' Perceptions of Changes in Mother-Child and Father-Child Relationships During Adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 20: 662–84. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Silverstein, Merrill, and Vern L. Bengtson. 1997. Intergenerational Solidarity and the Structure of Adult Child-Parent Relationships in American Families. *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 429–60. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Stack, Carol B., and Linda M. Burton. 1993. Kinscripts. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 24: 157–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Starrels, Marjorie E. 1994. Gender Differences in Parent-Child Relations. *Journal of Family Issues* 15: 148–65. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Steele, Ellen H., and Cliff McKinney. 2019. Emerging Adult Psychological Problems and Parenting Style: Moderation by Parent-Child Relationship Quality. *Personality and Individual Differences* 146: 201–8. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Swartz, Teresa Toguchi. 2008. Family Capital and the Invisible Transfer of Privilege: Intergenerational Support and Social Class in Early Adulthood. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development* 2008: 11–24. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Swartz, Teresa Toguchi. 2009. Intergenerational Family Relations in Adulthood: Patterns, Variations, and Implications in the Contemporary United States. *Annual Review of Sociology* 35: 191–212. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Thornton, Arland, Terri L. Orbach, and William G. Axinn. 1995. Parent-Child Relationships During the Transition to Adulthood. *Journal of Family Issues* 16: 538–64. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Udry, J. Richard, Rose Maria Li, and Janet Hendrickson-Smith. 2003. Health and Behavior Risks of Adolescents with Mixed-Race Identity. *American Journal of Public Health* 93: 1865–70. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Umberson, Debra. 1992. Relationships between Adult Children and Their Parents: Psychological Consequences for Both Generations. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 54: 664–74. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Umberson, Debra, and Mieke Beth Thomeer. 2020. Family Matters: Research on Family Ties and Health, 2010 to 2020. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 82: 404–19. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Umberson, Debra, Julie Skalamera Olson, Robert Crosnoe, Hui Liu, Tetyana Pudrovska, and Rachel Donnelly. 2017. Death of Family Members as an Overlooked Source of Racial Disadvantage in the United States. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114: 915–20. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Umberson, Debra, Robert Crosnoe, and Corinne Reczek. 2010. Social Relationships and Health Behavior Across the Life Course. *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 139–57. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- White, Lynn K., and David B. Brinkerhoff. 1981. Children's Work in the Family: Its Significance and Meaning. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 43: 789–98. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Zhang, Xing, and Sharon Sassler. 2019. The Age of Independence, Revisited: Parents and Interracial Union Formation Across the Life Course. *Sociological Forum* 34: 361–85. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.