

Exploring how a parent's education can affect the mental health of their offspring

January 26 2012

Could depression in adulthood be tied to a parent's level of education? A new study led by Amélie Quesnel-Vallée, a medical sociologist from McGill University, suggests this is the case.

Drawing from 29 years of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79), Quesnel-Vallée and co-author Miles Taylor, an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Florida State University, looked at pathways between a parent's education level and their children's education level, household income and depressive symptoms.

The team found that higher levels of parental education meant fewer mental health issues for their adult children. "However, we also found much of that association may be due to the fact that parents with more education tend to have children with more education and better paying jobs themselves," explained Quesnel-Vallée. "What this means is that the whole process of climbing up the social ladder that is rooted in a parent's [education](#) is a crucial pathway for the mental health of adult children."

These findings suggest that policies aimed at increasing educational opportunities for all, regardless of social background, may help break the intergenerational cycle of low socioeconomic status and poor [mental health](#). "Children don't get to choose where they come from. I think we have a responsibility to address health inequalities borne out of the conditions of early childhood," said Quesnel-Vallée.

The paper "Socioeconomic Pathways to Depressive Symptoms in [Adulthood](#): Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979" was recently published in the Journal *Social Science & Medicine*.

Provided by McGill University

Citation: Exploring how a parent's education can affect the mental health of their offspring (2012, January 26) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-01-exploring-parent-affect-mental-health.html>

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