

Behavior problems in preschool and child care centers may be an issue of genes

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A new study suggests that some children may be genetically predisposed to developing behavioral problems in child care and preschool settings.

Previous research has found that some children develop [behavior](#) problems at [child care](#) centers and preschools, despite the benefit of academic gains. It was never known, however, why some youngsters struggle in these settings and others flourish. The new study indicates that some children may be acting out due to poor self-control and temperament problems that they inherited from their parents.

The study's lead author Shannon Lipscomb, an assistant professor of human development and family sciences at Oregon State University-Cascades, said the findings point to the reason that some children develop problem behavior at care centers, despite the best efforts of teachers and caregivers. The results are published online today in the *International Journal of Behavioral Development*.

"Assuming that findings like this are replicated, we can stop worrying so much that all children will develop [behavior problems](#) at center-based care facilities, because it has been a concern," she said. "But some children (with this genetic predisposition) may be better able to manage their behavior in a different setting, in a home or smaller group size."

Researchers from Oregon State University and other institutions collected data in 10 states from 233 families linked through adoption and obtained genetic data from birth parents as well as the children.

They found that birth parents who had high rates of negative emotion and self-control, based on a self-reported temperament scale, were more likely to have children who struggled with behavioral issues such as lack of self-control and anger, in [child care centers](#). They controlled for adoptive parent's characteristics, and still found a modest effect based on the genetic link.

"We aren't recommending that children are genetically tested, but parents and caregivers can assess a child's needs and help them get to a setting that might be more appropriate," Lipscomb said. "This study helps us to explain why some [children](#) struggle so much with large peer groups and heightened social interactions. It may not be a problem with a teacher or parent, but that they are struggling on a biological level."

Provided by Oregon State University

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