

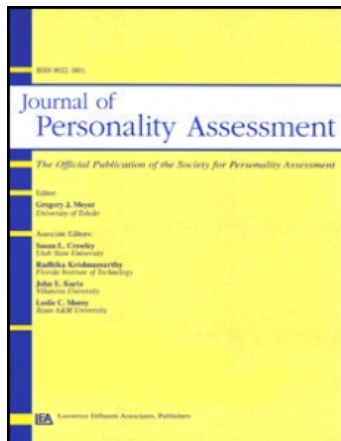
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## Childhood Celebrity, Parental Attachment, and Adult Adjustment: The Young Performers Study

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The associations between celebrity, parental attachment, and adult adjustment were examined among 74 famous, former young performers in television and film. As adults, former young performers whose parents served as their professional managers viewed their mothers as less caring and more overcontrolling than did performers whose parents were not their managers. Other factors affecting the quality of the parent-child relationship included dissatisfaction with money management, poor peer support, the perception that involvement in acting was determined by others, and the specific nature of professional experience. Together, these variables accounted for 59% of the variance in perceived caring and 40% of the variance in perceived autonomy support. The relation could not be attributed to a generalized response bias, as attachment was unrelated to degree of positive thinking. A Celebrity  $\times$  Parental Attachment interaction indicated that the quality of the parent-child relationship moderated the effects of celebrity on adult adjustment: Among participants with good parental attachment, there was no relation between professional experience and adjustment; however, among participants with poor attachment, this relation was strong. Possible implications for parenting child actors and analogous populations of talented children in high-stress arenas are discussed.

Some children are famous, and a substantially greater number of children strive to become famous. Limited research has examined the impact of celebrity on psychological functioning. Most existing studies are theoretical in nature (see Figley, 1995, for a review), and no empirical research has addressed the impact of celebrity during the childhood years on adult adjustment. Historically, research on stressors affecting children has examined the parent-child relationship as a potential moderating influence on the association between life events and adult adjustment. These issues form the focus of this study.

## IMPACT OF LIFE EVENTS ON ADULT ADJUSTMENT

Fame is associated with benefits of widespread admiration, influence, special ability, and unique personal importance. For the celebrity performing artist, there are often concomitant attributions of sex appeal, wealth, and a view of the person as prosocial (Stever, 1991). The unique stressors of celebrity have not been well documented; however, research by Figley (1995) indicated that the greatest liability of celebrity involves the loss of privacy and the public scrutiny associated with intrusiveness of the media. According to Figley, people are frequently more informed about intimate details regarding the lives of celebrities than about those of their own acquaintances. The fascination with celebrities is perhaps most acute with regard to the foibles of their personal lives, which likely represents the most intrusive and distressing aspect of celebrity to the famous person.

There is considerable evidence that important life experiences can influence psychological adjustment (Taylor, 1983), as well as fundamental beliefs about the self and the world (Epstein, 1992). According to Epstein, these experiences form the basic structure of personality. For example, Catlin and Epstein (1992) found that experiences such as a major success, a love relationship, and rejection significantly affected adult perceptions regarding self-esteem, competence, and the degree of meaning in one's life. Moreover, these authors reported that age was inversely associated with the impact of life experiences on adult adjustment.

In the context of psychological adjustment and belief systems, one might anticipate that fame, like other significant life experiences, has an independent and additive effect. The expected direction of this influence, however, could be argued from a variety of perspectives. Were it assumed that the positive aspects of fame predominate, success could be associated with beneficial effects on adjustment (Vinokur & Caplan, 1986; Zautra & Reich, 1981) or a "relativity effect" associated with contrast and habituation to fame (Brickman, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978). Conversely, were it assumed that the negative aspects of fame predominate, the effects of accumulated stress might be observed in increased psychopathology (Ensminger & Celentano, 1988; Hook, Hagglof, & Thernlund, 1995; Turner & Lloyd, 1995) or enhanced coping abilities (e.g., Noyes, 1980; Taylor, 1983).

## ADULT ADJUSTMENT AND THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Major theories of development propose that childhood relationships with parents are the primary influence on adult adjustment (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1988; Erikson, 1950; Freud, 1925/1961; Kohlberg, 1981). This assumption is supported by prospective and retrospective research documenting strong associations between the parent-child relationship and numerous aspects of adult personality

(Becker, Bell, & Billington, 1987; Block, 1971; Fonagy et al., 1996; Heesacker & Neimeyer, 1990; Parker, 1983; Pianta, Egeland, & Adam, 1996; Werner, 1986), the quality of romantic relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987), work orientation (Hazan & Shaver, 1990), and belief systems (Catlin & Epstein, 1992; Hall, Bolen, & Webster, 1994). These studies and others demonstrated that parental warmth and encouragement of autonomy are positively related to adult adjustment (see Jones, 1996). Although life experiences may be important determinants in adult adjustment, the ultimate impact of those experiences is believed to be moderated by the quality of the parent-child relationship. For example, classic psychodynamic theory proffers that secure parent-child relationships buffer the effects of external life events through the development of ego strength (Freud, 1925). Therefore, life experiences produce enduring effects on adult adjustment largely among individuals with histories of poor parenting.

Catlin and Epstein (1992) reported strong relations between perceived quality of childhood relationships with parents, life events, and adult adjustment; however, the nature of the interaction among these variables was unexpected and perplexing: In essence, beliefs about the meaningfulness of life were related to life events among persons with favorable parent-child relationships but not among persons with poor parent-child relationships. It was suggested that poor parenting may be reflected in inconsistent behavior toward the needs of the child, which is internalized as a general belief that the world is an arbitrary place. Thus, events that occur are viewed as random and have little impact on the individual's sense of meaning. In contrast, good parenting fosters a sense of order about the world that is disrupted by unjust or otherwise uncontrollable events.

### CHILD CELEBRITY

Celebrity is a nonnormative childhood experience. Libow (1992) discussed the effect of media inundation of child victims of catastrophic incidents and suggested that even brief celebrity posed negative consequences, such as feelings of powerlessness, loss of trust in the world, and diminished sense of control. The young performer frequently is isolated from mainstream educational settings and peer relationships and is expected to function as a professional in an adult work environment. The successful child actor's life includes the pressures of fame, substantial financial gain, and a schedule replete with set calls and promotional appearances. Few child actors obtain recurring roles; the majority work in single appearances on episodes or commercials (Curry, 1993). Auditions, which greatly outnumber jobs for most child actors, may pose an equal or greater stress (Russell, 1997). The media commonly depicts former young performers as maladjusted, underachieving, and "burned out" (see Black, 1994; Weeks, 1995). Yet, these characterizations are based on anecdotal evidence that is selectively presented for its me-

dia appeal, and no empirical data exist that might substantiate or refute this portrayal. Most anecdotal accounts fail to acknowledge possible benefits of being a young performer.

Although the actual number of famous young performers is small, their behavior and psychosocial adjustment has an impact on persons within the broad reach of the media. Regardless of the moral and ethical considerations of placing children in this situation, young performers face the added and substantial burden of serving as role models and as spokespersons for our larger culture (Ross, 1984). The advent of television syndication has extended the exposure of celebrity roles for decades. Therefore, the impact of the young performer often does not end with their transition into adulthood, whether or not they choose to continue their association with the performing arts. In contrast, the benefits of childhood fame are usually short lived (Black, 1994).

Clearly, there are many ways in which the relationship between a professional young performer and their primary caregiver might differ from those relationships in which the unique demands and stressors of the entertainment industry are absent. Because success is measured in time at work, the parent of a child celebrity is presented with the conflicting demands of facilitating their child's professional versus emotional and interpersonal development. This is a particularly problematic dilemma for parents who serve the dual roles of caregiver and professional manager. The issue of parent managers poses ongoing controversy in the entertainment industry (Curry, 1993; Petersen, 1997; Russell, 1997). Proponents argue that a parent is most invested in the child's well-being, best knows the child's strengths and limitations, and is least likely to act purposefully against the child's interests. An added benefit of parent managers is the elimination of the customary commissions paid to professional managers. Opponents argue that parents lack the necessary expertise in entertainment and financial management, have little perspective on industry-specific dangers to the child, and may exert undue influence on the child's decision-making process.

Controversy regarding parent managers is related to a widespread view that, like other activities in which children engage, involvement in professional acting should be self-determined. Aside from obvious dangers of coercing children to work, there is a commonly held belief that children who proactively choose to be performers perceive the environment as challenging or invigorating, whereas children placed in the environment perceive the same experiences as stressful (see Russell, 1997). This view is consistent with studies demonstrating that the impact of an experience is influenced by a person's primary appraisal of its valence (i.e., whether it is judged as negative or positive) and secondary appraisal of their resources to cope with the experience (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Money is a central issue in the entertainment industry and represents another disruption of the normal parent-child relationship. Unlike most children, many young performers become the primary wage earner for the family, whose lives

then depend on the child's continued success (Black, 1994; Petersen, 1997). Money may become central to the child's self-evaluation. The child may perceive love as conditional on professional success and interpret the management of their earnings as reflecting parental care. Unfortunately, parent managers may be ill prepared to handle the child's income or monitor the practices of a designated financial manager.

The successful child actor typically experiences celebrity as a phenomenon that ends abruptly with the transition to adulthood. In most cases, this is not the result of choice, but of limited opportunities for further work (Russell, 1997). Given the unique stressors of celebrity and the likelihood of traumatic role loss, potential buffering effects afforded the young performer by a healthy parent-child relationship may be particularly crucial to adult adjustment.

## PURPOSE AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study was twofold: First, we hoped to explore some of the issues important to former young performers and examine the veracity of common beliefs that are perpetuated by the media. Second, the unique childhood experiences of these individuals provided an opportunity to evaluate broader theoretical issues about the relative influences of life experiences and parenting style, and their potential relations to adult adjustment.

The first series of analyses examined the hypothesis that the dual role of parent and manager disrupts the view of the parent-child relationship as warm and encouraging of autonomy. Next, we endeavored to examine aspects of the young performer experience that might contribute to current views of the parent-child relationship. These analyses examined whether childhood celebrity had a cumulative and disruptive effect on the quality of the parental relationship. Furthermore, it was expected that satisfaction with money management and the belief that involvement in acting was self-determined held important symbolic meanings associated with perceptions of parental caring. The last analysis examined the competing hypotheses of the major developmental theories and Catlin and Epstein (1992) regarding the moderating influence of the parent-child relationship on the association between life experiences (celebrity) and adult personality adjustment.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sample was comprised of 74 adults (40 men and 34 women) who were employed as actors in the television and film industries between the ages of 6 months

and 18 years. Status as a former child celebrity was determined by consensus of expert peers (see Procedure section) and record of membership in the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) during childhood. Consistent with many union policies, all actors must hold membership in SAG to work professionally on camera. Because television and film acting involves long-term legal and financial dealings (i.e., residuals), SAG keeps complete records of individuals' professional records. Participants were recruited through the combined efforts of an invitation mailing for a national conference sponsored by the SAG, an advocacy organization for young performers, and through "snowballing," a research technique that uses associations and endorsements among individuals who consent to participate.

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 years ( $M = 42.0$ ,  $SD = 11.9$ ). Self-reported racial-ethnic identity reflected the demographic composition of the entertainment industry as a whole, with over 90% of the participants identifying themselves as White, 5.4% African American, and 4.1% multiracial or "other." Detailed characteristics of the work history, family history, and current status of the sample are reported in the Results section.

## Measures

**Parental Bonding Inventory (PBI).** The PBI (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) is a 25-item checklist that measures the quality of the parent-child relationship from the perspective of the child, who may be an adult at the time of testing. Respondents rated each parent on items reflecting behaviors and attitudes during the first 16 years of the child's life. Ratings were made on a 4-point scale, with alternatives ranging from 0 (*very like the parent's behavior*) to 3 (*very unlike the parent's behavior*). The PBI yields two measures of parental behavior validated through factor analytic research (Lopez & Gover, 1993; Parker, 1983): The Care subscale reflects the level of parental warmth, empathy, and intimacy. The Overcontrol subscale reflects the level of parental overprotection, intrusion, and obstruction of the child's independence. Low scores on Overcontrol indicate a perception of the parent as encouraging of individuation and autonomy. The PBI has excellent psychometric properties (see Lopez & Gover, 1993). There is considerable evidence that the PBI reflects accurate versus perceived parental behavior. For example, validation studies showed that adult perceptions of childhood relationships with parents were strongly associated with corroborative data obtained from parents and siblings (MacKinnon, Henderson, & Andrews, 1991; Parker, 1983; Rice & Cummins, 1996); moreover, scores on the PBI are unrelated to measures of social desirability, the degree of "liking" the parent rated, and affective symptoms (MacKinnon, Henderson, Scott, & Duncan-Jones, 1989; Parker, 1983). Coefficient alphas of the subscales for mothers in this study were .92 for Care and .88 for Overcontrol; correlation of the two subscales was  $-.53$ . Alphas of the Care and

Overcontrol scales for fathers were .93 and .91, respectively, and correlation of the subscales for fathers was  $-.56$ .

**Constructive Thinking Inventory (CTI).** The CTI (Epstein & Meier, 1989) was employed as an index of general psychological adjustment (Epstein, 1992). This measure was chosen because of its broad coverage of well-being and coping skills. In addition, the face validity was preferable to other indexes of well-being that focus exclusively on psychopathology (i.e., the Symptom Checklist-90-R; Derogatis, 1983). Constructive thinking is associated with maintenance of emotional and physical well-being, as well as success in love, social relationships, and work; yet, it is not associated with academic achievement or IQ (Epstein, 1989, 1992). At its broadest level, Global Constructive Thinking, the CTI reflects emotional intelligence and general coping skills. The Emotional Coping subscale reflects the domain of coping with one's internal world of thoughts and feelings, whereas the Behavioral Coping subscale reflects coping skills associated with external events. High scores on Emotional Coping reflect the ability to cope with distressing situations without experiencing excessive stress, whereas low scores are associated with neuroticism. High scores on Behavioral Coping reflect the tendency to think in ways that foster effective action (Epstein, 1992). Respondents rate the extent to which each of 108 items applies to them using a 5-point scale that ranges from 0 (*definitely false*) to 4 (*definitely true*). The reliability and validity of the CTI have been established in a variety of adult populations (see Epstein, 1992, 1993). Internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities for the Global, Emotional Coping, and Behavioral Coping scales range from .80 to .90. In addition, Lopez (1996) reported that Parker's PBI was a significant predictor of global constructive thinking among college students.

**Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST).** The MAST (Selzer, 1971) is a 24-item, true-false checklist that measures history of alcoholism. The reliability and validity of this widely used scale have been well established (Maisto, Connors, & Allen, 1995). Internal consistency of the MAST in this sample was .93.

**Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST).** The DAST (Skinner, 1982) is a 28-item checklist that provides an index of the severity of problems related to drug abuse. Respondents indicate which of the true-false items apply to them. Validation studies document that the DAST is related to actual frequency of drug use, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) diagnosis of substance abuse, and other measures of psychopathology (Skinner, 1995). Internal consistency of the scale in this sample was .94.

**Peer Interaction Scale (PIS).** The PIS (Epstein, 1992) measures childhood recollections of acceptance versus rejection by age mates. It consists of 10



items, each rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Internal consistency exceeded .90 in this sample, and extensive research has demonstrated the validity of the measure (Epstein, 1991; Ricks, 1985).

**General Information Questionnaire.** A five-page survey was constructed to obtain demographic data; historical information regarding family, education, and childhood finances; and current social and occupational status. Celebrity was quantified through detailed data regarding employment history as a child actor. Because the nature and environments of work in the entertainment industry differ markedly, four indexes were calculated from vitae checklists, reflecting the numbers of leading and supporting roles in television (episodes and commercials) and film productions.

### Procedure

Names of potential participants were determined by a review of the archives kept by SAG, the union that represents all on-camera performers. The review was conducted by members of the SAG Young Performers Committee, each of whom was a former child celebrity, and the professional staff of SAG in the course of compiling the mailing list for invitations to a conference on the welfare of young performers. SAG worked in cooperation with an advocacy organization for young performers in obtaining the most current addresses for the list. In essence, this survey was linked to this mass mailing of invitations.

Participants received survey packets by mail or personal delivery by the experimenters or peers. Each survey packet included a letter of introduction and request for participation from a well-known peer, as well as a letter from the experimenters detailing the nature of the study and their rights as participants in research. Participants also were provided with the opportunity to contact the principal investigator and peers to address any questions or concerns about the study. Individuals contacted by mail were sent a follow-up letter 2 weeks after the initial mailing, thanking those who had returned the surveys and reminding others of the request to participate.

No direct link was made between the data collected and the identities of participants. Each survey was returned anonymously in a postage-paid envelope. Another postage-paid letter was included in the survey packet to allow participants to indicate that they had returned the survey under separate cover or declined to participate, and to request a summary of the results. Participants living in areas from which a postmark might compromise confidentiality were provided with an additional return envelope. Thus, they could choose to mail the survey first to someone in another geographic area, who would then mail the survey to the research laboratory.

## RESULTS

Prior to analysis, the variables were screened for violations of assumptions associated with grouped and ungrouped multivariate tests. Results of this evaluation led to transformation of five variables to reduce skewness that may inflate alpha (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996): Square-root transformations were conducted on the indexes reflecting leading and supporting roles in television and film, as well as the DAST, which improved normality and linearity. MAST scores were severely skewed and required a logarithmic transformation. For purposes of interpretation, the untransformed values of the variables are included in the tables, whereas the transformed variables were used in the statistical analyses where appropriate. The untransformed scores were used when cutting scores from normative data were applied to the data.

### Response Rate

Approximately 271 surveys were disseminated. Attempts were made to contact 221 potential participants through the initial mass mailing. Of those surveys, 32 were returned for insufficient address and 11 were returned indicating that the person contacted was not a former child actor (e.g., the individual played the role of a child but was older than 18 years at that time, or the individual was currently a child actor who had not reached the age of 18). Approximately 50 additional surveys were disseminated personally. Most of these packets were provided to former young performers and entertainment-industry professionals who volunteered to recruit participants. The number of these packets to reach a potential participant is unknown; however, the specific target of the packet was known. The remainder of these packets were delivered by the principal investigator. Some of the targets of the additional packets disseminated were included in the initial mailing but had not yet indicated that they participated in the study, whereas others had not yet been contacted because their whereabouts were not known at the time of the initial mailing. Response letters indicating the participant had returned the survey under separate cover were received for 71 of the 74 cases. To our knowledge, all of these individuals were included in the original list of names, which indicates that snowballing enhanced participation from the initial pool. However, a conservative estimate of the response rate is 32.5% (74 of approximately 228 legitimate targets).

### Characteristics of the Sample

*Work history.* The participants began their professional acting careers at an average age of 6.7 years ( $SD = 3.6$ ), ranging from 6 months to 15 years of age. The

majority of these individuals were veteran actors: 78.4% had leading roles on television, with a mean number of 108.2 episodes performed as a lead ( $SD = 121.2$ ,  $Mdn = 63$ ). Over 90% had supporting roles on television ( $M = 65.7$ ,  $SD = 85.1$ ,  $Mdn = 26$  appearances). To place these figures in perspective, the number of episodes per television season ranged from 30 to 39 during the decades in which these actors were child celebrities. Nearly half the sample (48.6%) had leading roles in a major film ( $M = 2.9$ ,  $SD = 6.4$ ) and 74.3% had supporting roles in a major film ( $M = 6.0$ ,  $SD = 10.2$ ,  $Mdn = 3$ ). Over 75% were on the cover of a fan magazine, 45.9% were on the cover of a national periodical (e.g., *Time*, *Life*, or *People*), and 58.1% had or have fan clubs in their names.

Over 80% of the participants reported that they were still working actors at age 18; however, their peak year of earnings was at an average age of 14.3 years ( $SD = 3.3$ ). Several participants who reported themselves as "still working at 18" noted that they had not worked regularly for some time prior to age 18; yet, they either erroneously believed that more work would soon come or were unable to acknowledge that their acting careers had ended. Of those individuals who acknowledged that they were no longer working actors at age 18, 67% reported that this was not by choice.

**Childhood family history.** Approximately 45% of the sample perceived their mother to be their primary caregiver, whereas 51% perceived both parents as equally involved in their care. One participant (1.4%) was raised primarily by his father, and 2 women (2.7%) were raised primarily by other relatives. Twelve participants (16.7%) endorsed having someone other than a parent (e.g., another relative, agent, or self) serve as primary caregiver for some period of time during their childhood. The parents of 46% of the sample had divorced; mean age of the participants at the time of the divorce was 9.8 years. Among 67.6% of the sample, at a mean age of 9.9 years, annual income from their earnings as a young performer exceeded that of their parents. Sixty percent of the sample were satisfied with the management of their childhood earnings.

Twenty seven (36.5%) of the participants had a parent who served as their professional manager. In all but two of these cases, mothers were the child's manager. Sixty percent of the sample believed that the choice to become a child actor was theirs, whereas the remaining 40% of the sample perceived their involvement in acting as having been determined initially by others.

**Childhood social and educational history.** Eighty-five percent of the participants had siblings, and 52.7% had siblings who were also child actors. Over half the participants (55.4%) reported that, as children, the majority of their friends were adults; another 16.2% reported having equal numbers of adult and age-mate

friends. Approximately one third of their education through 12th grade was received "on set," which 77.0% rated as "good," "very good," or "excellent" quality. High school diplomas were earned by 85.1%, with 10.8% earning general equivalency diplomas and 4.1% not completing a 12th-grade equivalent. Level of education ranged from 8 to 20 years ( $M = 13.9$ ,  $SD = 2.3$ ). Over half the participants completed at least 2 years of college or technical training, with 41.9% completing a bachelor's degree or equivalent. Five participants (6.8%) obtained advanced degrees and were practicing in the fields of law, academic theater, mental health, and physical medicine.

**Current status.** A majority of the participants (71.6%) reported that their current occupation included involvement in some form of the arts: 54.0% in performing arts (acting, broadcasting, music), and 17.6% in nonperformance aspects of the arts (e.g., directing, producing, composing, teaching, and technical fields such as make-up and properties). For 36 participants (48.6%), work in the arts was the only occupation (or combination of occupations) listed. However, one third of those participants who reported continued involvement in the arts also listed an occupation unrelated to the entertainment industry (e.g., actress-salesperson, actress-manicurist, actor-student, musician-clerk). Income for the year prior to the study ranged from \$0 to \$2 million ( $M = \$52,500$ ).

Adjustment as measured by Global Constructive Thinking  $T$  scores was average ( $M = 55.42$ ,  $SD = 10.48$ ), with 89.2% of the sample scoring in the normal range or higher (i.e.,  $T$  score  $> 40$ ). Mean  $T$  scores for CTI Emotional Coping ( $M = 53.94$ ,  $SD = 11.07$ ) and Behavioral Coping ( $M = 56.67$ ,  $SD = 11.67$ ) were similar. Examination of the DAST indicated that 24.3% of the sample met criteria for lifetime history of substance abuse, whereas MAST scores indicated that 40.5% met criteria for lifetime history of alcohol abuse. Using a cutting score of 2  $SD$  in the pathological direction, normative data for the PBI (Parker, 1983) indicated reports of poor maternal attachment in 11.0% of cases for Caring and 26.0% of cases for Overcontrol. Eleven participants raised primarily in single-parent (mother-only) homes had missing data for the PBI-Father scales. Of those participants able to complete the PBI for their fathers, poor attachment was reported in 6.5% of cases for Caring and 9.8% of cases for Overcontrol.

### Parent Managers: Parental Attachment and Adjustment

To test the hypothesis that participants with parent managers ( $n = 27$ ) perceived the quality of their parent-child relationships as less optimal than did participants with nonmanager parents ( $n = 47$ ), the two groups were compared on the Care and

TABLE 1  
Descriptive Statistics and Results of Univariate ANOVAs Comparing Parent  
Managers and Nonmanagers

Variable	Parent Manager		Nonmanager		Total	$F^a$	$p$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Care–Mother	22.16	11.35	27.56	8.77	25.64	10.03	.027
Overcontrol–Mother	21.67	9.57	16.05	9.27	18.05	9.70	.017
Care–Father <sup>b</sup>	24.14	10.30	23.76	10.06	23.88	10.05	.891
Overcontrol–Father	15.14	9.49	13.71	18.25	14.18	8.62	.456
Global Constructive Thinking ( <i>T</i> Score)	55.31	12.15	55.48	9.53	55.42	10.48	.947
DAST	4.21	5.65	3.27	3.87	3.61	4.57	.953
MAST	7.88	11.86	5.06	8.64	6.08	9.94	.368

Note. ANOVA = analysis of variance; DAST = Drug Abuse Screening Test, ANOVA tested the square root transformation of the scores. MAST = Michigan Alcohol Screening Test, ANOVA tested the logarithmic transformation of the scores.

Overcontrol scales of the PBI. Table 1 presents the results of univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and descriptive statistics for the analyses: Parent-manager mothers were perceived as significantly less caring and more overcontrolling than were nonmanager mothers. Among those participants able to complete the PBI for their fathers, scores on Care and Overcontrol were equivalent for the parent manager and nonmanager groups. Univariate ANOVAs comparing the two groups on Global Constructive Thinking, DAST, and MAST scores indicated that they were also equivalent in psychological adjustment.

Participants with parent managers and those whose parents were not managers were equivalent in age,  $F(1, 72) = .00$ ,  $p = .99$ , and proportions of men and women,  $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = .04$ ,  $p = .84$ . The groups were also equivalent in professional success, as measured by leading and supporting performances in television,  $F(1, 72) = 0.20$ ,  $p = .65$ , and  $F(1, 72) = 0.54$ ,  $p = .46$ , respectively; and leading and supporting roles in film,  $F(1, 72) = 0.35$ ,  $p = .56$ , and  $F(1, 72) = 2.02$ ,  $p = .16$ , respectively. Participants with nonmanager parents were less likely to report that their involvement in acting was determined by people other than themselves,  $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 7.68$ ,  $p = .006$ ; among participants with parent managers, perceptions of self- and other-determined involvement in acting were equivalent,  $\chi^2(1, N = 74) = 0.93$ ,  $p = .34$ . However, perception regarding whether involvement in acting was self- or other-determined did not significantly affect adult adjustment as measured by Global Constructive Thinking,  $F(1, 72) = 3.10$ ,  $p = .08$ , and mean *T* scores for participants with both self-determined ( $M = 57.17$ ,  $SD = 8.57$ ) and other-determined ( $M = 52.86$ ,  $SD = 12.50$ ) involvement were in the normal range.

### Child Celebrity and Parental Attachment

Standard multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine aspects of the child celebrity experience as they relate to views of the parent-child relationship. Thus, a simultaneous solution entered predictor variables as a single block, with each predictor assessed as if it had entered the equation last. The first regression examined PBI scales for mothers, with leading and supporting roles in television and film, satisfaction with money management, choice to become a young performer, and peer support as predictor variables. Multicollinearity diagnostics were within an acceptable range and Mahalanobis distance ( $p < .001$ ) detected no multivariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Table 2 presents the results of the regression analyses. Multiple  $R$  for the regressions differed significantly from 0 at  $p < .001$ , for both the Care and Overcontrol scales,  $F(7, 63) = 12.98$ , and  $F(7, 63) = 5.90$ , respectively. The predictor variables accounted for 59.0% of the variance in Care, and 39.6% of the variance in Overcontrol scores.

Examination of the standardized Beta weights indicated that all predictor variables except (square root of) leading roles in television contributed significantly to the relation with Care scores for mothers. The unique contributions of each predictor to the overall  $R^2$  are reflected in the squared semipartial correla-

TABLE 2  
Standard Multiple Regression of Young Performers' History Variables on  
Parental Care and Overcontrol (Mothers)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficient</i>	<i>sr<sup>2</sup> (Unique)</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R<sup>2</sup></i>
Care-Mother (dependent variable)				
Satisfied with money management	.43	.12	< .001	.59 <sup>a</sup>
Peer relationships	.31	.08	< .001	
Involvement in acting self-determined	.30	.05	.007	
Television leading roles	-.10	.00	.882	
Television supporting roles	-.26	.06	.004	
Film leading roles	.24	.04	.012	
Film supporting roles	.22	.03	.035	
Overcontrol-Mother (dependent variable)				
Satisfied with money management	-.30	.06	.014	.40 <sup>b</sup>
Peer relationships	-.02	.00	.834	
Involvement in acting self-determined	-.38	.08	.004	
Television leading roles	-.03	.00	.740	
Television supporting roles	.09	.01	.369	
Film leading roles	.29	.07	.011	
Film supporting roles	.00	.00	.996	

Note.  $sr^2$  (unique) = squared semipartial correlation.

<sup>a</sup>Unique variability = .38; shared variability = .21. <sup>b</sup>Unique variability = .22; shared variability = .18.

tions ( $sr^2$  in Table 2); these statistics indicate that dissatisfaction with money management and poor peer support accounted for largest portions of the variance. Film leads loaded positively in the equation, indicating that success was associated with an enhanced perception of mother as caring. In contrast, supporting roles in television loaded negatively, indicating that perceived caring by mother decreased as the number of these jobs increased. For Overcontrol scores, dissatisfaction with money management, other-determined involvement in acting, and film leads (loading negatively) contributed significantly to the regression.

To investigate whether a generalized response bias could account for the relations observed in the regression, Pearson correlations were conducted between PBI Care and Overcontrol scales and CTI subscales measuring optimistic thinking styles. Positive Thinking,  $r(73) = -.109$ ; Positive Over-optimism,  $r(73) = .087$ ; and Pollyanna Thinking,  $r(73) = .166$ , were not significantly related to Care scores for mothers. Similarly, none of these CTI subscales were significantly related to Overcontrol scores of mothers,  $r(73) = -.138, .141, \text{ and } .013$ , respectively.

The regression analyses were then conducted on PBI Care and Overcontrol scales for fathers. Multiple  $R$  for the regressions differed significantly from 0 at  $p < .001$  for the Care scale,  $F(7, 52) = 4.12, R^2 = .357$ , and the Overcontrol scale,  $F(7, 52) = 4.06, R^2 = .358$ . Although the general pattern of the results was similar to those observed with PBI for mothers, diminished power due to missing data resulted in few of the variables contributing significantly to the regression equation. No further analyses were conducted for data on fathers.

### Moderating Effects of Parental Attachment on Adjustment

Standard multiple regression was also used to examine the moderating influence of the parent-child relationship on the association between celebrity and adult adjustment, as measured by the CTI Global Constructive Thinking scale. Predictor variables included the PBI Care scale for mothers and a composite index of celebrity, created using Beta weights of the four vita variables (leads and supporting roles in television and film). The regression was significant,  $F(3, 69) = 5.84, p < .001, R^2 = .20$ , and indicated that the main effects of Parental Care and Celebrity and the Care  $\times$  Celebrity interaction all made significant contributions to the regression. However, Mahalanobis distance ( $p < .001$  criterion) identified an outlier. The analysis was rerun without this case, and the result was similar,  $F(3, 68) = 6.54, p < .001, R^2 = .22$ , with Care, Celebrity, and the Care  $\times$  Celebrity interaction making significant contributions to the regression model (Care:  $\beta = -.692, p = .018$ ; Celebrity:  $\beta = 1.29, p < .001$ ; and the Care  $\times$  Celebrity interaction:  $\beta = -1.09, p = .003$ ).

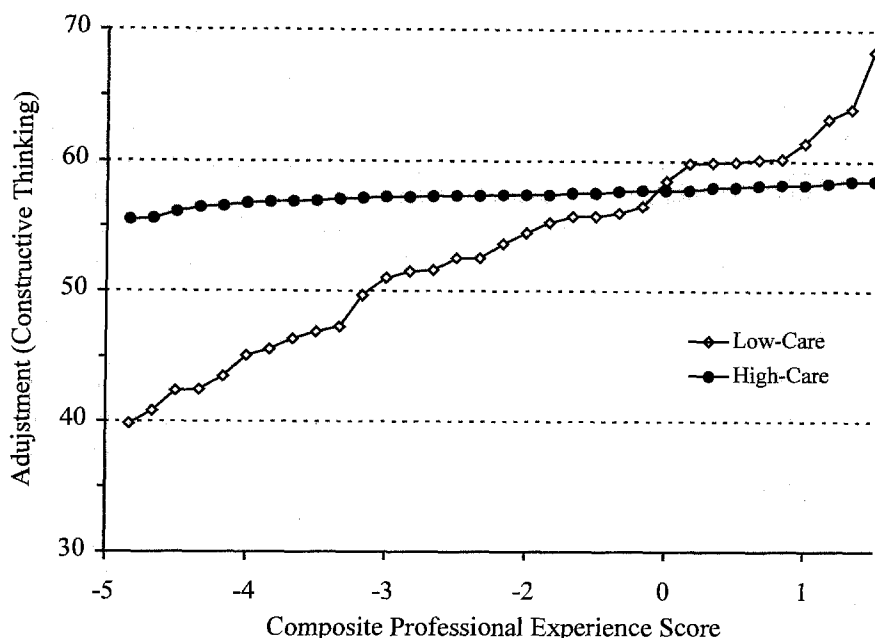


FIGURE 1 Adult adjustment as a function of maternal caring and childhood celebrity experience (composite score).

To explicate the nature of the Care  $\times$  Celebrity interaction, cases were divided into high- and low-care groups using a median split. Regression analyses examining the relation of Global Constructive Thinking to the Celebrity index were conducted separately for each group. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction through a plot of the predicted relation between Constructive Thinking and Celebrity. As can be seen in Figure 1, there was no relation between adjustment and celebrity among the high-care group,  $r(36) = -.10, p = .26$ ; however, there was a strong relation between adjustment and celebrity among the low-care group,  $r(36) = .61, p < .001$ . In contrast, perceived childhood peer support was unrelated to adjustment among both low-care,  $r(36) = .00, M = 31.12, p = .99$ , and high-care participants,  $r(36) = -.05, M = 33.58, p = .76$ .

## DISCUSSION

In contrast to common media portrayals of former child actors, the psychosocial adjustment and coping skills of these participants appears generally positive. Moreover, indexes of emotional and behavioral coping styles were equivalent, suggesting that these individuals maintained a balanced repertoire of coping skills. A troubling finding concerns the indexes of lifetime prevalence for substance (24%)



and alcohol (40%) abuse, which were substantially higher than those observed in the general population (0.2–14%; American Psychiatric Association, 1994). However, these figures do not reflect the number of participants with current drug or alcohol use problems, which likely are smaller numbers. For example, nearly two thirds of those participants meeting the criteria for lifetime history of alcohol abuse endorsed attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

### Celebrity and the Parent–Child Relationship

As adults, former young performers whose parents served as their professional managers viewed their mothers, but not their fathers, as less caring and more overcontrolling than did performers whose parents were not their managers. It is, therefore, noteworthy that mothers served as the child's manager in the majority of cases. It may be that the inherent duties of the manager role introduce conflict to the parent–child relationship; thus, regardless of their true nature, parent managers are subsequently perceived by their children in a less optimal light than are parents who were not managers. Alternatively, it may be that parents who choose to be managers tend to have a more businesslike nature that is accurately perceived by their child as a less warm, take-charge style. The clinical implications for the former case are fairly clear; parents choosing to be managers could be advised that their children may later perceive them in ways that damage the parent–child attachment. The clinical implications of the latter case are not as clear; however, it seems reasonable to suggest that a relationship already challenged by a parent's businesslike style would not benefit from entering an environment that magnifies this type of parent–child interaction. Moreover, these findings suggest that children of parent managers are no more successful in their endeavors than are those children whose parents relinquish control of their careers to an entertainment professional.

Other factors affecting the quality of parental attachment included dissatisfaction with money management, poor peer support, the perception that involvement in acting was determined by others, and the specific nature of professional experience. Together, these variables accounted for 59% of the variance in perceived caring and 40% of the variance in perceived autonomy support of mothers. Moreover, the magnitude of the relation cannot be attributed to a generalized response bias, as attachment was unrelated to degree of positive thinking.

The relation between parental attachment and satisfaction with money management may reflect a retrospective bitterness toward parents who were unsuccessful in protecting their child's earnings. It is understandable that these individuals expected to benefit from the hard work and sacrifices they made during their childhood working years. This would be particularly important for those individuals whose primary identity remained tied to their childhood accomplishments. In addition, they may blame their parents for the absence of a financial nest egg regardless of the circumstances that led to that result. Like the expectation that a parent

will choose a competent physician or secondary caregiver for their child, mismanagement of earnings violates the trust children maintain regarding their parents' responsibilities in protecting their interests.

Although perceived peer support was related to parental attachment, it was unrelated to adult adjustment. This finding is contrary to studies demonstrating that perceived social support during the time of stress minimizes distress (see Cohen & Wills, 1985); however, it is consistent with reported relations between peer support and parental attachment (Jacobson & Wille, 1986). The results may reflect the fact that age mates were not the primary source of social support for a majority of the participants. Thus, although participants generally felt accepted and liked by age mates, this benefit did not appear to translate into a meaningful buffer from stress.

### Celebrity, Parenting History, and Adult Adjustment

The hypotheses that celebrity would have additive effects on the parent-child relationship and adult adjustment were supported; however, the nature of this relation was more complex than was anticipated initially. Specific patterns of work exposure were associated with different effects: Leading roles in films were associated with a beneficial effect, whereas supporting roles on television were associated with a negative effect. In retrospect, the complexity of this relation can be understood in terms of differences in the status and consequences of these professional experiences. First, although it is considered an indelicate topic to discuss openly, there appears to be a hierarchy of status with regard to working medium. In essence, work in films is valued more highly as an art form than is work in television. Second, contrary to the well-known adage that denies a pejorative relation between "small parts" and "small actors," leading roles are understandably valued more than are supporting roles.

Leading roles in film are associated with the highest artistic status and economic return. Film roles offer added benefits of a slower paced and more stable work environment, as well as greater time between the stress of auditions. Although most nonactors perceive even a single television appearance as a great success, among professionals, high numbers of supporting roles denote a low-status career in acting. With the exception of children who work steadily on a television series, the number of supporting roles is related to the number of auditions and the concomitant stress of competition and repeated rejection. In addition, the high numbers of appearances by participants whose vitae were dominated by television supporting roles suggests that excessive exposure to work may be detrimental, regardless of the emotional valence of the experience. In sum, these results are consistent with studies showing that life events have a cumulative impact associated with both beneficial (Vinokur & Caplan, 1986; Zautra & Reich, 1981) and adverse (Hook et al., 1995; Turner & Lloyd, 1995) effects. Consistent with reports that negative events have a greater impact than do positive events (Myers, Lindenthal, & Pepper, 1975), the relative influ-

ence of supporting roles in television was somewhat greater than that of leading roles in film. Thoits (1986) suggested that this pattern reflects the fact that only adverse events threaten self-esteem, self-efficacy, and identity.

As predicted by the major theories of child development, the quality of the parent-child relationship moderated the effects of celebrity on adult adjustment. Among individuals with histories of good parenting, there was no relation between professional experience and adjustment; however, among individuals with poor parenting histories, this relation was strong. Thus, one manner for parents to reduce the risk of adverse consequences associated with child celebrity is to provide their children with warmth and encourage the development of their independence. Unlike ensuring professional success, this option is realistically within the control of the parent.

These findings suggest that a healthy parental attachment may be fostered even in the chaotic environment of the entertainment industry. Furthermore, a healthy parent-child relationship is an essential component in buffering the negative effects of the professional environment. Although recommendations should await prospective study, the results suggest that, in addition to caring and encouragement of autonomy, parents should ensure their child feels that involvement in acting is the child's decision, attempt to facilitate a normal peer network, and strongly consider retaining the services of competent professionals to manage their child's career and earnings. To help maintain normal parent-child boundaries and avoid bitterness over monetary mismanagement, it may be helpful to view the child's earnings as a manner to cover the costs of the activity and as a future resource for the child, as opposed to "family income."

It is important to acknowledge that the dilemma of parent managers is exacerbated by laws regulating the employment of children. The Fair Labor Standards Act (1938) exempts children employed in the entertainment industry; further, many state labor codes require that children are accompanied by their guardian while at the workplace (West, 1996a). In essence, parents are made to attend their child in the workplace without compensation, and children have no legal entitlement to their earnings (West, 1996b). Adding to the conflict are the customary commissions of industry professionals: 15% of earnings for managers and 10% for agents and publicists, each of whose services are required by the work environment. To assume these roles may seem in the child's best financial interest; yet, the findings of this study suggest the optimal solution may be for parents to accompany their children on location assuming only the role of a caring and supportive guardian.

### Limitations and Implications for Other Exceptional Children

Clearly, attempts to generalize beyond the population studied should be made with caution. The limitations of retrospective data in drawing causal conclusions are well established, and can be interpreted conservatively as perceived reality about past ex-

periences versus the actual course of events (Catlin & Epstein, 1992). With this cautious perspective in mind, the analogy between the experience of these former child actors and children in other high-stress arenas, such as athletics, giftedness programs, and beauty pageants, merits some consideration. Throughout this article, we have carefully avoided use of the term *stage mother* in reference to parent managers. The term has a history of pejorative connotation that unfairly stigmatizes parents who accompany and support their child's endeavors. In some ways, this study validates this classic characterization of a parent who exploits a talented child, as well as the consequences associated with that scenario. Yet, the results also contradict this stereotype, in finding that the majority of these exceptional participants are well-adjusted adults, most of whom maintain positive attachments to their parents.

In any competitive field, only a few individuals can occupy the elite positions. Parents of talented children surely realize that they cannot guarantee their child's success; therefore, it may be helpful to be aware of the risks involved in excessive exposure to low-status positions, rejections, or failure. No doubt, many children initiate and proactively seek to maintain their involvement in an intensive activity such as acting, regardless of the stress. Our findings confirm this notion, as more than half the respondents believed their involvement in acting was self-determined. Together, these findings highlight the delicate balance parents must strive to achieve between encouraging autonomy and protecting children from their natural inclination to overindulge in pleasant activities.

## Conclusion

Celebrity children respond to life stress as do other children. There is no paradoxical nature to these children; the talent that placed them in the limelight does not include special resistance to stress, and they do not specially thrive on pressure and competition. The notion that they are somehow immune to pressure, toughened by habituation, or psychologically compensated by the benefits of their success may make the phenomenon of child celebrity more palatable to the public; however, these findings indicate otherwise. Conversely, these findings also indicate that the environment of the entertainment industry is not necessarily toxic to normal development. Instead, the results support the well-established theory that good parenting serves as a buffer for life stress. These individuals, like others, can be inoculated to stress as children by parents who are warm, truly empathic, and encouraging of their autonomy within sensible limits.

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