

Adult Children's Needs and Relationship Quality with Their Parents by Coresidence Status

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Introduction

There is an increasing number of adult offspring (age 18 and older), who are living with their parents for longer periods of time (Qian, 2012). The purpose of this study is to examine differences in offspring characteristics (e.g., needs and relationship qualities with parents) by coresidence status.

- **Needs of offspring (age, student status, and life problems):** Younger adults sometimes return to their parents' homes after leaving the "nest." Offspring who are seeking a college degree are most likely to reside with their parents (Fry, 2013). Also, adult offspring experiencing problems in their life are more likely to depend on their parents, which may lead to coresidence with their parents.
- **Relationship quality:** Differences in relationship quality with parents may exist between coresident and non-coresident adult offspring, with coresidence offspring having poorer quality relationships. These differences may reflect problems that lead to coresidence (e.g., divorce, job loss) or may arise from day-to-day interactions that generate tensions (Furstenberg, 2010).

Hypotheses

- **H1: Coresident** offspring may have **more needs** for parents; they are younger, students, and/or with more problems than non-coresident offspring.
- **H2: Coresident** offspring may have **weaker relationships** (i.e., lower levels of positive relationship quality and higher levels of negative relationship quality) with their parents, compared to non-coresident offspring.

Data and Samples

This study uses data from the "Family Exchanges Study," which includes middle-aged parents from the Philadelphia Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area in 2008 (Fingerman et al., 2011).

- Parents ($N = 633$) reported on 1,384 adult-offspring in phone interviews.
- Table 1 describes characteristics of parents and their adult offspring (aged 18+).

Table 1
Parent and Offspring Characteristics from Family Exchanges Study Data

Characteristics	Parent (N = 663)		Offspring (N = 1,384)	
	M (SD)	Range	M (SD)	Range
Age	50.70 (4.99)	40-61	25.19 (5.80)	18-46
Female	47.6%	—	48.0%	—
Racial/ethnic minority	36.8%	—	—	—
Education (years)	14.18 (2.02)	9-17	13.73 (1.92)	1-17
Married/remarried	69.8%	—	—	—
Number of children (aged 18+)	2.19 (1.24)	1-10	—	—
Working (full- or part-time)	75.6%	—	69.1%	—
Student	—	—	19.4%	—
Coresident	—	—	23.6%	—
Sum of problems	—	—	0.91 (1.20)	0-6
Positive relationship quality	—	—	4.02 (0.90)	1-5
Negative relationship quality	—	—	2.05 (0.87)	1-5

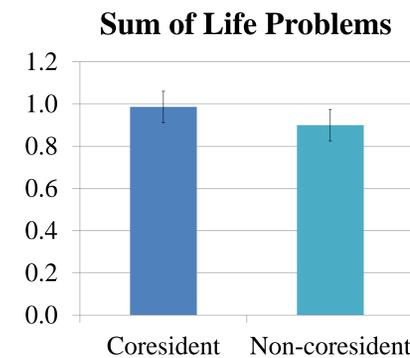
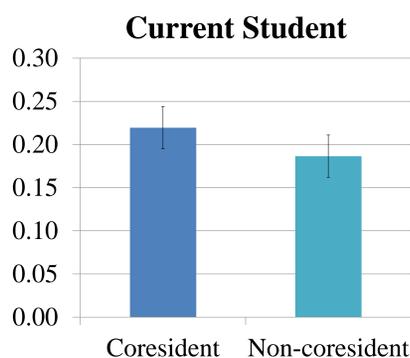
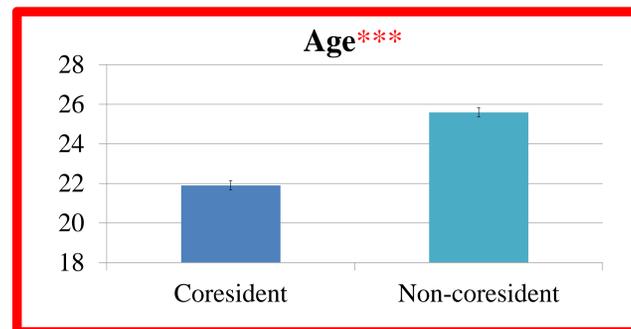
Measures

- **Offspring coresidence:** Parents described adult offspring as either living in the same household (*coresident*) or as living away from home (*non-coresident*).
- **Offspring needs**
 - ✓ **Age:** Parents reported the age of each adult offspring in their family.
 - ✓ **Student status:** Parents indicated whether each adult offspring is currently a student or not.
 - ✓ **Life problems:** Parents provided the information about offspring problems. The problems include nine items (*developmental delays/disability/physical disability, health problems/injury, emotional/psychological problems, drinking/drug problems, financial problems, trouble with law/police, victim of a crime, divorce or relationship problems*). We calculated the sum of the items for offspring life problems.
- **Offspring relationship quality with parents:** Parents rated four items assessing general relationship quality between parent-child, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). The two items represent **positive relationship quality** (e.g., love and understanding) and the other two items represent **negative relationship quality** (e.g., criticizes and demands).

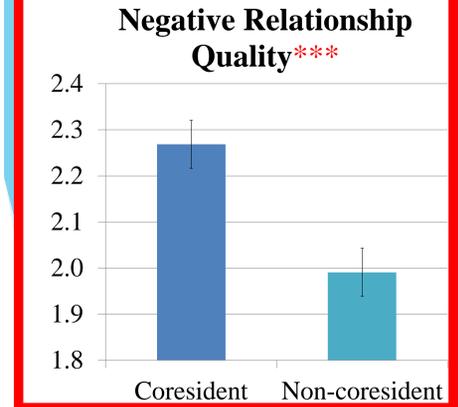
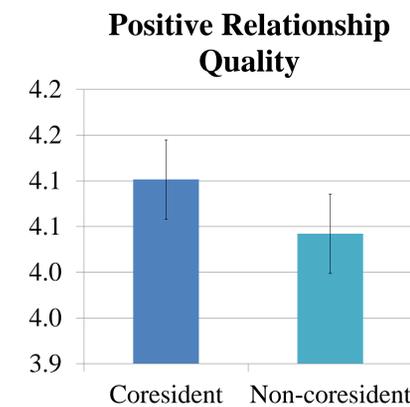
Analysis Methods

- We conducted a series of **independent samples t-test** to compare two groups (i.e., coresident vs. non-coresident offspring).
- The outcome variables are offspring's (1) age, (2) student status, (3) sum of problems, (4) positive relationship quality, and (5) negative relationship quality.

Results



Results (cont.)



- We found significant differences in **offspring age** ($t = -12.31, p < .001$) and **negative relationship quality with parents** ($t = 4.74, p < .001$). Thus, coresident offspring are younger than non-coresident offspring. Also, coresident offspring showed higher levels of negative relationship quality than non-coresident offspring.
- We did not find significant differences in student status, sum of life problems, and positive relationship quality by coresidence.

Discussion

- **Offspring Needs**
 - As hypothesized, we found that young age contributes to residency; however, age is a bit older than expected (young students: 18-22 yrs. old).
 - There was no difference in offspring's student status by coresidence – However, offspring who delayed/paused their education and our slightly older offspring sample may affect the non-significant result.
 - Although we did not find significant differences in the number of offspring problems by coresidence, but life problems may still characterize coresident offspring. It may matter more how well offspring cope with problems, rather than the amount of problems.
- **Relationship Quality with Parents**
 - There was no significant difference in the positive relationship quality by coresidence – parents will consistently love and care for their children.
 - A higher negative relationship quality amongst coresident offspring may be a result of dealing with a problem, or tensions that arise from daily interactions.
- **Conclusion**
 - Age and negative relationship quality can moderately characterize an offspring's coresidence. We need to use additional measures (i.e., cope, daily interactions) to better assess offspring characteristics by coresidence status.

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