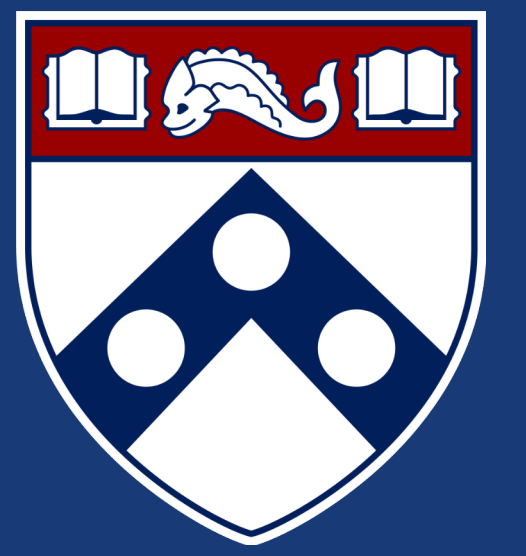


The Relationship Between Parental Emotion Scaffolding and Child Emotion Recognition and Expression



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INTRODUCTION

- Emotion recognition and expression skills are critical for healthy socioemotional functioning
- Deficits in emotion recognition and expression can lead to long-term negative outcomes, especially in children with callous-unemotional (CU) traits (i.e. decreased prosociality, empathy, guilt, and emotional sensitivity)
- A key part of how children learn emotion skills is through parental scaffolding (i.e. guided learning)
- Little is known about the relationship between specific components of parental scaffolding speech and child emotion recognition and expression, especially in children with CU traits

AIMS

1. Investigate whether higher parental scaffolding scores are associated with higher child emotion recognition
2. Investigate whether child emotion recognition performance in relation to parental scaffolding differs based on child CU traits
3. Investigate whether higher parental scaffolding scores are associated with higher child emotion expression
4. Investigate whether child emotion expression performance in relation to parental scaffolding differs based on child CU traits

METHODS

- $N=32$; $M_{age}=5.61$ years, 96.67% female
- Conversation during a wordless picture book task was coded to measure three aspects of parent emotion scaffolding: proportion of emotion production (vs. total utterances); proportion of emotion elicitation; proportion of instances where attention was directed to a character, their face, or their feelings
- Emotion recognition was measured as child's ability to correctly identify calm, fear, and sad music; emotion expression was measured as the number of emotion words children freely produced in 30 seconds
- Parent questionnaire used to measure CU traits (e.g. "Seems very cold and uncaring")



Figure 1: "The Family Picnic" picture book task, by: E. B. Greif

Emotionally-salient conversations between parents and children may be an intervention point to target deficits in child emotion recognition and expression

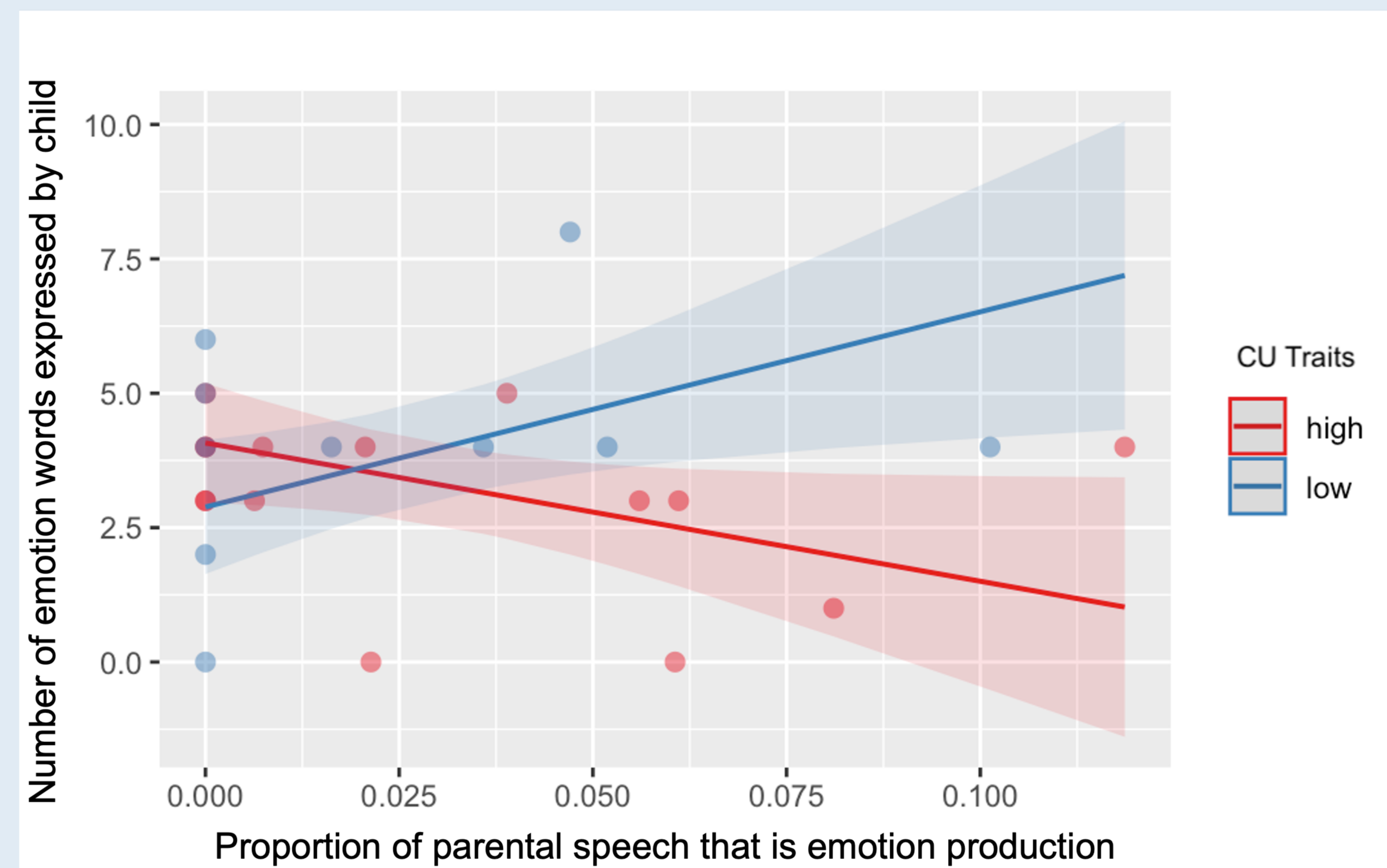


Figure 2: The relationship between parental emotion production and child emotion expression is significantly more positive for children with low CU traits

RESULTS

- Aim 1: Parent Scaffolding & Child Emotion Recognition**
- While not significant, the relationship between parental production and emotion recognition is in the positive direction ($b=.42, p=.69$), whereas the relationships elicitation ($b=-.70, p=.30$) and attention direction ($b=-.34, p=.68$) are in the negative direction
- Aim 2: Parent Scaffolding & Child Emotion Recognition & CU Traits**
- The interactions between CU traits and the parental scaffolding variables were not significant for emotion recognition ($ps > .2$)
- Aim 3: Parent Scaffolding & Child Emotion Expression**
- While not significant, the relationship between parental production and emotion expression ($b=.50, p=.68$) and attention direction and emotion expression is in the positive direction ($b=.12, p=.90$), whereas the relationship elicitation ($b=-.58, p=.46$) is in the negative direction
- Aim 4: Parent Scaffolding & Child Emotion Expression & CU Traits**
- The relationship between parental emotion speech production and child emotion expression was relatively more positive for children low in CU traits ($b=.06, t=2.93, p=.01$).
 - The interactions between CU traits and parental elicitation and attention direction were not significant for emotion expression ($ps > .3$)

DISCUSSION

- Important implications because a better understanding of the dynamics of emotional conversations between parents and children could lead to more targeted interventions for emotional deficiencies
- Limitations included a small sample size, low reliability, and only studying the parental speech (not taking into account the interactions between parent and child)
- Future research should increase the sample size to investigate whether these relationships persist, as well as investigate other components to parental scaffolding speech

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

