

Sample Correlational Study

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"Like Father Like Son:" The Relationship Between Fathers
in Scientific Professions and Sons With Autism ← *title of article*

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to determine if there was a relationship between boys diagnosed with autism and having fathers in scientific professions. Surveys were sent to fathers in scientific professions and fathers in nonscientific professions to ascertain the number in each group who reported having a son diagnosed with autism. Results revealed that fathers in scientific professions were significantly more likely to have sons diagnosed with autism than fathers in nonscientific professions. The findings of the study are discussed in terms of their implications for future research.

Introduction

previous research cited

It is well established that significantly more boys are diagnosed with autism than girls, with ratios consistently reported at four boys to every one girl (Billings, Dweck, Klinger, & Newman, 2018). There is less evidence that the transmission of the disorder follows the path from father to son. While anecdotal reports have suggested higher rates of certain "scientific" traits and tendencies in fathers of boys diagnosed with autism than in fathers of typical boys (Phillips, 2019; Ziegler, 2015), to date, no research studies have been conducted to determine if certain traits in fathers are associated with having a son diagnosed with autism. [The present study sought to determine if fathers in scientific professions were more likely to have sons diagnosed with autism than fathers in nonscientific professions.]

previous research cited

Research Question

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 498 men in scientific professions (75% Caucasian, 10% African American, 15% Asian) and 658 men in nonscientific professions (60% Caucasian, 15% African American, 10% Asian, and 15% Hispanic). Subjects in both groups were between the ages of 22 and 65; mean age was 42 and 38, respectively.

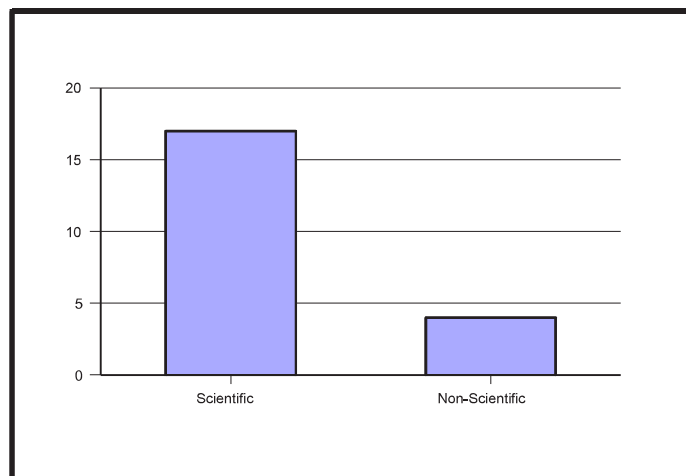
Procedure

Surveys were mailed to the homes of 2,000 men selected at random from scientific corporations and 2,000 men randomly selected from nonscientific organizations. Postage-paid, return envelopes were included with the surveys to encourage their return. The surveys were designed to collect basic demographic data (e.g., age, profession, education) as well as “family information.” Several questions were asked about the subjects’ family members, including a question that asked: “Have any of your children been diagnosed with any of the following disorders: autism, cerebral palsy, spina bifida.” Respondents were asked to give the age and gender of the child diagnosed with a disorder, if applicable. A total of 498 men in scientific professions and 658 men in nonscientific professions returned completed surveys.

Results

Percentage scores were calculated for both groups. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of men in scientific professions with sons diagnosed with autism was significantly higher than the percentage of men in nonscientific professions.

Figure 1. Percentage of men with sons diagnosed with autism in scientific and nonscientific professions.



Discussion

The present study sought to determine if fathers in scientific professions were more likely to have sons diagnosed with autism than fathers in nonscientific professions. The results of a survey sent to a random sample of men in scientific and nonscientific professions revealed a significant between-group difference in the percentage of fathers with sons diagnosed with autism.

The results of this study lend support to anecdotal reports of higher rates of certain “scientific” traits and tendencies in fathers of boys diagnosed with autism than in fathers of typical boys (Phillips, 2019; Ziegler, 2015). However, although the results of this study were significant, they only show a relationship between paternal “scientific” characteristics and sons with autism. Future research is needed to provide more sound scientific evidence of this relationship.