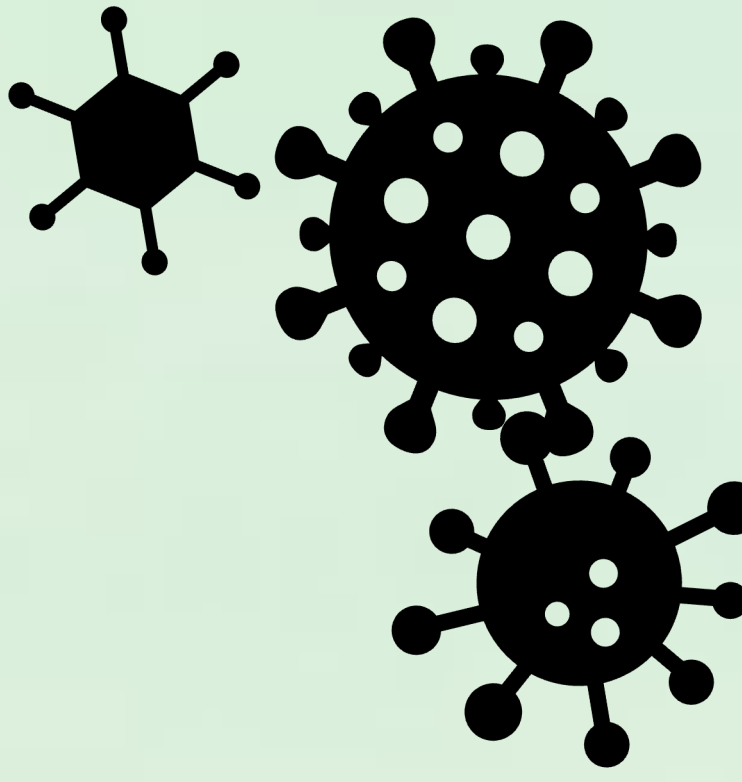


How childhood experiences effect fears and phobias later in life.

Ryan Graves

Research Question

How do early learning experiences in one's childhood contribute to the development of specific phobias later in life?



Introduction

Fears and phobias have always interested me for as long as I can remember. I've always wondered why certain people are afraid of specific things, and why many people all come to share similar fears, phobias, or fear-based mental issues like anxiety. My project aims to show how early childhood experiences play a role in developing fears and phobias. I will dive into experiences like parenting styles, personal encounters, learning through observation, and receiving information and how all these shape a person's fears and phobias.

Method

My study is a systematic review that uses scholarly articles from the EFSC database as well as case studies from people experiencing specific fears and phobias firsthand. I researched specific data using key variables relating to experiences early in life that are correlated to the formation of specific fears and phobias.

Discussion

Fears and Phobias that people grow to develop hold a surprising amount of connections to experiences people go through early in life. I found that fears are often attributed to behaviors of the parents when raising children, when a parent is deathly afraid of spiders, the child will most likely grow to be afraid of spiders as well. If a parent is heavy on harsh discipline, the child can grow to have a variety of fears including the fear to express themselves, conflict, authority, mistakes, and many more. On the other side, children that grow up to have little to no parent input can also develop specific fears and phobias. Children that grow up in these conditions can grow to fear abandonment and having to depend on other people, they can grow to fear their emotions, as well as the development of social anxiety. Fears, as well as phobias to an extent are a necessity for us to live, they keep us safe through acknowledgement of danger as well as creating learning experiences which can lead to the avoidance of dangerous situations all together. It's important to know where one's fears originate from as it can help the mental healing process if said fears are irrational. A limitation that I couldn't find much about is research done on fears in children that grew up with "perfect" lives. It's easy for research to be done on fears with negative backgrounds as the ones dealing with said fears often look for help, the same cannot be said for the children that grew up with so called "perfect" lives. I would have liked to read more about the fears developed by these children, but oh well. If I had to guess, I would say are found through personal one-off experiences as well as the environments, much like the research I found on the others.



Results

- Negative childhood experiences (injury, bullying)
- Parenting styles(overprotective, Authoritarian, Neglectful/Uninvolved, Permissive.
- Socioeconomic impacts.
- Modeling of behaviors.
- Fear-based discipline
- Over-rescuing (when a child is unable to solve issues on their own due to interviewing of adults "fixing" problems.
- Lack of education on problem solving skills, communication, and coping strategies.
- Critical thinking skills to identify perceived danger vs actual danger.

Common Fears and Phobias

- Acrophobia (fear of heights)
- Astraphobia (fear of thunder and lightning)
- Claustrophobia (fear of being enclosed in an area that escape may be difficult, or in small spaces)
- Mysophobia (fear of germs)
- Aerophobia (fear of flying)
- Atychiphobia (fear of failure)
- Anthropophobia (fear of people or social situations)
- Glossophobia (fear of public speaking)

References

- Bandelow, B et al. "Early Traumatic Life Events, Parental Rearing Styles, Family History of Mental Disorders, and Birth Risk Factors in Patients with Social Anxiety Disorder." *European archives of psychiatry and clinical neuroscience*. 254.6 (2004): 397-405. Web.
- Gullone, E. (2000). The development of normal fear: A century of research. *Clinical psychology review*, 20(4), 429-451.
- JAIN, P. (2018). A Step towards Ending Fear Based Education. (*Journal for Studies-ISSN-2348-3652*).
- Magee, W. J. (1999). Effects of negative life experiences on phobia onset. *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 34(7), 343-351. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s001270050154>
- Meltzer, H., Vostanis, P., Dogra, N., Doos, L., Ford, T., & Goodman, R. (2009). Children's specific fears. *Child: Care, Health & Development*, 35(6), 781-789. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.2008.00908.x>
- Nimphy, C. A., Venetikidi, M., Elzinga, B., van der Does, W., & Aktar, E. (2023). Parent to Offspring Fear Transmission via Modeling in Early Life: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, 26(3), 751-772. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-023-00448-1>
- Ollendick, T. H., Langley, A. K., Jones, R. T., & Kephart, C. (2001). Fear in children and adolescents: relations with negative life events, attributional style, and avoidant coping. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 42(8), 1029-1034.
- Salmela, M., Salanter, S., & Aronen, E. T. (2010). Coping with hospital-related fears: experiences of pre-school-aged children. *Journal of Advanced Nursing (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.)*, 66(6), 1222-1231. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2010.05287.x>

