

The Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative: Impacts on Positive Parenting

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Abstract

This study examines data collected from 9,444 parents who participated in parenting education series as part of the Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative from 2010-2016. Paired *t*-tests found that parents across groups reported significant increases in positive parenting with differential effects found for subgroups.

Introduction

Sensitive and responsive caregiving is critical for children’s healthy development¹. Research demonstrates that participation in parenting education is associated with significant increases in positive parenting practices, health-promoting behaviors, children’s cognitive and social development, and child and parent mental^{2,3,4}. Parenting education opportunities, however, have been limited in terms of funding and accessibility.

The Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative (OPEC) was developed as a partnership between four philanthropic foundations (The Oregon Community Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, and The Collins Foundation) and Oregon State University to increase awareness of and universal access to evidence-based parenting education for families with young children (prenatal to age six).



Methods

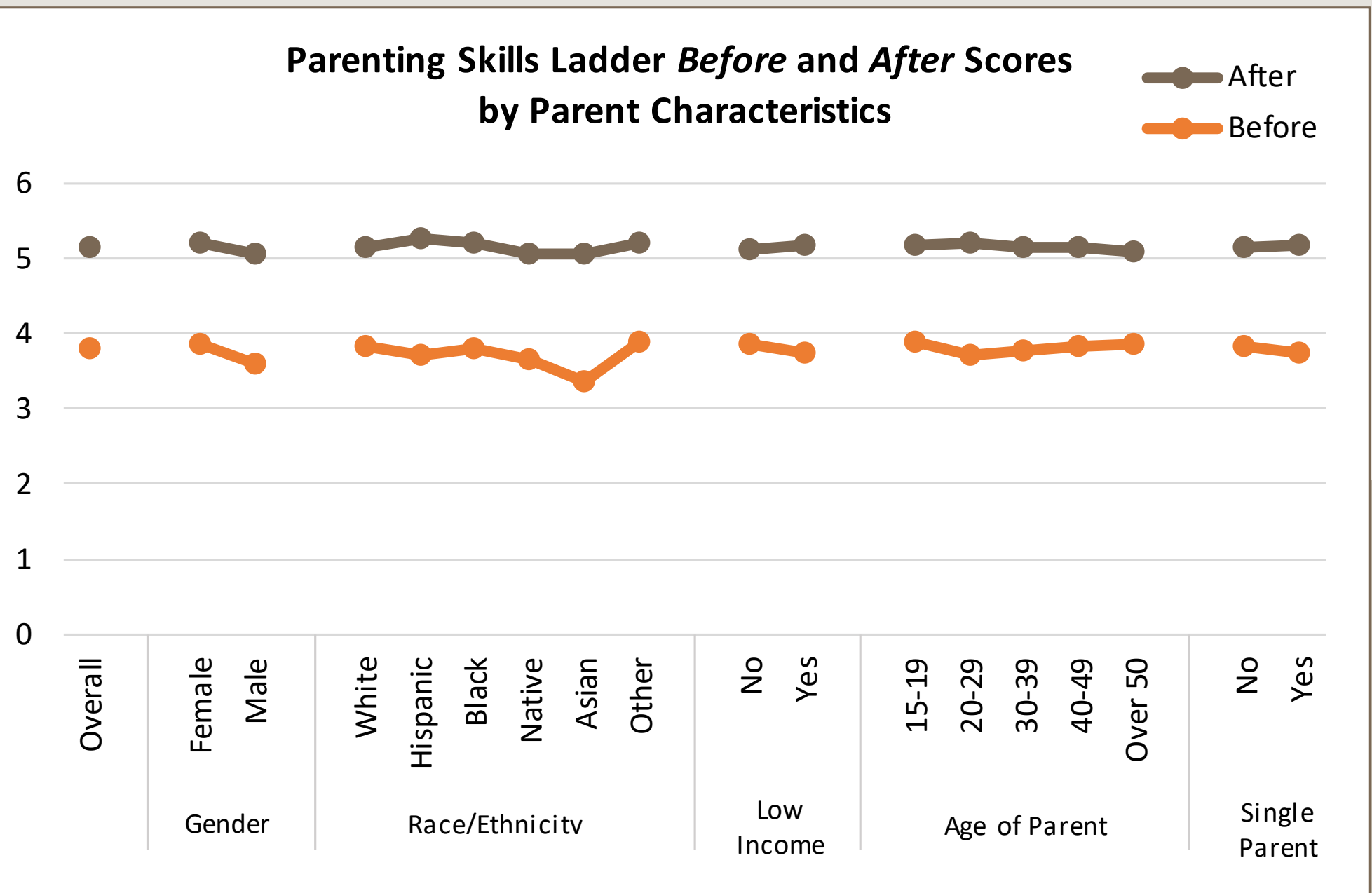
Participants include 9,444 parents who completed a parenting education series that was part of the OPEC initiative, with 82% of the series using evidence-based curricula. Positive parenting was assessed using the Parenting Skills Ladder (PSL). The PSL is a pre-post retrospective measure, including 12 items focused on parenting beliefs, behaviors, and skills. Each item on the PSL is rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 0=low to 6=high. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that PSL items denote one factor with an Eigenvalue of 5.07, factors loadings ranging from .53-.72, and strong reliability, $\alpha=.89$. A composite score representing positive parenting was created by averaging participant scores across the 12 items.

Research Question 1

Do participants report change in positive parenting following participation in a parenting education series?

Paired *t*-tests showed a statistically significant increase in positive parenting from *before* to *after* for the total sample ($t(9,443)=145.64, p<.000$) (see Table 1).

Table 1



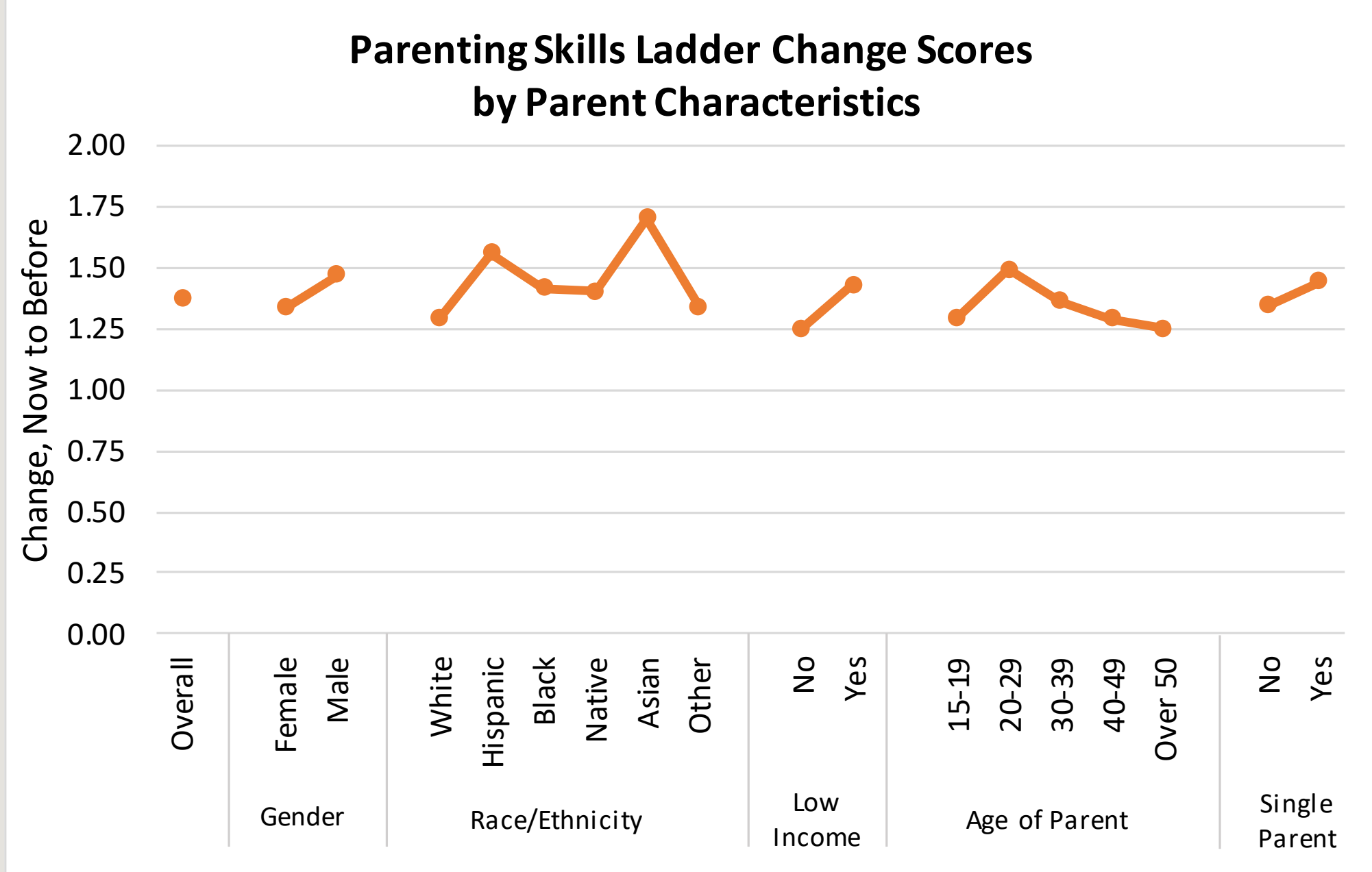
Research Question 2

Do participant/family characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, income level, parent age) predict differential effects?

T-tests revealed several statistically significant differences in change scores between groups (see Table 2). **Fathers** ($M=1.47$) had significantly greater gains in positive parenting than mothers ($M=1.34$; $t(8,899)=-6.25, p<.001$). **Parents with a low-income status** also had significantly greater gains ($M=1.43$) than those who did not meet the low-income criteria ($M=1.25$; $t(9,405)=-8.78, p<.001$). Parents who were **single parents** had greater gains ($M=1.44$) than those who were parenting with a partner ($M=1.35$; $t(8,519) = -4.46, p<.001$).

ANOVAs indicated statistically significant differences between parents of different races ($F(5, 8680)=33.17, p<.001$). **Asian parents** ($M=1.70$) reported significantly greater gains than parents who were White, Black/African American, or had reported their race/ethnicity as “Other” ($M=1.29, 1.42, 1.34$ respectively). **Hispanic/Latino parents** ($M=1.56$) reported significantly greater gains than White parents and parents who reported “other” as their race/ethnicity. In addition, **parents in their 20s** ($M=1.49$) reported larger gains in their positive parenting score than any other age group ($M=1.25-1.36$) ($F(4, 8792)=17.66, p<.001$).

Table 2



Conclusions

Results suggest that participation in parenting education programs resulted in significant differences in parent perceptions of positive parenting using a retrospective measure. Although there were significant differences in effect sizes reported based on gender, parenting method, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, parents in all groups reported gains in positive parenting practices. These results underscore the importance of increasing access to parenting education opportunities and using curricula that are responsive to community and cultural needs.

References

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