



# Familial Relationships effects on Endorsement of Traditional Romantic Relationship Events

Erica Anderson<sup>1</sup>, Kendall Rinewalt<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Cynthia Hall, Ph.D.  
Slippery Rock University



## Introduction

A romantic relationship is a broad term which encompasses a mutual connection between two people that goes beyond the bounds of friendship. Often, our mindset and outlook on romantic relationships can be influenced at an early age by familial experiences, both “functional” and “dysfunctional”.

If a child is presented with parental warmth from both the mother and father figures in their life, there is a positive correlation with romantic satisfaction in young adulthood (Ni Jian, 2022). However, the opposite also holds true, as dysfunctional family relationships can negatively affect someone’s romantic relationships later in life, and their views on love as a whole (Ni Jian, 2022; Zagefka et al., 2021).

People that experienced dysfunctional familial relationships in their childhood need to be aware of the factors that may affect their relationship ideals in order to better understand themselves and their endorsements of love. A well-rounded grasp of factors from our childhood that shape us can work to uphold and foster healthier, sustainable relationships in adulthood.

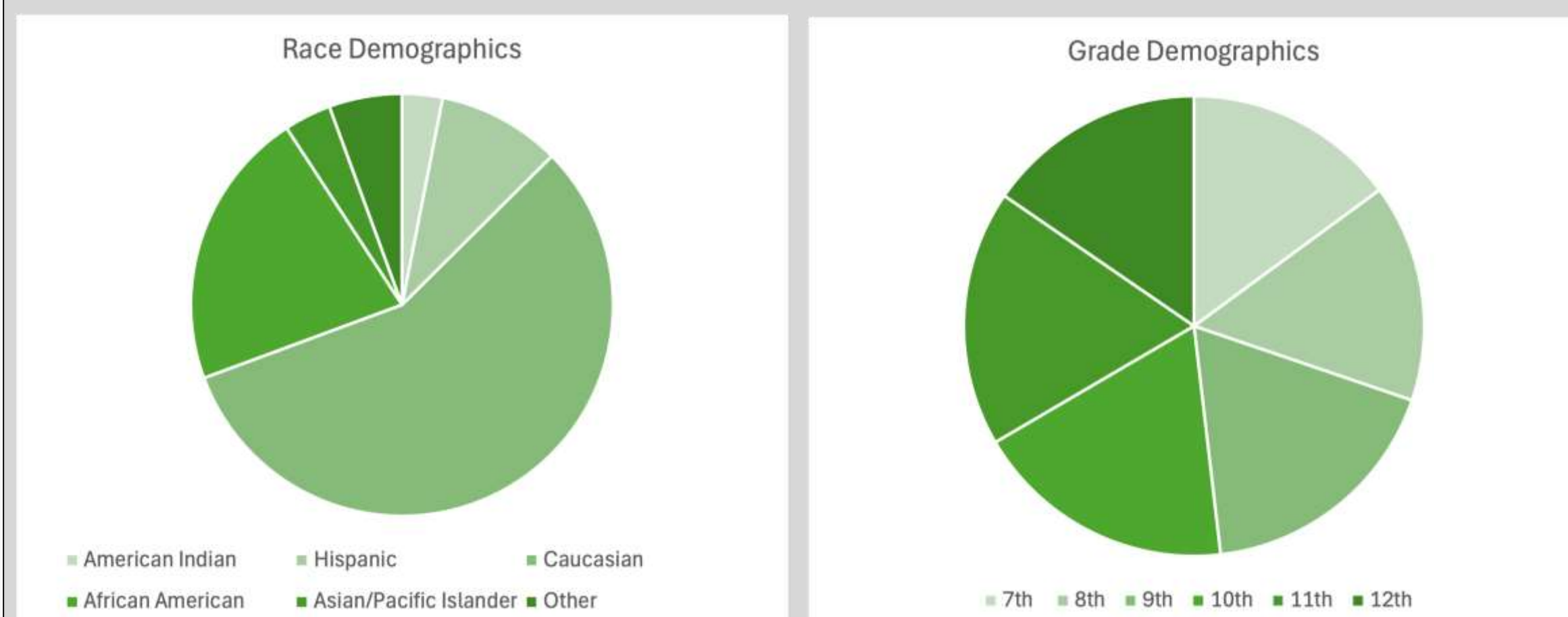
## Method

### Sample

6504 adolescents in 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, ages ranging from 12-21 years, who participated in the first wave of The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) were included in the public access sample.

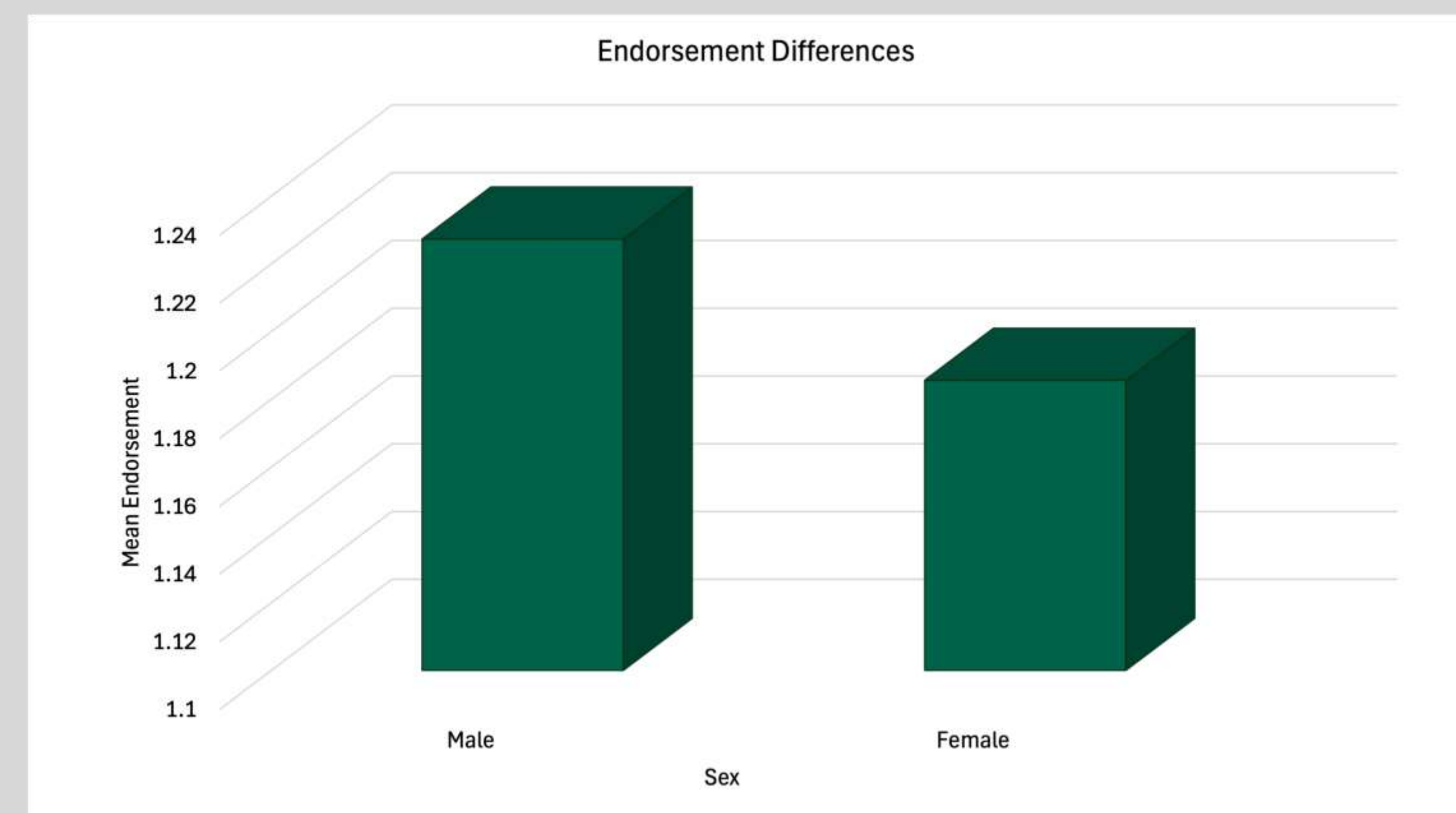
### Demographics of Sample

With 48% of participants being male and 52% being female, below are the ranges of different races and grades involved:



## Results

A series of preliminary analyses concluded a significant difference between sex and endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events,  $F(1, 6501) = 3.977, p = .046$ . Participants whose sex was male report higher endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events. The analyses on age were not significant. Analyses regarding race were statistically significant.



### Main Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant strong correlation between the functionality of one’s family life and their endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events,  $r(6502) = .213, p < .001$ . The significant positive correlation shows that as the health of one’s family life increased, their endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events increased.

## Measures

### Measures

- **Endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events** was measured assessing the degree of participant’s attitudes regarding traditional romantic relationship events. Participants “kept” or “rejected” five items based on if traditional romantic relationship events would or would not happen in their ideal romantic relationship.
- **Familial relationship health** was measured with five separate statements on a five-point numerical rating scale as to the functionality of the respondent’s relationships with their parents and the basis of which they can navigate their own lived experience as a result (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree).

## Discussion

The hypothesis was supported by a Pearson correlation analysis that there would be an increase in one’s endorsement of traditional romantic relationships given functional relationships with one’s parents and that it would decrease given the opposite. This finding is also consistent with previous research suggesting that there is a correlation between non-functional parenting and non-functional couple interaction within a romantic adult relationship, going against traditional romantic relationship events (White et al., 2024).

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Though this study does suggest that those with increased familial dysfunction endorse traditional romantic relationship events less, causal links cannot be established.

An uncontrolled third variable may be confounding these results. For example, divorce in families was not taken into account.

Further, it may be that more gender specific factors (someone experiencing more or less dysfunction in their relationships with their parents due to their gender) may be influencing these processes studied here, especially considering that men were more likely to endorse traditional romantic relationship events opposed to women.

Future research could expand upon how divorce and gender dynamics play roles on influencing one’s endorsement of traditional romantic relationship events. Also, a trauma-focused questionnaire would be able to differentiate the levels of dysfunction one may have experienced, having participants rate childhood traumas on a scale from 1-10, to see what they may have experienced growing up with their family (1= I didn’t experience that trauma, 10= I experienced that trauma daily).

## References

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- White, A. C., Diggs, O. N., & Neppel, T. K. (2024). Father and mother harsh parenting and adult romantic relationships over time: Individual behavior during adolescence. *Journal of Family Psychology, 38*(5), 775–785. <https://doi.org/proxysru.klnpa.org/10.1037/fam0001245>
- Zagefka, H., Clarke, Z., Kabeli, G., Lundy, C., Plumtree, A., & Smith, G. (2021). Lay beliefs about romantic relationships: A mediator of the effect of family dysfunction on romantic relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Adult Development, 28*(4), 299–308. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-021-09374-4>