

Title: Influences of Sibling Disability and Parentification on Selection of Disability-Specific Helping Profession

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Introduction: Typically developing siblings (TDS) of individuals with disabilities are more likely than non-TDS to select a helping profession, defined as a profession in which one primarily focuses on helping others (Marks et al., 2005; Taylor & Shivers, 2011). However, research examining the *types* of helping professions selected and *contexts* that influence TDS' choice of a helping profession remains limited. For example, prior research suggests that TDS may have a high likelihood of selecting a helping profession where one works with individuals with disabilities (Marks et al., 2005). One context that may be important for the selection of helping profession is TDS' experiences of parentification, or the experience of high levels of caregiving during childhood (Jurkovic, 1997). Parentification is common among TDS (Nuttall et al., 2018). Prior research indicates that individuals who experience parentification are more likely than those who did not experience parentification to select a helping profession (Marks et al., 2005). Parentification consists of two dimensions: instrumental caregiving and emotional caregiving (Jurkovic, 1997; Byng-Hall, 2008).

Method: The present study included 1,626 undergraduate students enrolled in education and human development courses at 11 institutions. The majority of participants were female (72.9%; $n = 1185$), their ages ranged from 17 to 48 ($M = 20.68$; $SD = 3.37$) and 200 (12.3%) had a sibling with a disability. Data were collected using online surveys. Because high and low levels of instrumental parentification are theorized to be associated with adverse outcomes whereas moderate levels of instrumental parentification are considered normative (Jurkovic, 1997), we examined instrumental parentification as a curvilinear, rather than a linear, effect consistent with prior research (Nuttall et al., 2019). All continuous predictor variables were grand mean centered (Cohen et al., 2003) and significant interactions were plotted and probed using a test of simple slopes in which significant interactions were decomposed at values of plus or minus one standard deviation.

Results: Our results revealed that individuals with a sibling with a disability were more likely to pursue a career working with youth with disabilities than individuals without a sibling with a disability at high levels of emotional parentification, $b = 0.32$, $s.e. = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$ (see Table 1; see Figure 1).

Discussion: This finding builds upon prior findings noting that emotional parentification was associated with higher levels of social competence (Champion et al., 2009). Extending this prior work, our findings may suggest that TDS who engage in high levels of emotional parentification display social competence by choosing careers aimed at supporting youth with disabilities. Additional work is needed to understand TDS' success in these careers to test such an explanation. Overall, our findings suggest that the presence of a sibling with a disability and the dimension of parentification experienced are important contexts impacting emerging adults' decision to pursue a career working with youth with disabilities.

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Table 1.

Regression Model for Sibling Disability Status and Parentification Predicting Intent to Pursue a Career Working with Youth with Disabilities

	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Intercept	3.14**	0.05		
Sibling Disability	0.15	0.12	0.06	1.26
Emotional	-0.00	0.01	-0.01	-0.28
Instrumental	0.01	0.01	0.10	1.86
Instrumental ²	-0.00	0.00	-0.05	-0.72
Emotional x Instrumental	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.39
Emotional x Instrumental ²	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.14
Sibling Disability x Emotional	0.04*	0.02	0.12	2.37
Sibling Disability x Instrumental	-0.02	0.02	-0.07	-1.30
Sibling Disability x Instrumental ²	-0.00	0.00	-0.03	-0.40
Sibling Disability x Emotional x Instrumental	0.00	0.00	0.11	1.55
Sibling Disability x Emotional x Instrumental ²	0.00	0.00	-0.12	-1.87

Note. Sibling Disability = Whether the participant has a sibling with a disability (1) or not (0); Instrumental = Instrumental parentification; Instrumental² = Instrumental parentification squared; Emotional = Emotional parentification; **p* < .05, ***p* < .01.

Figure 1

Interaction Between Emotional Parentification Sibling Disability Status Predicting Intent to Pursue a Career Working with Youth with Disabilities

