

# Are we saying the same thing? An Exploration of Social Control Reported by Parent and Child Dyads

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## Introduction

- With the increasing number of children not meeting the daily recommended level of physical activity (Borrud et al., 2014), examining factors associated with physical activity is important
- Social control (SC) is a regulatory type of social influence where one individual prompts or persuades another to perform a desired behavior (Lewis & Butterfield, 2005)
  - Use of SC by parents has been linked to increases in physical activity (Wilson & Spink, 2011; Wilson et al., 2010)
- Both parent report (Wilson et al., 2010) and child report (Wilson & Spink, 2010) of SC have been used
  - For family support, parent and child ratings showed similarities but also some discordance (Barr-Anderson et al., 2010)
  - However, similarities in the parent and child report of SC have yet to be explored
    - This has potential implications for the measurement and interpretation of SC measures

The purpose of this study was to explore if parent and child reports of SC are related to each other

## Methods

### Participants:

- Parent and child dyads (n = 28)
  - Parents: 23 Female, 5 Male
  - Children: 14 Girls, 14 Boys
    - 8 – 14 years old (M = 11.3 years, SD = 1.8 years)

### Procedures:

- Participants were recruited from the faculty and staff from multiple universities through email and flyers
- Interested parents received two links to an online survey (1 parent link and 1 child link)
- Both parents and children completed the online survey which measured positive, collaborative, and negative social control

### Measures:

 Items measured: 1 (never) – 7 (frequently)

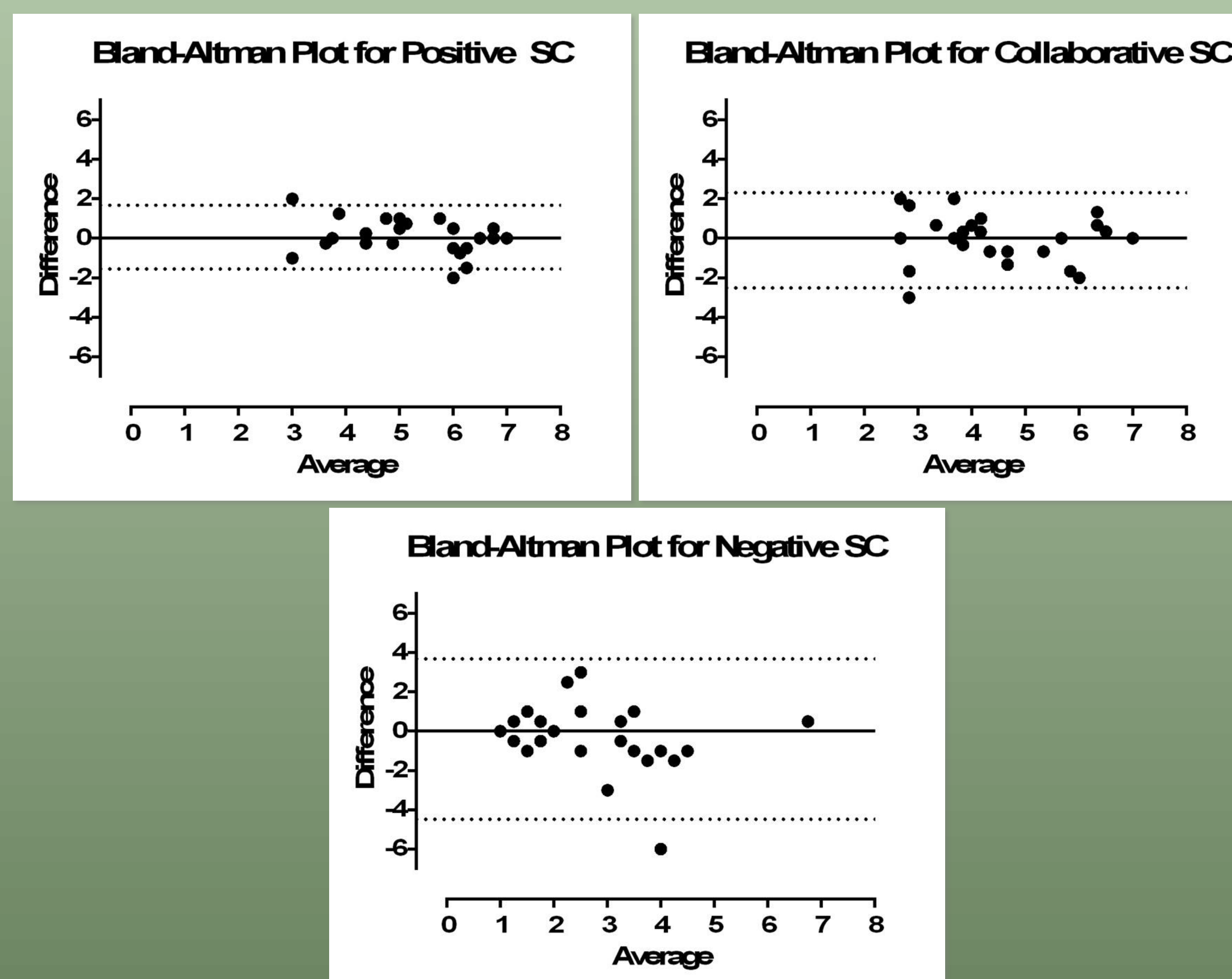
- Positive SC (PSC):** Encouraging strategies that may involve discussion or prompting (Wilson et al., 2010; 4-items)
- Collaborative SC (CSC):** An influence that requires action on the part of both the parent and child (Wilson et al., 2010; 3-items)
- Negative SC (NSC):** Pressuring strategy or use of guilt or disapproval (Wilson et al., 2010; 2-items)
  - All measures have been previously used in children and parents (Wilson & Spink, 2011; Wilson et al., 2010).

## Sample Questions

Over the last couple of weeks, you have (your parents have)...

- PSC:** said to your child (you) that physical activity is good for him/her (you)
- CSC:** offered to be active with your child (you)
- NSC:** ordered your child (you)

	Positive SC	Collaborative SC	Negative SC
Parent Alpha	0.81	0.74	0.89
Child Alpha	0.77	0.79	0.76
ICC	0.82	0.66	0.22
95% CI	0.64 – 0.91	0.38 – 0.83	-0.16 – 0.54
Parent Mean (M <sub>p</sub> )	5.6 (1.25)	4.4 (1.40)	2.6 (1.39)
Child Mean (M <sub>c</sub> )	5.5 (1.46)	4.5 (1.57)	3.0 (1.90)



## Results

- The Cronbach alpha levels for all parent and child scales were good ( $0.74 \leq \alpha \leq 0.89$ )
- A one-way random effects intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) assessed the consistency of ratings of SC by parents and children
  - Positive SC:**
    - ICC of 0.82 suggests an excellent consistency
  - Collaborative SC:**
    - ICC of 0.66 suggests a strong consistency
  - Negative SC:**
    - ICC of 0.22 suggests a poor consistency
- Bland Altman Plots were created to evaluate possible bias in reporting between parent and children reports

## Discussion

- Parent-child dyads tended to respond similarly for positive and collaborative SC
  - Supports findings with respect to social support that showed consistency in parent and adolescent reports of social support (Barr-Anderson et al., 2010)
  - This suggests that both parent and child reports of SC may show similar relationships with other predictors
- Negative SC showed an inconsistency between parent and child reports with a bias towards parents reporting lower levels of use
  - This inconsistency indicates that parents may not recognize or feel that he or she is using negative regulatory practices
  - A trend such as this may indicate a breakdown of communication within the parent-child dyad
  - Possible 'face-saving' effort (Brown, 1970) by parents due to negative connotations associated with the emotions produced by negative SC (Lewis & Butterfield, 2005)

## Strengths

- Both reports from parents and children were collected
- Sample included a variety of activity levels as well as both mothers and fathers

## Limitations

- Generalizability:
  - Only faculty and staff at colleges/universities recruited
  - Only children between 8-14 years old
- Sample size is small, which may lead to large 95% CI

## Future Directions

- Assess a broader sample to improve the ability to generalize these findings
- Evaluate whether parent or child reports of SC are better predictors of other factors such as physical activity and self-efficacy

## Conclusion

- Parent and child reports of both positive and collaborative social control were similar
- Negative social control reports appeared to be lower by parents than children
- These findings suggest further investigation of the differences between parent and child reports of social control, especially an emphasis on negative social control may be warranted