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Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem

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Abstract

Data from 183 participants were collected through an online survey focusing on the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem across a specific age range. Parenting styles were assessed using a four-factor model while self-esteem was evaluated using two different scales. Multiple analyses were completed to find that self-esteem changed across the age range, and across parenting styles. The study looks at the ways in which these two variables changed. Implications, limitations and future research opportunities are discussed.

Parenting Styles and Self-Esteem

Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother (Chua, 2011) is a book that sparked conversations across the nation about the rights and wrongs of raising children. The book is written by a Chinese woman, Amy Chua, not as a guide to parenting but as a memoir. However, the reactions to the book have been widespread, causing people to wonder if being a Tiger Mom is the best way to raise a child. Amy Chua describes her children's rigid afterschool regimes, which include piano practice, violin practice, and studying to get the only acceptable grade, an A. Using harsh words, honesty, strict rules, and rigid expectations, Amy Chua experiences the culture clash when raising her two girls in America. As a strict Chinese mother, she tries to raise her daughters as she was raised, in a culture consisting of a more laid-back approach to parenting. Chua says that the American parenting styles she sees creates "soft" and "entitled" children (Schulte, 2012). The Tiger Mom's eldest child thrives under these parenting conditions, while the younger fights back. This little girl is the reason some people ask the question as to whether this really is the best way to parent a child.

Well into this debate came the Panda Dad. The Panda Dad is a journalist and father named Alan Paul. He is a western man, raising his three children in China. Paul spoke out against the Tiger Mom and is best known for his article written for the online *Wall Street Journal*, entitled, "Tiger Mom meet Panda Dad" (Paul, 2011). He is a man who believes in unstructured play, showing love, affection, and independent children. These two examples of somewhat extreme parenting styles are just the tip of the iceberg as far as ways to raise a child.

Both ways of childrearing could potentially lead to raising an overall successful child. But what is a successful child? One way to gauge positive effects of parenting styles is by measuring the child's self esteem. How is the child's self esteem being affected by these

different parenting styles? This is an interesting question, and the subject of investigation in the current study.

Parenting styles are something that many people have familiarity with either while parenting or while growing up, and therefore there are many opinions on the best or better ways of going about it. These different approaches can be categorized as different parenting styles. The idea that parenting styles exist was originally observed by Diana Baumrind in the 1970's. The term parenting style refers to behaviors and strategies used by parents to control and socialize their children (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009).

In 1971, Baumrind conducted a study consisting of interviews and observations with parents and children, concluding in the identification of three types of parenting based on levels of demandingness (control, supervision, maturity demands) and responsiveness (warmth, acceptance, involvement). These parenting styles she called authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. The authoritarian parenting style is described as a black and white style of parenting, where rules are expected to be followed without question or there will be consequences. These parents tend to be strict and demanding, while not treating their children as equals. They do not appear very responsive to their children. The Tiger Mom is a good example of a parent displaying this parenting style.

The authoritative parenting style also is one with rules that must be followed, however the parents tend to be more open about their reasoning and take into account their children's opinions more so than authoritarian parents. Authoritative parents tend to talk about issues with their children in a supportive manner instead of simply inflicting punishment.

Permissive parents tend to act more responsively and demand less from their children; in turn they do not usually discipline their children as regularly. They are also communicative and nurturing. The Panda Dad is a good example of this parenting style.

Researchers, Maccoby and Martin reassessed the three styles of parenting in 1983. They updated Baumrind's findings also using demandingness and responsiveness as measures. According to their findings there appeared to be more parenting styles than had previously been shown. Maccoby and Martin ended up dividing the permissive style into two different parenting techniques that fit their findings when considering observed levels of demandingness and responsiveness. Consequently, the researchers created the permissive and neglecting labels for these styles of parenting. Hereafter, four parenting styles have widely been acknowledged to exist, authoritative (high on demandingness and responsiveness), authoritarian (high on demandingness but low on responsiveness), permissive (low on demandingness but high on responsiveness), and neglecting (low on both demandingness and responsiveness, Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

Research done later by Steinberg et al. (1994) supports this four-dimension typology. Furthermore, they looked into potential effects that parenting styles may have on children. Their research showed that children with authoritative parents were more competent than children coming from other parenting style families, in social, emotional, and academic abilities. Children with authoritarian parents were found to have lower levels of well being than children with other style parents, while those with indulgent parents had high levels of well being, but lower levels of achievement. Finally, Steinberg et al. found that children with neglectful parents showed the lowest levels in all areas. These results indicate a true connection between parenting styles and personal qualities of children. Other research done by Grusec et al. (1994) and Pomerantz et al.

(2005) found similar results; that children from authoritative parents show more proficient social, skills, independent problem solving, psychological well being and adjustment when compared to children raised by parents practicing other styles of parenting.

Many researchers have looked for connections between parenting styles and personal traits. For example, previous studies have explored the link between self-esteem and parenting styles. Most studies show there is indeed a connection between the two. There appears to be a correlation between certain parenting styles and higher or lower levels of global self-esteem in children (Hosogi et al., 2012). This leads us to the question of what self-esteem means in this context.

Self-esteem is a highly researched field, with multiple types of self-esteem to investigate. The general term self-esteem is defined as one's assessment of their own self-worth (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). This general definition can be called one's global self-esteem, considering all internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to emotions, genetic makeup and personality traits, while external factors refer to specific events, family, career etc. However, that definition covers a few different types of self-esteem. Trait self-esteem is the amount of regard we have for ourselves through time (Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 2006). This type of self-esteem tends to remain stable over a lifetime (Block & Robins, 1993), which is why some refer to this trait self-esteem as part of one's personality. Another type of self-esteem is state self-esteem. State self-esteem is much more fluid and is affected by feelings and situations (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). It has to do with how one is feeling about himself or herself at a certain point in time. There also exist more specific types of self-esteem such as academic self-esteem, where one's feeling of self-worth is somewhat contingent upon how well one does academically (Valizadeh, 2012).

Self-esteem can be developed in a multitude of ways, Branden (1969) states that generally self-esteem is formed and altered through a person's beliefs and awareness of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Self-esteem is important because of its role in healthy human development. Abraham Maslow categorized self-esteem as one of the basic human motivations. In his concept of the hierarchy of needs, esteem comes near the top. First comes physical needs, such as food and sleep, then security or safety needs, next social needs, meaning love and affection from others followed by esteem needs, reflection of personal worth and accomplishment, followed only by self-actualization, where one can finally fulfill their full potential (Maslow, 1987). Based on this hierarchy of needs, a child's level of self-esteem is a good way to determine level of success for parenting style. It is clear that one can look at self-esteem in many lights and under multiple contexts. The current study focused on global and academic self-esteem.

The current study's focus was on the relationship between the four main parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglecting) and self-esteem from childhood to early adulthood. Past research in the field of parenting styles and self-esteem generally points to a strong relationship between the two. A study done by Hosogi et al. in 2012 focusing on children showed that the environment where children are raised contributes deeply to the development of their self-esteem. This means that everything from school and family dynamics to socio-economic status and parenting styles affect children greatly. Additionally another past study suggests more precisely that nurturing and supportive parenting styles could improve children's self-esteem (Yang & Liang, 2008). This statement indicates further investigation needs to be done on the connection between parenting styles and self-esteem.

Research done on the consequences of specific parenting styles conclude that these styles do affect the child's self-esteem (DeHart, Pelham & Tennen, 2006). Some research has been done specifically looking at the effect of these four styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglecting). There is some variation among results as to what parenting style leads to the highest level of self-esteem. Martínez and García in 2007 found that children of indulgent parents had the highest levels of self-esteem while children of authoritarian parents had the lowest. Another study done later by Martínez and García (2008) found that adolescents with indulgent parents had equal or higher levels of self-esteem than adolescents with authoritative parents. The research additionally showed that adolescents with authoritarian and neglectful parents had the lowest levels of self-esteem. Alternatively, Garcia and Gracia (2009) found that both the children of indulgent parenting style as well as the authoritative parenting styles had the highest levels of self-esteem. It was also concluded in 2007 that the authoritative and indulgent parents' children scored highest on levels of self-esteem (Martínez, García & Yubero, 2007). Based on these results it is somewhat unclear which of the parenting styles can be labeled most successful on the basis of the child's self-esteem, therefore more research is needed.

Moreover, previous research has concluded specific qualities of a parent can lead to higher levels of self-esteem. The quality of supportiveness as perceived by the child predicted higher levels of implicit self-esteem in a study conducted by Antonopoulou, Alexopoulos & Maridaki- Kassotaki (2012). This means it is likely that children with neglecting parents would have lower levels of self-esteem. Furthermore parents who were recognized as more nurturing (authoritative and permissive) had a positive effect on their children's self-esteem, while parents perceived to be overprotective (authoritarian) had a negative effect (DeHart, Pelham & Tennen, 2006). Additionally emotional warmth (authoritative and permissive) has been positively

correlated with higher levels of self-esteem, while negative loving, anger and rejecting were negatively correlated (Yang & Zhou, 2008). While considering the effects of these traits on self-esteem it is important to look at the potential changes in self-esteem over time, unlike these past studies that focused on examining participants at only a single time period.

One's self-esteem over time has been studied a multitude of times with varying outcomes. The most popular finding is that self-esteem increases throughout adolescence to middle adulthood where it begins to decrease as one enters old age (Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012). It is important to consider potential confounding variables within these results, such as success in one's career or family life or decrease in health (Orth, Trzeniewshi & Robins, 2010). It is possible that the results partly reflect accomplishment of age specific challenges such as completing levels of school, marriage, children, physical complications, retirement, or sickness (Wagner, Lüdtke, Jonkmann & Trautwein, 2012). Another study arrived at the same conclusion of an increase in self-esteem throughout adolescence, and additionally notes that gender did not make a difference in the expected trajectories (Erol & Orth, 2011). It is important to note the insignificant effect of gender because the current study did not consider gender as a variable of interest for that reason. When looking simply at the adolescent stage, results mostly show a general increase in self-esteem throughout adolescence (Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012). Similarly, it is essential to look at possible confounding variables affecting this increase in self-esteem during adolescence. One variable that was found to have an important effect is education level. It was found that as education level increases so does level of self-esteem (Hallsten, Rudman, & Gustavsson, 2012). While discussing factors that affect self-esteem levels and the ways that self-esteem can change over time, it is relevant to acknowledge that parenting styles could change over time as well. This is important to recognize because different parenting styles

could have positive or negative effects on the child's self-esteem levels through time and development.

It is commonly accepted that an individual's needs change over time as he/she develops. Therefore it only makes sense that parenting style does as well. This possibility was not considered in the creation of the four main parenting styles. Why couldn't a parent transition from one style to another as their child grows? One study by Wentzel (1994) discusses the importance of parenting styles over time. Wentzel's results show that the importance of parenting style initially increases during infancy to preschool. When the child reaches the elementary level, the importance of parenting style can go one of three ways, depending on what the parent's focus is. The importance of parenting style could increase if the focus of the child is on discipline or education, or decrease if importance is placed on responsiveness or sensitivity. The importance level could also stay the same as in the preschool age if the parental focus is simply on general welfare or protection. Eventually, the importance of parenting styles and techniques decrease as the child enters late adolescence and early adulthood (Wentzel, 1994). These results show that parenting style should change depending on what is needed by the child at different age points.

At the same time, it has been found that inconsistent parenting can be related to aggressive and rebellious behavior (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). So where is the happy medium? Further studies have shown that for any and every age group the bonding, responsiveness, and sensitivity qualities in a parent are most important to the child's successful development, while the disciplinary characteristic is the least important when trying to raise a happy, effective child (Shamah, 2011). Due to these findings, perhaps a singular parenting style is better across all ages.

Previous research done on the subject of parenting styles and self-esteem has investigated a wide variety of elements, however there is still more to be covered and concluded. First, most of the studies on self-esteem and parenting styles focus solely on children in early adolescence or adults, which leaves a large gap between these two stages that must be explored. It is also true for the most part that studies evaluate participants only at one age point and not across time. While studies do a thorough job detailing the current status of one's perceived parenting style or self-esteem, it is important to see how these variables can change over time in order to understand their relationship. Also, there is a lot of research done outside of the United States on these topics; it would be helpful to see more data within the United States because of potential cultural differences, which were clearly expressed in the Tiger Mom versus Panda Dad scenario. While so much has been examined, there is undoubtedly more to be studied and analyzed.

The current study was designed to address these weaknesses, specifically, covering a range of ages using a U.S. population. The focus of the study was to look at the relationship between the four different parenting styles and a child's self-esteem at four different age points. This study hopes to conclude whether or not parenting styles should vary or not across the given age range. Hypotheses for the current study are that parenting style will have a significant effect on self-esteem across all ages. It is also hypothesized that the permissive parenting style will be related to the highest self-esteem levels at all ages tested, while the neglecting style will be related to the lowest levels of self esteem at all ages. Next, it is hypothesized that self-esteem will increase with age. Another hypothesis is that children reporting consistent parenting styles will have higher self-esteem. The final hypothesis for this study is that parenting styles will become more lenient over the age range and less restrictive parenting will lead to higher levels of self-esteem.

Method

Participants. A convenience sample of 183 participants was surveyed in this study (N=183). Participants were all between the ages of 18 and 23, with a mean age of 20.77($SD= 1.279$). There were a reported 151 female participants and 30 male participants, with an additional 2 that chose not to select a gender. Participants were recruited to participate in the survey through the social media website Facebook and in Psychology classes at a liberal arts college in southern California.

Materials. For each of the four ages examined, as shown in appendix A, a short framing vignette was read containing some contextual points referring to what most children are experiencing at each of the different age points, for the purpose of getting the participant thinking back to when they were the given age.

On the survey, there was a short questionnaire to determine self-esteem level. At first two ages of 6 and 11, participants were presented with the Self-esteem Rating Scale for Children-Revised (Chiu, 1987) as shown in appendix B. The questions selected were rated by teachers and then tested in their classrooms for reliability and consistency all with confident outcomes. This scale was slightly altered in tense in order to make sense with the reflective nature of the study, however the question's integrity remained the same.

At the next two ages of 14 and current age, participants were asked to fill out Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) as shown in appendix C. Bringle, Phillips & Hudson (2004) and Fleming and Courtney (1984) tested the Rosenberg self-esteem scale for temporal consistency and it was found to have good internal reliability results. This scale is commonly

used to measure self-esteem in adults and is generally reported to have high consistency, as well as internal and external validity. This scale was also slightly altered in tense in order to make sense with the reflective nature of the study, while the question's integrity remained the same.

In addition, there was a section of the survey containing definitions of the four parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, indulgent, and neglectful) at each age, however the descriptions of each style were labeled A, B, C, or D (in corresponding order) to avoid any biases, as shown in appendix D. A small sample group read the parenting style descriptions to be sure that the results were as intended, also to test for any confusion with the definitions. Once participants read the parenting style definitions they were asked to select the parenting style they felt best fit the dominant style used in their household at the given age.

At the end of each age section, there was a question asking how accurately the participant felt he/she was able to respond to the measures for the given age on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very) as shown in appendix E.

Procedure. An online survey was created using the website SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is a website where one can design and create surveys. After a survey is completed the survey is given a link so people can take it. Participants were invited to join an event on Facebook where they were able to access the link to the survey.

The survey began by having the participants read an informed consent form. Participants were only able to complete the survey if they accepted the terms of the consent form. If they did not consent, they were thanked for their time and offered a chance to receive compensation.

Upon providing consent, participants were presented with the first age where they assessed themselves at age 6, just entering kindergarten. There was a framing vignette for

participants to read, they were then asked to fill out the relevant self-esteem measure and choose from the described parenting styles. They were also instructed to answer a question about how accurately they felt they were able to respond to the questions. Next participants filled out relevant measures for the ages of 11, 14, and finally their current age of between 18 and 23.

After completing all ages, participants provided demographic information, including gender, age and amount of school completed. Finally, participants were debriefed.

Results

An analysis of the manipulation check was done to see how well participants felt they were able to answer the questions relating to self-esteem and parenting styles at ages 6, 11, 14 and their current age. The test came back with good results. The highest overall mean was 3.9 at participant's current age, and the lowest mean answer was 2.67 at age 6, both answers were out of a possible 4. These responses vary accurately due to the difficulty of collecting reflective data from when a person was so young and removed from where he/she is now. However, even at age 6 the mean result was relatively high, suggesting the resulting data can be further analyzed.

Self-Esteem

It is important to recognize that there were two different scales used in the survey to measure self-esteem at different age points. The age group of 6 and 11 shared a scale, and the age group of 14 and current age shared a scale. After coding the results, it was found that the average self-esteem score at age 6 was 3.42 ($SD = .448$), at age 11 it was 3.47 ($SD = .407$), out of 5; at age 14 the average self-esteem score was 2.92 ($SD = .568$), and for current age it was

3.21 ($SD = .508$), out of 4.

Standardized scores were created in order to compare the self-esteem levels across all age scales. The analyzed self-esteem was standardized within each measure using a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). The Mean Z-scores at the following ages were $M_6 = -.0074$ ($SD = .13$), $M_{11} = .0074$ ($SD = .12$), $M_{14} = .047$ ($SD = .19$), $M_{\text{current}} = .049$ ($SD = .17$). Mauchly's test of sphericity indicated a violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption ($\chi^2(2) = 61.5$, $p < .0001$). Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was used. This analysis shows that self-esteem at the four ages was not statistically the same, $F(2.57, 467.80) = 21.98$, $p < .0001$.

A test of within subjects contrasts showed linear ($F(1, 182) = 7.01$, $p = .009$), quadratic ($F(1, 182) = 30.13$, $p < .0001$), and cubic ($F(1, 182) = 37.068$, $p < .0001$) patterns. Specifically, as shown in Figure 1, self-esteem at age 6 was not significantly different from self-esteem at age 11 ($\text{mean diff} = -.02$, $n.s.$). Self-esteem at ages 6 and 11 were significantly higher than at age 14 ($\text{mean diff} = .039$, $p = .015$ and $\text{mean diff} = .054$, $p < .0001$, respectively). Self-esteem at ages 6, 11 and 14 were significantly lower than at current age ($\text{mean diff} = -.56$, $p < .0001$, $\text{mean diff} = -.041$, $p = .003$ and $\text{mean diff} = -.095$, $p < .0001$, respectively).¹

¹Difference in self-esteem between ages 11 and 14 may not be correct due to the change in scale used for ages 6/11 and 14/current age. Although self-esteem scores were standardized by measure, between measure differences may not be appropriately represented.

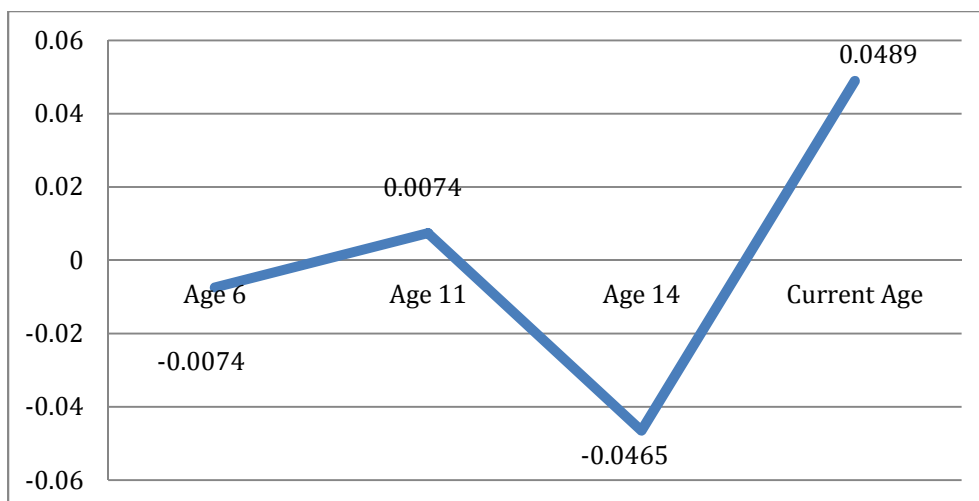


Figure 1. Self-esteem across the age range

Parenting Style

As shown in Table 1, the most commonly reported parenting style changes across the age range. For the first three ages tested, the most commonly reported parenting style was the authoritative style. However, at the participant’s current age of between 18 and 23, the most commonly reported parenting style shifted to the permissive style.

Table 1. Parenting styles across the age range

Parenting Style	Age 6	Age 11	Age 14	Current Age
Authoritarian	34	35	34	10
Authoritative	116	110	105	72
Permissive	27	30	39	90
Neglecting	5	5	5	11

From ages 6 to 11, 16.76% of people reported a parenting style change. Between ages 11 to 14, 18.33% of people reported a parenting style change. Finally, from ages 14 to current 40.44% of people reported a parenting style change.

To further examine how often parenting style changed, a change variable, measuring the number of times parenting style was reported to have changed across the timespan, was created. This change variable ranged from 0 to 3, with 0 meaning parenting style did not change over the timespan and 3 meaning parenting style changed at every new age point. Participants reported an average of .7486 ($SD = .806$) changes in parenting style across the timespan. This means that there were a significant number of parenting style changes across the timespan, $T [178] = 12.42, p < .0001$.

In addition, parenting style was ordered from most to least restrictive on the survey. Option A, authoritarian is the least lenient parenting style, while option D, neglecting is the most lenient parenting style. Another way to look at change was to look at whether parenting styles became more or less lenient over time. A change in leniency variable was created to look at the way in which parenting styles changed over the timespan. The change in leniency variable was created by subtracting the parenting style at the lower age from the parenting style at the higher age. For example, parenting style at age 11 was subtracted by parenting style at age 6 to create the 611change variable. Implicating that a positive outcome represents more restrictive parenting, while a negative outcome represents less restrictive parenting. From ages 6 to 11 parenting style became less restrictive, $M_{6-11} = .0056, (SD = .48)$. However, results were not significant $t(178) = .156, p = .88$. From the ages 11 to 14 parenting style also became less restrictive $M_{11-14} = .056, (SD = .54)$. Though the results were again, not significant,

$t(179)=1.39, p=.17$. Finally, from age 14 to current age, parenting style became significantly less restrictive $M_{14-current}=.475 (SD=.68), t(182)=9.49, p<.0001$.

Parenting Style and Self-Esteem

Four analyses of variance (ANOVA) were done to look at the relationship between self-esteem and parenting styles at each age. At age 6 self-esteem varies significantly across the four parenting styles, $F(3, 178)=6.36, p<.0001$. Self-esteem at age 6 for participants reporting authoritarian parenting style was significantly lower than people reporting authoritative parenting style (*mean diff*=-.2, $p=.001$).

At age 11 self-esteem was not the same across parenting styles $F(3, 176)=3.16, p=.026$. Participants that reported authoritarian parenting style had significantly lower self-esteem than those that reported authoritative parenting style (*mean diff*=-.22, $p=.02$).

Self-esteem was not the same across parenting styles at age 14 either $F(3, 179)=11.11, p<.0001$. At age 14, participants that reported authoritarian parenting style had significantly lower self-esteem than participants with authoritative (*mean diff*=-.52, $p<.0001$) and permissive (*mean diff*=-.49, $p=.001$) parents. Participants reporting authoritative (*mean diff*=.74, $p=.013$) and permissive (*mean diff*=.71, $p=.027$) parenting style had significantly higher self-esteem than participants reporting neglecting parenting style.

There was significant difference in self-esteem based on parenting styles at current age as well $F(3, 179)=6.28, p<.0001$. Participants reporting authoritarian parenting style had significantly lower self-esteem than participants reporting the authoritative (*mean diff*=-.71, $p<.0001$) and permissive (*mean diff*=-.62, $p=.001$) parenting styles, and marginally lower for the neglecting parenting style (*mean diff*=-.54, $p=.055$).

Mixed model ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether a parenting style change predicted a change in self-esteem at each change point. From ages 6 to 11, parenting style change did not significantly affect self-esteem, $F(1,177)=.08, p=.821$. Also, from ages 11 to 14, parenting style change did not significantly affect self-esteem, $F(1,178)=3.10, p=.08$. Finally, from ages 14 to current age, parenting style change did not significantly effect self-esteem, $F(1,181)=2.84, p=.094$.

Mixed model ANOVAs were conducted to examine whether the number of parenting style changes across the timespan predicted self-esteem changes across the timespan. Mauchly's test of sphericity indicates a violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption ($\chi^2(5)=56.16, p<.0001$). Therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was used. This analysis shows that parenting styles at the four ages are not statistically different, $F(7.75,451.77)=1.46, p=.171$. However, as seen in Figure 2, the data follows a significant quadratic pattern, $F(3,175)=2.98, p=.033$. Figure 2 demonstrates how having more parenting styles across the age range leads to more extreme changes in self-esteem as well as lower self-esteem.

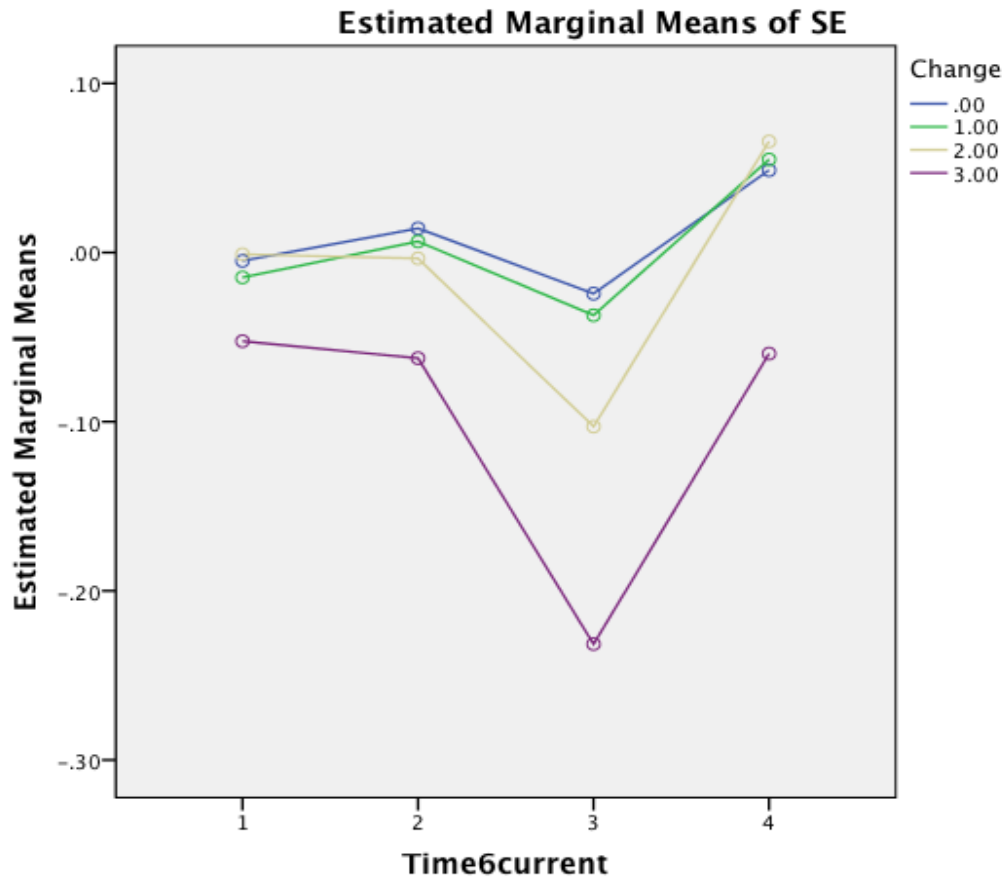


Figure 2. Self-esteem according to number of parenting style changes over the age range

A repeated measures analysis was done in order to assess in what ways parenting styles change (more or less lenient) and how the change potentially influenced self-esteem across the age range. For the ages of 6 to 11 and 11 to 14, the change in lenience of parenting style could not predict self-esteem change. For both 6 to 11 and 11 to 14, $F's < 1.289$, *n.s.* Between the ages of 14 to current age, it was found that change in lenience of parenting style did marginally predict change in self-esteem $F(1,181) 5.4, p=.021$. These results show that between the ages of 14 and current age, as parenting styles became less restrictive, self-esteem got higher.

Discussion

Raising a happy, successful child is challenging. No one knows all of the answers as to how this can be done. One way to approach this issue is by looking at different parenting styles and their potential effect on a child's self-esteem. When looking at the four main parenting styles, authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglecting, it is impossible to say exactly which one is best for every child. The majority of past research involving parenting styles has focused their studies only on young children at a single age point instead of across a larger time period. The purpose of the current research is to look at the relationship between self-esteem and parenting styles at four age points in order to get a comprehensive idea of the way self-esteem and parenting styles develop and change over time.

It was originally hypothesized that self-esteem would increase with age. This was found to be only somewhat true. While self-esteem did follow a general linear pattern across the age range, it also followed other patterns. It was found that self-esteem was highest at current age, as expected, however, self-esteem was found to be lowest at age 14. Ages 6 and 11 also had significantly higher self-esteem than age 14. This outcome was unexpected, yet it does make sense. It is possible that the drop in self-esteem is due to the intense changes one goes through around age 14. Just entering high school, everything is changing from your body to relationships with your family and friends. Age 14 is generally a tough time for people.

The parenting style data shows that the most commonly reported parenting style at ages 6, 11 and 14, was authoritative. However, the most commonly reported parenting style shifted at participant's current age of between 18 and 23 to the permissive parenting style. These results are understandable due to the need for more freedom as one matures.

It was also hypothesized that the permissive parenting style would be related to the highest self-esteem levels at all ages tested, while the neglecting style would be related to the lowest levels of self esteem at all ages. Self-esteem was indeed found to change across parenting styles at every age point. At all ages, children with authoritarian parents had significantly lower self-esteem than children with authoritative parents. At age 14, children with authoritarian parents also had significantly lower self-esteem than children with permissive parents. Additionally, children with authoritative parents had significantly higher self-esteem than children with neglecting parents. Also at age14, it was also found that children with permissive parents had significantly higher self-esteem than children with neglecting parents. Finally at current age, children with authoritarian parents had significantly lower self-esteem than children with any other parenting style. These results show that there is no clear best or worst style of parenting.

Another hypothesis in this study was that parenting styles would become more lenient over the age range. While there were a significant number of parenting style changes across the timespan this hypothesis was only somewhat true. Parenting styles were marginally found to change to become more lenient over the ages of 6,11, and 14; the change was only significant however, from ages 14 to current age. These results make sense due to the fact that children need fewer rules and less help from their parents as they grow up, as they become more independent, especially once they turn eighteen and most go off to college.

It was additionally hypothesized that parenting style would have a significant effect on self-esteem across all ages. It was found that over all of the ages, parenting style had no significant effect on self-esteem. These results, while going against what was hypothesized, can

be understood when thinking about the range of other events, people and actions that can effect one's self-esteem.

It was also hypothesized that consistency in parenting style would lead a child to have higher self-esteem across the age range. The data follows a significant quadratic pattern, showing that more inconsistent parenting leads to generally lower self-esteem as well as more extreme changes in self-esteem between the ages.

It was finally hypothesized that less restrictive parenting styles would lead to a higher level of self-esteem. The results show that for the ages of 6 to 11, and 11 to 14 the change in lenience of parenting style could not predict self-esteem change. However, between the ages of 14 to current age, it was found that change in lenience of parenting style did marginally predict change in self-esteem. These results show that between the ages of 14 and current age, as parenting styles became less restrictive, self-esteem got higher. These results make sense because from the age of 14 through to current age, one requires the most freedom generally, as people are off in college and away from their parents for the majority of their time.

There are some critical implications of the findings from this study. It is interesting that self-esteem, while growing linearly across age, seemed to drop around age 14. This finding is important because it can be used to not only add to the field of research on self-esteem, but to help the general public understand what the average person feels at that age and potentially figure out what aspects of life are causing the self-esteem drop.

While it was hard to determine which parenting style was actually best based on levels of self-esteem, it was noteworthy that at all ages, children with authoritarian parents had lower self-esteem than children with authoritative parents. These results go against the theory of the Tiger

Mom and can help parents understand that perhaps being controlling and strict is not always the best way to raise a child.

The marginal trend of parents becoming more lenient in their parenting styles over the age range was intriguing because when the change was significant, from ages 14 to current age, was the same time period as the rise in self-esteem. There could potentially be a relationship between the two, which could help parents to appreciate their child's need for independence at this stage.

The data showing that inconsistent parenting may lead to generally lower self-esteem as well as more extreme changes is very important. Parents can use this information to avoid harming their child's self-esteem by altering parenting techniques many times.

Less restrictive parents leading to higher levels of self-esteem between the ages of 14 and current age makes sense and is essential to know because then parents can effectively "let their child go" at this stage knowing that they are doing the right thing.

The findings of this study are both consistent and inconsistent with past research. Such findings as parenting styles being found not to have a significant effect on a child's self esteem at any of the ages tested is inconsistent with the research as well as some of the self-esteem levels for certain parenting styles. These inconsistencies are the reason that more research must be done on the topic of parenting styles and self-esteem.

It is imperative to note that there are some limitations involved in the current study. Beginning with the population of the study, it was focused on men and women between the ages of 18 and 23 in the United States. The sample size could have been larger and more evenly distributed when it comes to gender, age, reported parenting style, and number of parenting style changes in order to better represent the population of interest. This could be a concern when

thinking about the generalizability of the results. It is also important to note that the data collected was only as accurate as the person reporting the information could recall, as it is a reflective study. The questions asked the participant to remember information from the time they were 6, which can be hard to remember entirely accurately. There is also always the possibility that due to the fact that it was a self-report survey, participants could have fabricated anything they wished. Because of these factors, it is impossible to be sure that the data collected was entirely accurate. Additionally, when analyzing the data, the difference in self-esteem between ages 11 and 14 may not be correct due to the change in scales used for ages 6 and 11 versus age 14 and current age. Although self-esteem scores were standardized by measure, between measure differences may not be appropriately represented. Finally it is essential to keep in mind that the findings in this study could in fact be results of a confounding variable that affects parenting style or self-esteem at different ages.

While a number of these previously listed limitations are nearly impossible to avoid, additional research should be done in order to explore the connection between parenting styles and self-esteem. In future research it would be important to collect a representative sample of the population of interest. It would also be noteworthy to look at ways in which culture plays a role in parenting styles and their potential effect on children's self-esteem. A longitudinal study is advisable to a reflective study in order to achieve higher levels of validity in the data collected. Furthermore, a new scale is needed in order to effectively assess self-esteem levels across different ages. Future studies should also take into account some potential confounding variables that may affect the data including family structure, mental health or level of success in school. The conflicting results found in this area of study lead to the conclusion that this further research is required.

The purpose of this study was to focus on the relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem across a range of ages in the United States. Results showed that self esteem changes across the age range, self-esteem was different across parenting styles, and parenting styles became generally less restrictive over time which positively effected self-esteem. The results found in this study are quite relevant in that they can help to expand the area of research on parenting styles and self-esteem, while also helping parents to better understand the effects that different parenting styles have on children's self-esteem. In brief, children are principal in creating a positive future. Parents are the people who help to create their children's self confidence, respect, and worth which one must posses in order to make an impact on the world. This study adds to the prospect that children will be raised in that way.

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Appendix

A. Framing Vignettes

Age 6: You are just entering Kindergarten, leaving your parents potentially for the first time. You are just learning to make friends and socialize. You are beginning to understand that people are different; there different genders, different ethnicities, and different family dynamics. Learning the alphabet and how to count, you are practicing following directions. You are learning how to behave in a more structured environment.

Age 11: You are just entering middle school. You may have switched schools; you are starting to get more schoolwork and make new friendships. You may start to isolate yourself from your family, trying to become more independent. You are entering puberty, thinking about who you want to become from personal style to morals. You are also figuring out how to balance being a kid while growing up. Playing during recess but also just enjoying hanging with your friends.

Age 14: You are entering high school. Still trying to find the path that is best for you, making solid friendships and shifting away from your parents, becoming more and more social with your peers. Still experiencing many personal changes in appearance and emotions. Grades now matter, and expectations begin to increase. You may be starting to date and have crushes.

Current age: You are either just entering college in which case you are leaving the care of your parents, making new friends and trying new things. In college you are experiencing all different kinds of people, broadening your perspectives, meeting life long friends, working hard, and giving your life direction. You are going to parties, spending long nights in the library and learning how to live on your own.

B. Self-Esteem Rating Scale for Children—Revised

(Tense altered)

Response options are: always, frequently, occasionally, seldom, and never.

1. Hesitated to speak up in class.
2. Tended to dominate or bully other children.
3. Adapted easily to new situations or new tasks.
4. Became upset by failures (e.g., pouting, whining, withdrawing).
5. Tended to be chosen by peers for activities.
6. Became upset when being criticized or scolded (e.g., pouting, whining, withdrawing).
7. Sought support or reassurance from the teacher.
8. Got along well with peers.
9. Sought attention by displaying inappropriate behavior.
10. Showed confidence or assurance in actions.
11. Gave in to others easily.
12. Kept calm in stressful situations.

C. Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale

Answers are on a four-point scale, including, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself
9. I certainly feel useless at times
10. At times I think I am no good at all

Tenses revised for age 14

1. I felt that I was a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
2. I felt that I had a number of good qualities
3. All in all, I was inclined to feel that I was a failure
4. I was able to do things as well as most other people
5. I felt I did not have much to be proud of
6. I took a positive attitude toward myself
7. On the whole, I was satisfied with myself
8. I wish I could have had more respect for myself
9. I certainly felt useless at times
10. At times I thought I was no good at all

D. Parenting Styles

(Not shown on page) A=Authoritarian, B=Authoritative, C= Permissive, D= Neglecting

A. Parents are very controlling and enforce strict rules. They are characterized as “because I said so” parents. These parents hold their children to high standards but are not very responsive. Parents are obedience and status-oriented, expecting their orders to be followed without question.

B. Parents enforce rules in a more democratic fashion, willing to listen to questions and opinions. Parents still hold their children to high standards but are helpful and nurturing along the way. Parents monitor their children and display clear standards for their child’s behavior. They are assertive, while not interfering or being limiting. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, instead of simply retributive. They want their children to be assertive and responsible, as well as self-motivated and obliging.

C. Parents do not demand much from their child and allow the child to make decisions on their own. They are very nurturing and communicate well. These parents provide encouragement and feedback. Parents are more responsive than they are demanding. They are quite lenient, and do not demand mature behavior from their children. They allow their children to make mistakes and choose what they want to do while avoiding confrontation.

D. Parents do not demand very much and are not very responsive to their child. They fulfill basic needs, but are a little detached. These parents can be inconsistent with affection and discipline.

E: Questions of Reliability

When asked to answer questions about when you were 6, how accurately were you able to do this?

1 not at all 2 3 4 very

When asked to answer questions about when you were 11, how accurately were you able to do this?

1 not at all 2 3 4 very

When asked to answer questions about when you were 14, how accurately were you able to do this?

1 not at all 2 3 4 very

When asked to answer questions about your current age, how accurately were you able to do this?

1 not at all 2 3 4 very