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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTING STYLE AND ACADEMIC
SUCCESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

By
Sarah E. Pisacano

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
April 21, 2006

Approved by

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ABSTRACT

Sarah E. Pisacano
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTING STYLE AND ACADEMIC
SUCCESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

2006/04

Dr. John Klanderman
Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parenting style and academic success as measured by grade point average in college students. Data was obtained by administering a demographic survey and the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by John Buri to forty-one undergraduate participants at Rowan University. The PAQ was used to score levels of permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting. A correlational analysis was utilized and the results from which supported previous research of the benefits of authoritative parenting. High scores on authoritative parenting had a significant positive relationship with grade point averages. Separate correlations used to determine if results were gender specific revealed the same pattern with girls; however boys' grade point averages were positively correlated with permissive parenting rather than authoritative.

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Chapter 1: The Problem

Statement of Need

Previous research has linked components of family interaction to cognitive competence. Diana Baumrind's popular work in this area yielded three parenting styles that have consequences for the development of cognitive and social competence. A vast amount of literature has been published examining the effects of parenting styles on children's outcomes, particularly establishing the benefits of authoritative parenting in contrast with negative outcomes linked to authoritarian and permissive parenting. Many students leave college without obtaining an undergraduate degree due to poor academic performance or social adjustment. Less than 50 percent of U.S. college students entering four-year colleges or universities actually graduate, researchers at Council for Aid to Education (CAE) said in a 2001 report from The Associated Press. Entry into college characterizes a new stage of life for the traditional college student as many face a level of independence and personal responsibility not previously experienced (Lanhinrichsen-Rohling, Larsen & Jacobs, 1997). Due to individual and familial differences, adolescents inevitably will encounter varying levels of academic success as they negotiate this transition (Brooks & DuBois, 1995). A plethora of research exists attempting to explain why teens do not succeed in college. Since parents provide the foundation of life values to children, it was worthwhile to examine their role in the academic success or failure of their offspring. Which parenting style best prepares young adults for higher education and academic accomplishment once they have migrated to university life? This realm of

research may help to label ineffective behaviors demonstrated by parents and parents may take note to benefit subsequent generations academically.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parenting style and academic achievement in college students. More specifically, this study investigated which parenting style was associated with superior college academic performance as measured by GPA.

Hypothesis

Despite the growing autonomy of our youth and their ability to thrive regardless of the obstacles presented in their lives, previous research should hold true that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles do not yield positive results in terms of social and academic adjustment. Therefore, authoritative should remain the parenting style most frequently associated with higher GPA. The independent variables in this research study were the three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive as determined by student responses to the PAQ (Parental Authority Questionnaire). The dependant variable was the grade point average of the sophomore college student.

Theory

Developmental psychologists have been interested in how parents influence the development of children's social and instrumental competence since at least the 1920's (Darling, 1999). One of the earliest parenting theories was developed by Baumrind (1971), whose approach classified parents into three prototypes: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive, by crossing the dimensions of responsiveness/warmth and control/demandingness. Later, she added neglectful (or disengaged) as a fourth type of

parent (Baumrind, 1989). The authoritarian parent attempts to shape, control and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of a child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. This parent values obedience as a virtue and children should conform without explanation. The authoritarian favors punitive, forceful measures to curb self-will at points where the child's actions or beliefs conflict with what the parent thinks is proper conduct. Preservation of order is highly valued whereas as a child's autonomy is restricted. While authoritarian style is demanding and directive, they are not responsive. The authoritative parent attempts to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner. This parent encourages give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind their policy and solicits the child's objections when he/she refuses to conform. The authoritative parent affirms the child's present qualities but also sets standards for future conduct through supportive measures rather than restrictive measures. Finally, the permissive parent attempts to behave in a nonpunitive, acceptant and affirmative manner toward the child's impulses, desires and actions. This parent acts as a resource for the child to use as he/she wishes, not as an ideal to emulate. This parental style is indulgent and avoidant of confrontation (Baumrind, 1991).

Children from authoritative homes generally fair better than other children. They are more competent than other children, use fewer drugs as adolescents, and generally have a happier life than other children (Mandara, 2003). Research studies continue to document more positive links between authoritative parenting and the well-being of children and adolescents than for the other styles of parenting (Santrock, 2004). Children from authoritarian homes tend to be more aggressive, less independent, more depressed,

and have lower academic achievement (Mandara, 2003). Permissive parents have children who are less achievement-oriented, have lower levels of self-control and self-esteem, and higher levels of aggression toward their parents (Mandara, 2003).

Definitions

Parenting styles are broad patterns of child rearing practices, values and behaviors. When referring to parenting styles, the terms coined by Diana Baumrind were used for the purposes of this study. Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive, but not responsive. They are obedience and status-oriented and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation. Authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive. They are assertive but not intrusive or restrictive. Permissive parents are more responsive than demanding. They are lenient and nontraditional and do not require mature behavior. A more in-depth analysis of these definitions was discussed in the previous section of this chapter. GPA (grade point average) is a weighted average based on the grades received and the number of credit hours taken in a college course.

Assumptions

The soundness of the conclusions drawn in this research was based on several assumptions. Regarding responses on the Parental Authority Questionnaire, it was assumed that participants were answering questions truthfully in order to provide the researcher with an accurate depiction of the type of authority practiced by their parental figure. It was also assumed that the self-report data given (cumulative GPA) was indeed the actual GPA for that participant. In answering the survey questions, it was assumed that all students understood the complete anonymity of the survey and this was not a factor in the honesty of responses.

Limitations

It obtaining this research, a limited sample was used which may not be a true representation of the population. Generalizations cannot be made to the entire college population based on only the participating students at Rowan University. Another limitation was that low GPAs could have been the result of many other factors such as family tragedy, substance abuse, mental disorder, learning disability or other distracting life event which were not encompassed by the realms of this study. Issues such as the number of siblings in a home, birth order or the age of parents were also possible contributing factors worth exploring. Controls for these variables were not incorporated into this study. This study was designed to examine those students living independently from the family in a college setting, looking at how students adjust academically once they have left the environment hosting the parenting style in question. There are many students attending Rowan University who are commuting, therefore possibly still residing with the parent. This should be taken into consideration when interpreting the GPA/parenting style relationship for these individuals. More recent research has named a fourth parenting style that was not measured in John Buri's Parental Authority Questionnaire. This style, referred to as uninvolved or neglectful, is therefore not controlled for in this study.

Summary

In chapter two, past and current research dealing with parenting styles and their relationship to academic performance in college students as well as younger children will be reviewed in depth and summarized. There will also be a review of other relevant research dealing with parenting styles and their effects on various issues such as self-

esteem, creativity and behavior. In chapter three, an explanation of the design of the study will be provided including the measures used and sample size. In chapters four and five, the results of this study will be presented, interpreted, summarized and conclusions will be made.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

Many studies have examined Diana Baumrind's parenting styles and their relationship to diverse child outcome variables. In this chapter past research is reviewed beginning with wide-ranging findings on overall benefits of authoritative parenting over other parenting styles. The second section provides a cross-cultural review of literature followed by an analysis of literature regarding motivation, goal orientation and self-actualization in the third section. Lastly, the final section will evaluate studies regarding academic achievement and parenting style and literature specific to the focus of this thesis.

General Benefits of Authoritativeness

The trend in research linking authoritative parenting style to beneficial outcomes transcended the scope of this study. Parenting style was associated not only to academic achievement but to various outcomes. A study that investigated the relationship between perceived parenting styles, depersonalization, anxiety and coping behavior in a normal high school student sample showed a significant relationship to exemplify this trend. DeHart, Pelham & Tennen (2004) found that authoritarianism was related to higher scores on depersonalization and anxiety whereas authoritative and permissive styles of parenting showed higher scores on active problem coping. Additionally, research by Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) indicated that adolescents who characterize their parents as authoritative scored highest on measures of psychosocial competence and lowest on measures of psychological and behavioral dysfunction; the

reverse was true for adolescents who described their parents as neglectful. Adolescents whose parents were characterized as authoritarian scored reasonably well on measures indexing obedience and conformity to the standards of adults but had relatively poorer self-conceptions than other youngsters (Lamborn et al., 1991).

The negative relationship between authoritative parenting and behavioral dysfunction called into question deviant practices in children regarding substance abuse. A study by Weiss and Schwartz (1996) found that children from Nonauthoritarian-Directive or Authoritative parents had the lowest alcohol use by their senior year of college, and their alcohol use was significantly lower than that of individuals from Democratic (Permissive) or Unengaged (Neglectful) homes. Child tobacco and alcohol use was associated with child perception of lower authoritativeness and higher permissiveness (Cohen, 1997).

In a study examining relationships between parenting styles and their relationship to several types of guilt and college adjustment, Shilkret & Vecchiotti (1997) found that authoritative parenting was generally associated with good adjustment to a college environment and negatively associated with Self-Hate Guilt (guilt about being worthy). Authoritativeness yielded better adjustment than authoritarian on all adjustment variables (social, academic, personal/emotional) while authoritarianism was positively associated with all guilt measures (Shilkret & Vecchiotti, 1997).

Parents engaging in authoritarian practices might argue that this style leads to the development of certain virtues. Perhaps one area where one would resist disputing authoritarian style would be the successful adaptation to a dictatorial context such as a military training environment. Authoritarian parenting would seem beneficial to

adjusting to a rigid and controlling context such as boot camp. However, even in this context, authoritativeness was proven a more efficient approach. This was exemplified in a research study by Maysel, Scharf and Sholt (2003) that assessed 18-year old men in Israel during their first year of basic military training. Researchers examined the relationship between the parenting styles of these men and their coping/adaptation to an authoritarian military context. The general benefit of authoritativeness was again supported in this research. It was found that authoritative parenting was advantageous with respect to coping and adaptation even in an authoritarian context (Maysel et al., 2003).

Cross-Cultural Analysis

Much of the information supporting authoritative parenting practices was based on samples of white, European American families and Western measures of parenting style. However, some of these benefits have translated to other cultures. In a study comparing Canadian and East Indian adolescents, researchers examined parenting style and its relation to academic achievement. They found that in these two separate and distinct cultures, authoritativeness was linked to positive outcomes (Garg, Levin, Urajnik, & Kauppi, 2002). Findings for the Canadian sample indicated that authoritative parenting was related to the highest levels of familial interaction and academic performance whereas neglectful parenting was related to the lowest. Authoritative parenting was associated with higher levels of parent concern and family cohesiveness for the Indian students, however there were no academic differences for these adolescents due to parenting style (Garg et al., 2002). Although these results failed to find a relationship between parenting styles and academics in the Indian group, the Indian

findings may highlight the importance of significant aspects of authoritative parenting across cultures. High levels of family cohesion and parent concern appear to be reflective of authoritative parenting in general (Hein & Lewko, 1994).

Several studies have examined relationships between parenting styles and outcomes in Asian cultures. A study by Xia and Qian (2001) examined the association of recalled parenting styles with adolescents' self-evaluated health-status. Many psychosomatic symptoms and lower scores on indexes of general mental health were significantly related to higher levels of parental rejection and denial, punishing tendency, overprotection and overinvolvement and to lower levels of parental emotional warmth and comprehension (Xia & Qian, 2001). Parenting style has also been linked to children's development of self-regulated learning and exertion of control over their own learning in the Chinese culture. In an additional study of Chinese children, a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's self-regulated learning was found (Huang & Prochner, 2004). Additionally, this study found a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and children's self-regulated learning. Further research examining first and second graders in Beijing, China found that authoritarian parenting was associated with children's low effortful control and high dispositional anger/frustration (Zhou, 2004). However this study did not find evidence to support a relationship between authoritative parenting and children's dispositional anger/frustration. In a study of parenting style and its relationship to self-perception (academic competence, morality and self-reliance) in Korean American college students, authoritative parenting was significantly and positively correlated with academic competence and morality (Kim, 2003). Authoritarian parenting was significantly and

negatively correlated with academic competence. This contradicts previous research that authoritarian parenting is most common in Asian Americans. Researchers believe this may be due to changes in parenting practice over time with increased exposure to the host culture for Korean American college students (Kim, 2003). Although the detrimental effects of authoritarian parenting are not as evident in Asian Americans as in European Americans and other minority groups, the overall pattern of the relationship between parenting style and adolescent development is similar, particularly with regard to the benefits of authoritative parenting. Across racial and ethnic groups, adolescents raised by authoritative parents reported higher levels of self-reliance and school performance, fewer psychological problems and less involvement in delinquency in comparison with those from nonauthoritative homes (Dornbusch, 1990).

Querido, Warner and Eyberg (2002) investigated parenting styles and child behavior in African American preschool children and found that authoritative parenting style was most predictive of fewer child behavior problems. Female caregivers who reported higher levels of behavior problems tended to have lower education and income and to endorse the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles (Querido et al., 2002).

A study that investigated the association between adolescents' achievement strategies and parenting style in Swedish individuals showed that adolescents from authoritative families applied the most adaptive achievement strategies (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000). These strategies were characterized by low levels of failure expectations, task-irrelevant behavior and passivity and the use of self-enhancing attributions. Authoritarian parenting, in turn, was found to be associated with the deployment of maladaptive strategies, particularly passive behavior and a lack of use of

self-enhancing attributes, typical of learned helplessness. In this study, adolescents from permissive families differed only with respect to their causal attributions from those coming from authoritarian families: they reported a higher level of self-enhancing attributions than adolescents from authoritarian families (Aunola et al., 2000).

In a study by Leung, Lau and Lam (1998), relationships between parenting styles and academic achievement were investigated in Hong Kong, the United States and Australia. This study differentiated among types of authoritarianism and authoritativeness. This study provided an explanation for the paradoxical finding that, although Asian American parents tend to be authoritarian, their children generally perform well in school. Whereas *academic* authoritarianism was negatively related to school performance in all three cultures, *general* authoritarianism was positively related to school performance in Chinese adolescents only. *General* authoritativeness was positively related to school performance of American and Australian adolescents, but it did not show any relation for Chinese adolescents. Results indicated that Australian parents were lower than both Chinese and American parents in academic authoritarianism. Compared to the Australians and Americans, Chinese parents were higher in general authoritarianism, but lower in academic and general authoritativeness. In all three cultures, academic achievement was negatively related to academic authoritarianism. Academic achievement was positively related to general authoritarianism in Hong Kong. Academic achievement was positively related to general authoritativeness only in the two English-speaking groups (Leung et al., 1998).

Motivation, Self Actualization and Other Factors Relating to Success

It was worthwhile to examine the effect of parenting style on essential elements that lead to academic success such as self-actualization, motivation, and goal orientation. Previous research examined the relationship between goal orientations and parenting styles. In a study by Gonzalez, Holbein and Quilter (2002), high school students' level of maternal authoritativeness was positively related to mastery orientation. Specifically, parents who are perceived to explain rules, place less emphasis on strict obedience, and emphasize autonomy were more likely to have students concerned with improving ability and attaining personal mastery. In contrast to this, maternal authoritarianism was positively related to students' performance orientations. Therefore, parenting perceived as emphasizing obedience, absolute conformity, and punitive measures of discipline was related to a goal orientation where students are concerned with *proving* their ability. Maternal permissiveness was also positively correlated with performance orientations. Parental structure may nurture an understanding in children that the path to achieve outcomes is within their control. If parents are permissive and do not provide this structure, students may not have the chance to internalize a sense of structure and control necessary to adopt a mastery goal orientation (Gonzalez, 2002).

Results from a study by Pychyl, Coplan and Reid (2001) found a significant negative relationship between maternal authoritative parenting and procrastination. For males, paternal authoritative parenting was not significantly related to procrastination, but for females, a significant negative relation was found between paternal authoritative parenting and procrastination. For authoritarian parenting, no significant relations were found for authoritarian mothers, however, with authoritarian fathers, a significant positive

relation between paternal authoritarian parenting and procrastination was found. This confirmed literature suggesting that children with overly critical, overly demanding parents might learn to avoid tasks, rather than risking failure. Other previous research suggested that authoritarian parenting appears to have a greater effect on females' personalities than on males (Buri, 1988).

Motivation plays a key role in children's learning and school success. Research has confirmed that children whose school behavior is more intrinsically motivated, self-regulated or learning oriented perform better in school than those children whose motivation is extrinsic, externally regulated or performance oriented (Harter, 1981). In attempt to examine the factors that facilitate adaptive motivational orientation, Grolnick, Kurowski and Gurland (1991) looked at the parent's role. These researchers challenged the traditional notion that parental involvement affects children's school success directly by building skills such as those in math and reading. Rather, they suggested an indirect-effects model where-by parent-involvement activities affect children's school success through their impact on children's motivational resources (Grolnick et al, 1991). Grolnick et al. (1991) found that parental involvement and autonomy support were associated with children's motivational resources of perceived competence, control understanding and self-regulation. These resources were, in turn, associated with children's academic achievement. A study by Ginsberg and Bronstein (1993) of fifth graders also examines intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation. Their findings suggest that over-controlling and under-controlling parenting styles such as authoritarian and permissive/neglectful were related to an extrinsic motivation and lower academic performance. On the contrary, parental encouragement in response to grades and

autonomy-supporting family styles such as authoritative parenting were associated with intrinsic motivation and higher academic performance. Additional research supported that harsh and authoritarian parenting styles were related to maladaptive components of perfectionism in Caucasian American men and women and Asian American women (Kawamura, Frost & Harmatz, 2000).

Self Actualization is the highest need in Abraham Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs as it represents one's reaching their full potential. A study by Dominguez and Carton (1997) investigated the relationship between self-actualization and parenting style and suggested that authoritative parenting style facilitates self-actualization in college students. Students who rated their parents as being more authoritative had the highest levels of self-actualization, whereas students who rated their parents as being more authoritarian had the lowest levels of self-actualization. One possible explanation is that the use of positive reinforcement, rather than punishment, and the independence training that characterize the authoritative parenting style facilitate self-actualization in college-aged children.

Academic Achievement

Parenting styles have been associated with academic successes (Dornbusch et al., 1987). More specifically, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles have been associated with (a) poor academic grades, (b) college adjustment, and (c) self-esteem of adolescents (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Eskilson, Wiley, Muehlbauer, and Dodder (1986) found that most school-related conflict between parents and high school youth was related to demanding expectations (authoritarian) or not high enough expectations (permissive). In addition, high-achieving students, more often than

underachieving students, described their parents as understanding, approving, trusting, affectionate, encouraging achievement, and not overly strict in disciplining (Masselam, Marcus, & Stunkard, 1990). Conversely, underachievers described their parents as very strict and demanding, lax, or punitive in their disciplinary techniques (Dornbusch, Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Chen, 1990). Finally, Lamborn et al. (1991) found that adolescents from authoritative home environments demonstrated greater levels of academic competence and adjustment than adolescents reared by authoritarian parents. Thus, adolescents reared in authoritarian or permissive home environments appear to be at greater risk for negative academic outcomes.

Substantial information supported an association between authoritative parenting style and higher grades. On the other hand, the detrimental effect of authoritarian and permissive parenting styles on academics has been repeatedly supported. A study by Amy Strange (1998) utilized a sample of 465 college students who provided information using the Student Attitudes and Perceptions Survey, a self-report questionnaire. A series of correlational analyses were obtained that examined the relationship between students' reports of their relationships with parents and their perceptions of various aspects of their academic environment and study habits. Perceptions of parents as authoritative and emotionally close were predictive of (1) general confidence and positive sense of self (2) positive goal orientation at school (3) general concern about preparation for the future and (4) positive adjustment to college. Authoritative family profiles were also predictive of (1) students rating their introductory college psychology course as interesting and supportive (2) favorable ratings of their general time and effort management abilities and note-taking skills and (3) strong agreement with a series of items reflecting components

of self-regulated learning. Perceptions of parents as authoritarian were predictive of concern about preparation for the future and predictive of students rating their introductory psychology course as difficult. Authoritative parents and an emotionally close family were predictive of students' having clear personal and professional goals and were predictive of students' feeling in control of their academic lives. In contrast, authoritarian parents continued to be predictive of students' perceived lack of control over their academic lives (Strange, 1998). This study supported that students who were most skilled at setting attainable goals and monitoring and maintaining their progress described relationships with their parents that fit the "secure" and "authoritative" profiles, while students who seemed least able to do so came from the ego-enmeshed, "insecure-ambivalent" families with "authoritarian" parenting styles. The authoritative parenting was associated with having a positive academic disposition (Strange, 1998).

In a follow up study, Strange and Brandt (1999) again examined the college undergraduate population and found that student's grades, confidence level, persistence, task involvement and rapport with their teachers were generally predicted by both current and childhood levels of parental autonomy granting, demandingness, and supportiveness. These researchers concluded that an authoritative home world effectively imparts the elements of a mastery orientation toward schoolwork, which in turn prepares students for the world of American college where self-regulation, persistence and autonomy are important for success (Strange & Brandt, 1999).

Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) examined three aspects of authoritative parenting- acceptance, psychological autonomy, and behavioral control- and their relation to school achievement. With a sample of 120 adolescents, researchers collected data on

family relations and psychological maturity during school and home visits conducted in 1985 and then again one year later. Students also provided information on parental occupation and household composition which were used to index family socio-economic status and family structure, each was used as a covariate in the analyses. The Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI), a widely used Likert-scale format report of parental disciplinary practices was used to determine parenting practices and the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory was used to assess psychosocial maturity. Official school records provided by the school district were used to determine grades (English and mathematics only). Verbal and Mathematics scores on California Achievement Tests were also used as a covariate. Results indicated that all three aspects of authoritative parenting (acceptance, psychological autonomy and behavioral control) led to increases in school grades. These results persevered even after controlling for achievement test scores and an array of demographic factors. This presented strong evidence of the impact of authoritative parenting on school success (Steinberg et al., 1989). Since each of the three integral components of authoritative parenting provided independent contributions to school achievement as supported in this research, the effectiveness of authoritative parenting on academics was supported.

In additional research by Melby and Conger (1996), 347 seventh grade students and their parents were studied over a four year period. This research examined the relation of two types of parental behaviors (involved parenting and hostility) to adolescent academic performance. The adolescents in this study were white, primarily lower-middle or middle class intact families from eight adjacent counties in a Midwest state. Parental child-rearing behavior predicted later adolescent academic performance

for the target adolescents in this study. Displays of hostile affect by the parent toward the adolescent decreased the adolescents' subsequent school performance. By examining the manner in which parental behaviors influence change in academic performance over time, the researchers also extended findings regarding the relation between authoritative parenting and school performance (Melby & Conger, 1996).

A study by Gregory Hickman (2000) examined the influence of parenting style on the adjustment and academic achievement of traditional college freshmen. His study did not find a relationship between academic achievement and parenting style, however parenting style was found to be related to other factors contributing to academic success. Self-report questionnaire data was obtained from 101 college freshmen through the Parental Authority Questionnaire, (PAQ), Quick Word Test, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Inventory and family demographics. To assess the extent to which parenting styles influence the adjustment to college and academic achievement of these students, separate multivariate regression models for each dependent variable of adjustment were estimated using ordinary least square regression. Each measure of adjustment (overall, academic, social, personal-emotional, and goal commitment-institutional adjustment) and academic achievement was regressed on the background variables (i.e., gender, parents' educational level, and family structure), followed by aptitude, self-esteem, and dimensions of parenting styles. The researchers hypothesized that college freshmen would display lower levels of academic achievement (GPA) when reared by authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Similar to the other dependent variables, academic achievement was regressed on the background variables (i.e., gender, parents' educational level, and family structure), aptitude, self-esteem, and dimensions of parenting styles. The results did not

support this hypothesis, as no significant association between parenting style dimensions and academic achievement was found. The model did however indicate that authoritative parenting and self-esteem are significant predictors of academic adjustment of college freshmen. This study supported, yet disconfirmed other antecedents theoretically related to adolescent adjustment and achievement. With one exception, none of the models indicated that parenting styles influenced the adjustment and academic achievement of college freshmen. However, authoritative parenting was found to have a positive impact on academic adjustment. Adolescents accustomed to a warm, emotional, and caring environment associated with open communication may have an advantage when making the transition into a college environment as they have achieved greater mastery and self-regulation of their environment while growing up (Brooks, 1996). This finding was consistent with the vast literature in which researchers have concluded that adolescents experience heightened developmental outcomes when reared by authoritative parents (e.g., Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1992).

A study by Weiss & Schwartz (1996) utilized a sample of 178 University of Connecticut students and their parents as participants and examined relations between parents' child-rearing practices and 4 domains: personality, adjustment, academic achievement and substance use. Regarding academic achievement, these researchers found that sons with authoritative parents had a significantly higher GPA than sons with authoritarian-directive parents. Children from non-directive homes had significantly higher SAT scores than children from Authoritarian homes (Weiss & Schwartz, 1996).

A large and diverse sample of high school students in the San Francisco Bay Area (N= 7,836) was used by Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh (1987) to

determine the relation of parenting style to grades. These researchers found that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were negatively associated with grades and authoritative parenting was positively associated with grades. Pure authoritative families (high on authoritativeness and low on permissiveness and authoritarianism) had the highest mean grades while inconsistent families that combined authoritarian with other parenting styles had the lowest grades. Three parenting style indices were developed to roughly conform with Baumrind's three styles of parenting and grade point averages obtained by the school to measure student academic grades. There were small sex differences in the parenting styles reported by students. Females, compared to males, reported a significantly lower level of authoritarian parenting, this difference was statistically significant. There was no gender difference in reports of permissive parenting. For both sexes, the correlations between grades and the three indices of parenting style strongly supported earlier studies on the cognitive impact of parenting styles. There was a negative correlation of authoritarian parenting with grades for both males and females. For permissive parenting, the correlations were also negative for both sexes. Finally, authoritative parenting had positive correlations with grades for both males and females. All correlations were significant at the .001 level. The negative relation of authoritarian parenting to grades was the strongest of the three correlations. The data indicated that, across ethnic groups, authoritarian and permissive styles were associated with lower grades and authoritative style was associated with higher grades (Dornbusch et al., 1987).

Summary

The researched reviewed in this chapter linked an array of positive outcomes to authoritative parenting, ranging from generally to specifically related to the thesis topic. Negative outcomes such as depersonalization, anxiety, substance abuse, behavioral dysfunction, and several types of guilt were negatively associated with authoritativeness and positively associated with authoritarianism. Conversely, desirable outcomes such as college adjustment, active problem coping, psychosocial competence, low levels of behavioral dysfunction, low substance abuse and effective adjustment to an authoritarian context were all related to authoritativeness. A cross cultural review of literature supported the universal benefits of authoritativeness over authoritarianism. Intrinsic motivation, self-actualization and positive goal orientations were all linked to authoritative parenting whereas extrinsic motivation, high procrastination and maladaptive components of perfectionism were linked to authoritarianism. In reference to academic achievement, research supported that authoritative parenting led to self-regulated learning. Authoritativeness was also repeatedly linked to higher grades, higher SAT scores, better academic adjustment, and better time management skills than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Authoritative parenting was repeatedly linked to positive outcomes and desirable traits in individuals whereas authoritarian and permissive were frequently linked to negative outcomes.

Chapter 3: The Design

Sample

This study employed a sample of 41 undergraduate students at Rowan University, a mid-size public university in southern New Jersey. The respondents were 41.5% male (n=17) and 58.5% female (n=24). The mean age for this sample was 19.49 with a *SD* of 1.362 (See Figure 3.1). The breakdown of classes was as follows: 51.2% freshmen (n=21), 31.7% sophomore (n=13), 7.3% junior (n=3), and 9.8% senior (n=4). This breakdown is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.1 Sample Age

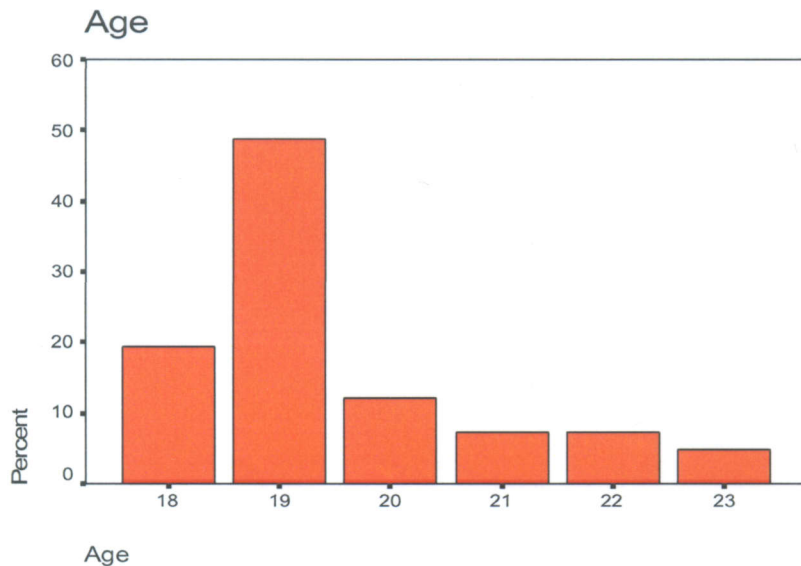
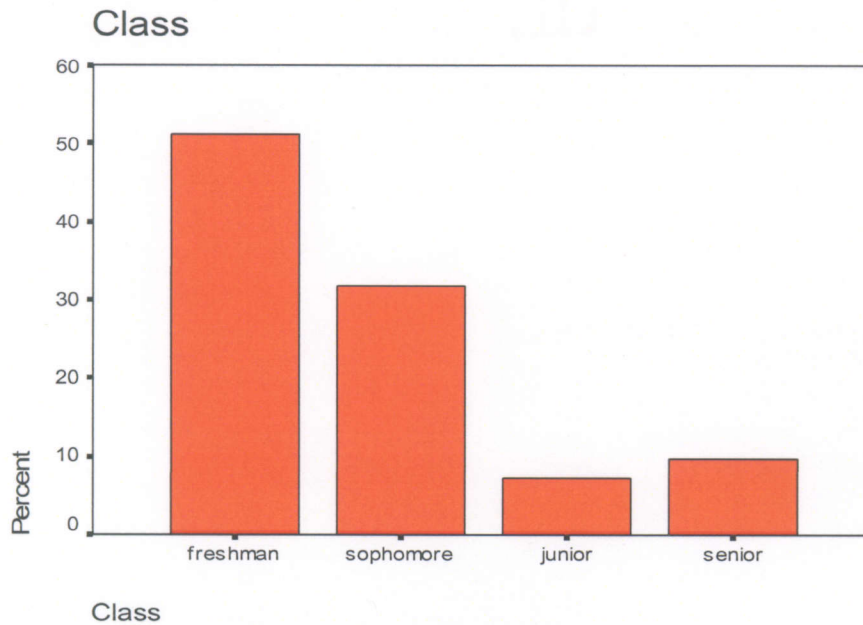


Figure 3.2 Year in College



Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

A self-report questionnaire was administered to the sample population. The questionnaire was comprised of open-ended questions on demographics including age, sex and academic year. Grade point average was asked to determine level of academic achievement. Students were also asked about their living situation, more specifically, if they lived alone or resided with the parent whose rearing practice was under evaluation. This distinction was necessary to address the issue of academic adjustment outside of the parental environment.

Parental Authority Questionnaire by John Buri (1991)

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), developed by John Buri (1991) was administered to measure Diana Baumrind's (1971) three parenting styles- authoritarian, authoritative and permissive- as perceived by students. The PAQ contained 30-items and

used a five-point Likert scale to rank each item, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items consisted of statements regarding the manner in which participants were reared by their parents. The 30 items were grouped into three subscales consisting of 10 items that assessed each of the three parental authority prototypes. Due to the prevalence of single-parent families today, this study utilized the PAQ to assess the dominant parent as measured by the student. However, the PAQ can be administered to evaluate the mother and father separately by completing the same survey twice, replacing the word mother with father, which yields 60 total questions rather than 30. However, for the purposes of this study, subjects were instructed to simply answer based on their dominant parent. Buri (1991) provided evidence of the test-retest and internal consistency reliability, as well as the validity of the measure for identification of the three parental authority prototypes. The 2-week test-retest scores for the three prototypes ranged from 0.78 for mother's authoritativeness to 0.92 for father's authoritativeness. The following reliabilities were yielded: 0.81 for mother's permissiveness, 0.86 for mother's authoritarianism, 0.78 for mother's authoritativeness, 0.77 for father's permissiveness, 0.85 for father's authoritarianism and 0.92 for father's authoritativeness.

The prototype subscales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with Cronbach coefficient alpha values that ranged from 0.74 for father's permissiveness to 0.87 for father's authoritarianism. The following Cronbach coefficient alpha values were obtained for each of the six PAQ scales: 0.75 for mother's permissiveness, 0.85 for mother's authoritarianism, 0.82 for mother's authoritativeness, 0.74 for father's permissiveness, 0.87 for father's authoritarianism, and 0.85 for father's authoritativeness.

Both the test-retest reliability coefficients and the Cronbach alpha values are highly respectable, especially given the fact that there are only 10 items per scale (Buri, 1991).

Buri (1991) supported the discriminant-related validity of the PAQ. Mother's authoritarianism was inversely related to mother's permissiveness ($r = -.38, p < .0005$) and to mother's authoritativeness ($r = -.48, p < .0005$). Similarly, father's authoritarianism was inversely related to father's permissiveness ($r = -.50, p < .0005$) and to father's authoritativeness ($r = -.52, p < .0005$). Mother's authoritativeness was not significantly related to mother's permissiveness and father's authoritativeness was not significantly related to father's permissiveness. Divergent responses to the items on the authoritative, authoritarian and permissive scales supported that the PAQ is an accurate measurement of Baumrind's parenting styles.

Method

John Buri was contacted via email to gain approval for the use of his measurement instrument. Permission was granted for use of the PAQ for the purposes of this thesis. Following approval from Rowan University's Institutional Review Board, subjects were obtained by solicitation. Students in Introductory to Psychology classes at Rowan University were solicited via sign-up sheets posted at the Psychology Department. Students in this subject pool received credit for participating in 20 minutes of research studies at the university. Multiple 20 minute sessions were necessary to obtain a sufficient sample size. Subjects were given informed consent forms to sign prior to participating. Students were reassured of the confidentiality of the study and asked to complete the questionnaire completely and honestly. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed in writing.

As hypothesized in Chapter One, it was expected that this study would confirm the plethora of previous research linking authoritative parenting to positive outcomes in offspring. More specifically, authoritative was expected to remain the parenting style most frequently associated with higher grade point average in the sample population of undergraduate students. The independent variables in this research study were the three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive, as determined by participant responses to the PAQ. The dependent variable was the grade point average of the college student participant.

Design

This study employed a correlational design. A correlation coefficient was used to determine the direction and strength of the association between the parenting style and academic success as measured by grade point average.

Summary

Rowan University undergraduates recruited through the subject pool served as participants for this study. These participants were given demographic questions to answer in addition to completing the Parental Authority Questionnaire. It was hypothesized that a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and academic achievement would exist among subjects who completed the instruments administered. A correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis by determining the association between parenting style and grade point average.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if a significant correlation exists between parenting style and academic achievement in college undergraduates. More specifically, it was hypothesized that subjects who scored high in authoritative parenting style would yield higher grade point averages based upon previous research highlighting the various benefits of this style of parenting. A correlational analysis was used to examine the relationship between parenting style and academic success as measured by grade point averages. Correlations between the three parenting styles were also calculated. Finally, additional correlational analyses were performed separately for male and female participants to determine if gender had an effect on the results.

Results

Descriptive statistics regarding the scores on the PAQ are illustrated in Table 4.1. The highest possible score for each level of parenting style was 50. The mean scores for permissive, authoritarian and authoritative were 25.61, 29.83, and 35.27, respectively. The mean grade point average for the group was 2.9886 ($SD = .509$).

Table 4.1 PAQ Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Permissive	41	13	35	25.61	6.078
Authoritarian	41	15	42	29.83	7.729
Authoritative	41	17	48	35.27	6.943
GPA	41	1.89	4.00	2.9886	.50927
Age	41	18	23	19.49	1.362
Valid N (listwise)	41				

A correlation matrix was constructed to examine the relationship among authoritative parenting, authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting and grade point averages. As hypothesized, a positive correlation between authoritative parenting and grade point averages was found. The Pearson correlation coefficient had a value of .424, which was significant at the 0.01 level. One additional significant finding was a negative correlation between permissive and authoritarian parenting style ($r = -.616$), this was also significant at the 0.01 level. This correlation matrix is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Correlation Matrix

		GPA	Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative
GPA	Pearson Correlation	1	.083	-.215	.424(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.607	.176	.006
	N	41	41	41	41
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	.083	1	-.616(**)	-.185
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.607	.	.000	.246
	N	41	41	41	41
Authoritarian	Pearson Correlation	-.215	-.616(**)	1	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.176	.000	.	.942
	N	41	41	41	41
Authoritative	Pearson Correlation	.424(**)	-.185	-.012	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.246	.942	.
	N	41	41	41	41

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To further examine this relationship, separate correlation matrices were constructed for males and females to look at the role of gender. For the male sample, a significant negative relationship was found between authoritarian and permissive parenting ($r = -.783$). This correlation was significant at the 0.01 level. Additionally, a positive correlation was found between permissive parenting and grade point average ($r = .519$). This correlation was significant at the 0.05 level. These were the only significant findings when looking specifically at the male sample. This process was

repeated for the females in the sample. There were three significant relationships found when looking only at the females. As seen when looking at the entire sample, a significant positive correlation was found between authoritative parenting and grade point average in females ($r=.477$). Significant negative correlations were found between authoritarian and permissive parenting styles ($r=-.461$) and authoritative and permissive ($r=-.410$). These three findings for the females were significant at the 0.05 level. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate the separate correlational matrices for the male and female samples respectively.

Table 4.3 Correlation Matrix for Male Sample

Male Sample		Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Grade Point Average
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	1	-.783(**)	.173	.519(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.507	.033
	N	17	17	17	17
Authoritarian	Pearson Correlation	-.783(**)	1	-.177	-.360
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.496	.156
	N	17	17	17	17
Authoritative	Pearson Correlation	.173	-.177	1	.374
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.507	.496	.	.139
	N	17	17	17	17
Grade Point Average	Pearson Correlation	.519(*)	-.360	.374	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.156	.139	.
	N	17	17	17	17

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.4 Correlation Matrix for Female Sample

Female Sample		Permissive	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Grade Point Average
Permissive	Pearson Correlation	1	-.461(*)	-.410(*)	-.224
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.023	.047	.292
	N	24	24	24	24
Authoritarian	Pearson Correlation	-.461(*)	1	.014	-.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.	.947	.732
	N	24	24	24	24
Authoritative	Pearson Correlation	-.410(*)	.014	1	.477(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	.947	.	.018
	N	24	24	24	24
Grade Point Average	Pearson Correlation	-.224	-.074	.477(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.292	.732	.018	.
	N	24	24	24	24

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Summary of Findings

A significant positive correlation was found between authoritative parenting and grade point averages, supporting the proposed hypothesis for this study. The only other significant finding when looking at the entire sample was a significant negative correlation between authoritarian and permissive parenting scores. When separating the groups by gender the hypothesis was again supported for the females. This pattern differed for the male sample, whose grade point averages correlated positively with permissive parenting rather than authoritative. Both gender groups had significant negative correlations between authoritarian and permissive parenting and the female sample also had a significant negative correlation between authoritative and permissive parenting.

Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

Discussion

Parenting style has been linked to a wide-range of outcomes in offspring. The benefit of authoritative parenting pervades across many areas of development as documented studies have shown. Previous research highlighting the advantages of authoritative parenting was further evidenced from this study. The hypothesized positive relationship between authoritative parenting and grade point averages was supported. This suggests that academic success in college students may be related to a child-rearing practice that emphasizes both demanding and responsive qualities. Parents who are assertive but not intrusive or restrictive may expect better outcomes for their children than those who employ a restrictive, authoritarian environment in the home. The significant negative correlation between authoritarian and permissive parenting was logical since these two styles represent opposite modes of discipline and a converse method of communication between parent and child. This relationship held its strength even when looking at the samples separately by gender. This significant negative relationship found between opposite parenting practices supported the Parental Authority Questionnaire as an adequate tool of distinguishing between parenting styles. There was no significant negative relationship between authoritarian parenting or permissive parenting and grade point average as expected. This may have been due to an insufficient sample size or it may simply suggest that benefits of authoritativeness do not necessarily imply detriments in other styles of parenting.

Although the positive relationship held up when looking at females alone, it failed to do so in the male sample. Rather, permissive parenting and grade point averages correlated positively in the males. One possible explanation may be that there is a gender difference as to which parenting style is related to higher academic achievement.

Although this study was targeted for college freshmen and sophomores, seven students that were either juniors or seniors enrolled in a lower level psychology course participated in this study. Of these seven students, six were male. Another explanation for the different relationship in the males may be explained by this percentage of older participants within the sample. The older the student, the less likely they are to be bound to their parents restrictions and the more accepted they may be as adults. Hence, these male students may have been more likely to view their parents as permissive since they were toward the end of their college career. The higher number of older males in the sample provided an alternative to the idea that males and females respond differently to parenting styles.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

In order to generalize to the larger population, a larger sample size should be used in subsequent studies in this area. The sample size of 41 individuals represented a serious limitation to this study; however, the fact that significance was obtained despite a small sample size may further indicate strengths in authoritative parenting. In Chapter Two, the universal benefits of authoritative parenting were documented. A cross cultural review of literature supported the universal benefits of authoritativeness over authoritarianism. This particular study was conducted at a university in a suburban area with a homogenous population. According to a spring 2006 research brief published by

Rowan University's Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 79.5% of enrolled students are Caucasian as compared to only 9% African American, 6% Hispanic and 3% Asian. Future research examining cross cultural benefits of authoritative parenting would necessitate the utilization of a much more diverse sample. It is important to acknowledge that low GPAs could be the result of many other factors such as family tragedy, substance abuse, mental disorder, learning disability or other distracting life event which were not encompassed by the realms of this study. Issues such as the number of siblings in a home, birth order or the age of parents are also possible contributing factors worth exploring. Controls for these variables were not incorporated into this study and future research may benefit from acknowledging these variables. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Diana Baumrind's fourth parenting style, neglectful, was not measured by the PAQ. Future research may benefit from using a tool to measure this type of parenting as to provide further clarity between styles of parenting. This was merely a correlational study and such studies cannot predict causality. Therefore it cannot be concluded that authoritative parenting influences grade point averages from this study alone. Future experimental studies should be performed to identify the underlying cause of the relationship. Subsequent research may also benefit from examining the negative aspects of authoritarian and permissive parenting. Positive aspects of authoritative parenting have been repeatedly supported. Perhaps now the most effective way to provoke change is to examine where the other two styles are lacking so that parents in the future have a stronger knowledge base. Gaining a stronger understanding of the negative aspects of authoritarian and permissive parenting may help parents improve areas of well-being in subsequent generations of children.

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