

Constellations of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Styles in Adolescence: Congruity and Well-Being

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ABSTRACT. The current study examined patterns of maternal and paternal parenting styles in adolescence and the variations in adolescent well-being as a function of parenting style combinations. Participants included 272 students in grades 9 and 11 from a public high school in a large city in the northeastern United States. Participants completed measures of perceived maternal and paternal parenting styles and indices of psychological well-being. Distinct patterns of

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maternal and paternal style constellations were established. The most common constellation found was the combination of a neglectful mother and a neglectful father. Participants with either both parents authoritative or only mother authoritative reported higher well-being than participants with no authoritative parent. Participants with no permissive parent or with a permissive mother scored lower on self-esteem than participants with only a permissive father. Finally, participants with either parent neglectful or both parents neglectful scored lower on self-esteem than participants without a neglectful parent. The current study illustrates the need to examine constellations of maternal and paternal parenting in studies assessing the familial variables contributing to adolescent well-being.

KEYWORDS. Adjustment, adolescence, familial variables, parenting styles, well-being

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades an abundance of studies have examined parenting behaviors and their role in the socialization of children and adolescents. Within the broader interest in parenting behaviors, a considerable literature exists on the predictors and consequences of more specific parenting styles drawing from the seminal work of Baumrind (1971). The categories of parenting styles outlined by Baumrind (1971) were *authoritative*, parents showing considerable responsiveness toward their children in combination with demands; *authoritarian*, parents demanding but not very responsive to their children; and *permissive*, parents who were high in responsiveness but low on demands. Subsequent research has expanded on Baumrind's three parenting styles by using four classifications of parenting styles. The four classifications differentiate between two categories of permissive parenting: *indulgent*, parents who are high in responsiveness but low on demands, and *neglectful*, parents who are low on both responsiveness and demands (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

The first focus of the current study is on the congruity between adolescent perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting styles. Several studies assessed differences between mothers and fathers in

styles used. Using a sample of preschool children, Russell and colleagues (1998) reported that fathers were more likely to use the authoritarian style of parenting, whereas mothers preferred the authoritative style. Similarly, Smetana (1995) found that during adolescence mothers were more likely to use authoritative styles than fathers. Other studies examined parenting style differences based on the gender of the child (Lytton & Romney, 1991). However, little is known about similarities or differences in parenting styles used by mothers and fathers in the same home. Winsler, Madigan, and Aquilino (2005) report modest similarities in styles used by two parents within the same home for preschool children. Forehand and Nousiainen (1993) found some correlation between mothers and fathers on several dimensions of parenting in adolescence. However, parenting style congruity dynamics in adolescence are largely unidentified.

A second focus of the current study is on the association between patterns of adolescent perceptions of parenting styles and well-being. From a theoretical perspective, individual psychology's parenting model, based on Adlerian theory, suggests that an autocratic parenting style may not be effective because it implies a superior-inferior relationship between parent and child. This approach to child rearing fails to produce responsibility in children. Furthermore, permissive parenting is potentially harmful for children because it fails to give them a sense of personal achievement. A democratic parenting style was suggested as the most ideal for psychological adjustment because behavioral compliance and psychological autonomy are viewed as interdependent objectives (Gfroerer, Kern, & Curlette, 2004).

Research using Baumrind's classification has produced consistent findings suggesting that an "authoritative" parenting pattern of warmth, nonpunitive discipline and consistency is associated with several adaptive developmental outcomes in children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Parenting styles have been found to relate to children's classroom adjustment as well (Kauffman et al., 2000). Additionally, authoritative parenting has been shown to foster secure attachments between children and their caregiver and to contribute to a greater sense of autonomy (Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003)

Studies using adolescent samples, although not as extensive as work using samples of children, forwarded similar findings when examining variations in academic achievement, behavior problems, and psychological well-being (Fletcher, Darling, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1995; Gonzalez, Holbein, & Quilter, 2002; Weiss & Schwarz,

1996). Lamborn et al. (1991) found that adolescents who considered their parents to be authoritative had higher levels of psychological competence and lower levels of psychological and behavioral dysfunction in comparison with adolescents who perceived their parents as neglectful. Students who believed they had authoritarian parents were found to do well with obedience and conformity to adult standards; however, they showed relatively poor self-conceptions. Adolescents with permissive/indulgent parents were found to have strong self-confidence but they also experienced more problems with drug experimentation and misconduct in and outside of school. In a 2-year follow-up of the Lamborn et al. (1991) study, Steinberg et al. (1994) reported similar patterns of adjustment as a function of parenting style over time.

Although current research indicates that parenting behaviors are related to adolescent adjustment, most work in the area has combined maternal and paternal styles in a general categorization of parenting styles without considering the unique contribution of paternal parenting styles (Conrade & Ho, 2001). More importantly, studies examining the patterns of congruity between maternal and paternal parenting styles have been limited.

The need to examine the interdependence of maternal and paternal parenting styles is based on recent advances in systems-driven approaches to the study of social networks that emphasize the need to examine specific relationships in the context of the entire social network system. The dynamic nature of social relationships, and the importance of assessing these integrated processes, has been the focus of several theoretical and empirical investigations (Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt, 1993, 1994; Magnusson, 1998).

Current Study

The goal of this study was to examine patterns of congruity between adolescent perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting styles and variations in well-being as a function of these patterns.

The current study examines congruity of maternal and paternal parenting styles and adolescent well-being using four classifications of parenting styles, differentiating between two categories of permissive parenting, indulgent and neglectful (Steinberg et al. 1994). Traditionally, these two categories of parenting styles have been lumped together, possibly due to the inherent difficulty in obtaining

a sample of adolescents from neglectful homes. Most work on adolescents and their families, using “active” consent procedures (i.e., requiring written consent from parents before their adolescents participate in the study), has screened out a disproportionate number of potential participants from neglectful homes because the “neglectful” parents may be less likely to respond to the researchers’ request. The current study, using a passive consent procedure described in Methods, assessed congruity of maternal and paternal parenting styles using all four parenting styles and psychological adjustment in a sample of adolescents.

Classification of parenting styles in the current study was based on the perceptions of adolescents. Although parents may not share the perceptions of their children about parenting styles, considering the current study’s focus on the relation between parenting styles and adolescent adjustment, we chose to assess the child’s perception of style.

METHODS

Sample

Participants in the current study included 272 students (145 boys and 127 girls) in grades 9 and 11 from a public high school in a suburban area of a large city in the northeastern United States. The sample included 146 students in 9th grade ($M = 14.69$, $SD = .55$) and 126 students in 11th grade ($M = 16.55$, $SD = .50$). By ethnicity the sample consisted of 253 European-Americans, 10 African-Americans, 5 Hispanic-Americans, 3 Asian-Americans, and 1 with no ethnicity data. The ethnic composition of the sample was comparable with the general ethnic make-up of the school district. One hundred ninety-four participants (71.3%) reported having married biological parents, 57 participants (21%) reported that their parents were divorced, 13 participants (4.8%) reported having not married and not divorced parents, and for 8 participants (2.9%) we were missing marital status data.

Procedures

With the approval of the school district and our university’s internal review board, we used a “passive” consent procedure (i.e.,

informing the parents in advance about the nature of the study and providing the opportunity for the parents to call our research office if they did not want their child participating in the study) enabling us to truly assess all four categories of parenting, including the “neglectful” style. Studies using similar procedures have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education (Steinberg et al., 1994).

Letters were sent to the parents of the students in the target classes informing them of the nature of the study, and the opportunity to contact the child’s school or our office about the project was provided. Less than 1% of parents requested that we not involve their child in the project. Participants were administered questionnaires in class and received a small gift for taking part in the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Measures

Measures included indices of maternal and paternal parenting style as well as indices of psychological well-being. The following specific measures were analyzed in the current study.

Maternal and Paternal Parenting Style

Parenting styles were assessed, for maternal and paternal styles separately, using the acceptance/involvement and the strictness/supervision subscales of the Authoritative Parenting Measure (Steinberg et al., 1994). Participants were first asked to indicate what type of female/male is raising them and subsequently asked to answer all the mother/father questions in reference to the individual indicated. Birth mothers were reported on by 93.8% of the participants and birth fathers were reported on by 84.6% of the participants. Sample items on the acceptance/involvement subscale, which assesses the adolescents’ perception of parental love, acceptance, involvement, and closeness, included “I can count on my mother/father to help me out if I have some kind of problem” and “When my mother/father wants me to do something, she/he explain(s) why.” Responses to each of the nine items on the acceptance/involvement subscale were scored on a 1 to 5 Likert style scale, with higher scores indicating higher acceptance/involvement. Sample items on the strictness/supervision subscale, which assesses the adolescents’ perception of parental supervision and monitoring, included “How much does your mother/father try to know where you go at night?” and “How much

does your mother/father really know what you do with your free time?" This set of items was scored on a 1 to 3 Likert style scale. Additionally, the strictness/supervision subscale included the items "In a typical week, what is the latest you can stay out on school nights?" and "In a typical week, what is the latest you can stay out on weekends?" These two items were scored on a 1 to 7 Likert style scale. After combining both sets of items in the strictness/supervision subscale, totaling eight items, higher scores indicated higher strictness/supervision. Alpha reliabilities were .82 for the maternal acceptance/involvement subscale, .71 for the maternal strictness/supervision subscale, .85 for the paternal acceptance/involvement subscale, and .77 for the paternal strictness/supervision subscale. The scores were used to place participants into one of four parenting style categories as detailed in the result section.

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being was assessed with three commonly used self-administered measures. These were measures of self-esteem, depression, and life satisfaction.

Self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965). A sample item is "I am able to do things as well as most other people." Each of the 10 items is given a score from 1 to 5, and higher scores indicate more positive self-esteem. The alpha reliability for the sample was .90.

Depression was assessed with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Short Depression Scale (Andresen, Malmgren, Carter, & Patrick, 1994; Radloff, 1977). In this scale participants are given a list of feelings and behaviors and are asked to indicate how often they have felt this way during the past week. Sample items include "I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me" and "I felt that everything I did was an effort." Responses to each of the depression items were scored on a 1 to 4 scale, 1 being "rarely or none of the time" and 4 being "all of the time," with higher scores indicating higher levels of depression. The alpha reliability for the sample was .80.

Life satisfaction was measured by asking the participants to indicate on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being extremely dissatisfied and 7 being extremely satisfied, how satisfied they are with their life as a whole these days (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976).

TABLE 1. Sample Size and Scores on the Acceptance/Involvement and Strictness/Supervision Scales of Maternal Parenting Styles Category

Parenting style	Sample size		Acceptance Scores		Strictness Scores	
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Authoritative	99	36.8	4.40	.33	3.11	.27
Authoritarian	60	22.3	3.36	.38	3.97	.24
Permissive	31	11.5	4.28	.32	2.38	.29
Neglectful	79	29.4	3.21	.46	2.29	.32
Total	269	100	3.80	.67	2.75	.46

Participants without a mother or a father were excluded from analysis.

RESULTS

To assess parenting styles, the sample was divided into four parenting style groups based on a median split of acceptance/involvement (median for mother = 3.78, father = 3.89) and strictness/supervision (median for mother = 2.75, father = 2.54) scores.

The current study used the categorical approach of parenting practices, as opposed to the dimensional approach, to reflect the theoretical paradigm of parenting practices proposed by Baumrind (1971). Based on the categories outlined by Baumrind (1971), *authoritative* parents were those scoring above average on both the acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision scales, *authoritarian* parents were those scoring below average on the acceptance/involvement subscale and above average on the strictness/supervision subscale, *permissive* parents were those scoring above

TABLE 2. Sample Size and Scores on the Acceptance/Involvement and Strictness/Supervision Scales of Paternal Parenting Styles Category

Parenting style	Sample size		Acceptance Scores		Strictness Scores	
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Authoritative	71	27.3	4.48	.33	3.08	.26
Authoritarian	34	13.1	3.51	.35	3.01	.26
Permissive	47	18.1	4.36	.30	2.35	.26
Neglectful	108	41.5	3.21	.58	2.13	.38
Total	260	100	3.80	.73	2.55	.53

Participants without a mother or a father were excluded from analysis.

average on the acceptance/involvement subscale and below average on the strictness/supervision subscale, and *neglectful* parents were those scoring below average on both the acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision scales. This categorization was followed separately for maternal and paternal styles. Information on the size of each of the four maternal and paternal categories and scores on the acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision scales for the categories can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

In terms of parental gender, mothers were most likely to use the authoritative style of parenting, whereas fathers were most likely to use the neglectful style. Grade and gender differences in parenting styles was assessed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with grade and gender as the independent variables and scores on the maternal and paternal acceptance/involvement and strictness/supervision scales as the dependent variables.

The main effect of grade was significant for paternal strictness/supervision, $F(1,257) = 11.16, p < .01$. Participants in 9th grade reported higher scores ($M = 2.65, SD = .57$) on the strictness/supervision scale than participants in 11th grade ($M = 2.42, SD = .46$).

TABLE 3. Frequency and Percentages of Mother and Father Parenting Style Combinations

Parenting Style Combinations	Frequency	Percent
Neglectful mother–neglectful father	59	23
Neglectful mother–authoritarian father	2	.8
Neglectful mother–permissive father	10	3.9
Neglectful mother–authoritative father	3	1.2
Authoritarian mother–neglectful father	20	7.8
Authoritarian mother–authoritarian father	19	7.4
Authoritarian mother–permissive father	7	2.7
Authoritarian mother–authoritative father	12	4.7
Permissive mother–neglectful father	15	5.8
Permissive mother–authoritarian father	0	0
Permissive mother–permissive father	13	5.1
Permissive mother–authoritative father	2	.8
Authoritative mother–neglectful father	13	5.1
Authoritative mother–authoritarian father	13	5.1
Authoritative mother–permissive father	17	6.6
Authoritative mother–authoritative father	52	20.2
Total	257	100

Parenting Style Combinations

The percentages for each combination of maternal and paternal parenting styles can be found in Table 3. The most common patterns found was the neglectful mother and neglectful father combination with 23% of the sample reporting to be in this category.

The second most common pattern found was the authoritative mother and authoritative father combination with 20.2% of the sample falling into this category followed by the authoritarian mother and neglectful father combination with 7.8% of the sample included in this category.

The least common pattern found was the permissive mother and authoritarian father with not a single participant falling into this category. The second least common two patterns were the neglectful mother and authoritarian father and the permissive mother and authoritative father, with .8% of the participants in both of these categories. Finally, congruity between mother and father style, regardless of combination, was found in 55.7% of the cases.

Patterns of Parenting Style and Well-Being

Considering the fact that the size of each maternal and paternal parenting style combination was not large enough to compare the outcomes associated with all style combinations, analyses were performed using more general combinations.

Authoritative

First, the sample was divided into four groups: those with both parents authoritative, those with only a mother authoritative, those with only a father authoritative, and those with no authoritative parent.

Differences in well-being between the four authoritative possibilities were assessed using a MANOVA with authoritative combination group and gender as the independent variables and self-esteem, depression, and life satisfaction as the dependent variables. The main effect of authoritative group was significant for self-esteem, $F(3,265) = 12.29, p < .01$; depression, $F(3,265) = 9.16, p < .01$; and life satisfaction, $F(3,265) = 15.21, p < .01$.

Least square difference (LSD) post-hoc comparisons yielded significant differences between the group with no authoritative parent and the group with either both parents authoritative or only mother

TABLE 4. Self-Esteem, Depression, and Life Satisfaction for Maternal and Paternal Authoritative Style Combinations

Authoritative Style Combinations	Self-Esteem		Depression		Life Satisfaction	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Both authoritative	4.21*	(.62)	1.64*	(.44)	6.14* ^{***}	(1.01)
Only mother authoritative	4.15**	(.64)	1.79**	(.46)	5.74**	(.95)
Only father authoritative	3.95	(.47)	1.78	(.48)	5.41**	(.94)
Nonauthoritative	3.64* ^{**}	(.81)	2.05* ^{***}	(.59)	4.92* ^{**}	(1.42)

* and **Denotes a significant difference from each other at $p < .01$.

^{***}denotes a significant difference from each other at $p < .05$.

authoritative, with the participants with no authoritative parent scoring lower on self-esteem and life satisfaction and higher on depression than participants with either both parents authoritative or only mother authoritative. Additionally, participants with two authoritative parents scored higher on life satisfaction than participants with only an authoritative father (Table 4).

Authoritarian

Next, the sample was divided into four groups: those with both authoritarian parents, those with only an authoritarian mother, those with only an authoritarian father, and those with no authoritarian parent.

Differences in well-being between the four authoritarian possibilities were assessed using a MANOVA with authoritarian combination group and gender as the independent variables and self-esteem, depression, and life satisfaction as the dependent variables. The main effect of authoritarian group approached significance for life satisfaction, $F(3,265) = 2.52$, $p = .06$.

LSD post-hoc comparisons yielded significant differences between the group with no authoritarian parent and the group with an authoritarian mother, with the participants with no authoritarian parent scoring higher on life satisfaction than participants with an authoritarian mother (Table 5).

Permissive

Subsequently, the sample was divided into four groups: those with both parents permissive, those with only permissive mother, those with only a permissive father, and those with no permissive parent.

TABLE 5. Self-Esteem, Depression, and Life Satisfaction for Maternal and Paternal Authoritarian Style Combinations

Authoritarian Style Combinations	Self-Esteem		Depression		Life Satisfaction	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Both authoritarian	3.52	(.79)	1.99	(.65)	5.06	(1.34)
Only mother authoritarian	3.80	(.72)	1.96	(.51)	4.92*	(1.40)
Only father authoritarian	4.05	(.67)	1.82	(.59)	5.60	(1.35)
Nonauthoritarian	3.87	(.79)	1.90	(.56)	5.40*	(1.33)

*Denotes a significant difference from each other at $p = .06$.

Differences in well-being between the four permissive possibilities were assessed using a MANOVA with permissive combination group and gender as the independent variables and self-esteem, depression, and life satisfaction as the dependent variables. The main effect of permissive group was significant for self-esteem, $F(3,265) = 2.75$, $p < .05$.

LSD post-hoc comparisons yielded significant differences between participants with no permissive parent or with a permissive mother and participants with only father as permissive. Participants with no permissive parent or with a permissive mother scored lower on self-esteem than participants with only a permissive father (Table 6).

Neglectful

Finally, the sample was divided into four groups: those with both parents neglectful, those with only a neglectful mother, those with only a neglectful father, and those with no neglectful parent.

TABLE 6. Self-Esteem, Depression, and Life Satisfaction for Maternal and Paternal Permissive Style Combinations

Permissive Style Combinations	Self-Esteem		Depression		Life Satisfaction	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Both permissive	4.07	(.82)	1.96	(.68)	5.92	(1.26)
Only mother permissive	3.69*	(.93)	2.08	(.71)	4.71	(1.61)
Only father permissive	4.16** **	(.79)	1.87	(.52)	5.45	(1.35)
Nonpermissive	3.80**	(.74)	1.90	(.54)	5.31	(1.32)

* and **Denotes a significant difference from each other at $p < .05$.

TABLE 7 Self-Esteem, Depression, and Life Satisfaction for Maternal and Paternal Neglectful Style Combinations

Neglectful Style Combinations	Self-Esteem		Depression		Life Satisfaction	
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)
Both neglectful	3.46*	(.65)	2.15*	(.55)	4.72*	(1.28)
Only mother neglectful	3.68***	(.98)	1.89	(.64)	5.07	(1.54)
Only father neglectful	3.66**	(.83)	2.00 ^c	(.57)	4.88**	(1.44)
Not neglectful	4.08*, **, ***	(.70)	1.79*, ***	(.52)	5.73*, **	(1.18)

* and **Denotes a significant difference from each other at $p < .01$.

***denotes a significant difference from each other at $p < .05$.

Differences in well-being between the four neglectful possibilities were assessed using a MANOVA with neglectful combination group and gender as the independent variables and self-esteem, depression, and life satisfaction as the dependent variables. The main effect of neglectful group was significance for self-esteem, $F(3,265) = 11.56$, $p < .01$; depression, $F(3,265) = 6.82$, $p < .01$; and life satisfaction, $F(3,265) = 10.96$, $p < .01$.

LSD post-hoc comparisons yielded significant differences on self-esteem between participants with either parent neglectful or both parents neglectful and participants without a neglectful parent. Additionally, the posthoc comparison yielded significant differences on depression and life satisfaction between participants with a neglectful father or both parents neglectful and participants without a neglectful parent.

Participants with either parent neglectful or both parents neglectful scored lower on self-esteem than participants without a neglectful parent. Additionally, participants with a neglectful father or both parents neglectful scored higher on depression and lower on life satisfaction than participants without a neglectful parent (Table 7).

DISCUSSION

The goals of the present study were to examine the congruity between maternal and paternal parenting styles in adolescence using the four classifications of parenting styles and to examine variations

in adolescents' well-being as a function of patterns of maternal and paternal parenting styles.

First, several parental differences in styles were found. Mothers were most likely to use the authoritative style of parenting, whereas fathers were most likely to use the neglectful style. These findings are consistent with Smetana (1995), who found that during adolescence mothers were more likely to use authoritative styles than fathers and with previous work suggesting that mothers undertake a greater role in parenting adolescents than do fathers (Forehand & Nousiainen, 1993). Although Conrade and Ho (2001) found differences between maternal and paternal styles based on the gender of the child in an Australian sample of college students, the current study did not reveal any gender differences.

Demographic differences in parenting styles were found only for age and paternal strictness/supervision. Ninth graders reported higher paternal strictness/supervision than did the 11th grade students. This finding is consistent with studies on overall parenting, suggesting that parents place more demands on younger children than older children (Grigorenko & Sternberg, 2000; Smetana, 1995).

Distinct patterns of maternal and paternal style constellations were established. Surprisingly, the most common constellation found was the combination of a neglectful mother and a neglectful father. This finding is consistent with the limited literature assessing parenting styles in general. In a study on parenting styles and adjustment in adolescence by Lamborn et al., (1991) 37.3% of the sample was categorized as coming from neglectful homes. The second most common pattern found was the authoritative mother and authoritative father combination. Perhaps, at the two extremes, individuals who take a more "hands-off" approach to parenting, as neglectful parents do, and those who are engaged in all aspects of parenting, as authoritative parents are, seek partners with similar approaches to parenting as they have.

In relation to the outcomes associated with patterns of parenting style, overall the results indicate that patterns of parenting styles are related to well-being in adolescents.

For authoritative parenting, participants with either both parents authoritative or only mother authoritative scored higher on self-esteem and life satisfaction and lower on depression than participants with no authoritative parent. These findings are consistent with previous work on children, based on Baumrind's emphasis on the

importance of parental warmth and nonpunitive discipline, suggesting a link between authoritative parenting practices and adjustment (Karavasilis et al., 2003; Kauffman et al., 2000; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Additionally, participants with two authoritative parents scored higher on life satisfaction than participants with only an authoritative father. Taken together, these findings seem to highlight the importance of authoritative mothering in comparison with authoritative fathering. Authoritative fathering did not seem to provide any additive benefit when authoritative mothering existed. Perhaps, based on Adler's individual psychology's parenting model, having an authoritative mother alone is enough to convey the interdependence between behavioral compliance and psychological autonomy (Gfroerer et al., 2004).

The importance of maternal style was highlighted further in relation to authoritarian parenting style. Participants with no authoritarian parent were found to score higher on life satisfaction than participants with an authoritarian mother.

However, of particular note is that in relation to permissive parenting, participants with no permissive parent or with a permissive mother scored lower on self-esteem than participants with only a permissive father. This finding seems to indicate that permissive fathering may not be as detrimental to the child as permissive mothering. The importance of fathers in the lives of children has received attention in empirical studies (Lamb, 1986). Nevertheless, although fathers are beginning to play a large role in the lives of children, fathers seem to serve a different function in parenting than do mothers (Lamb, 1986), which may account for the differences found in the current study. It is possible that because fathers serve a more playful role in the lives of children, having a permissive father may complement the fatherhood role and hence may not interfere with the child's well-being as much as having a permissive mother. As parenting studies assessing these relationships seldom included separate analyses for mothers and fathers, conclusions regarding these dynamics are necessarily speculative. These differences highlight the importance of examining the consequences of parenting practices separately for mothers and fathers.

Finally, participants with either parent neglectful or both parents neglectful scored lower on self-esteem than participants without a neglectful parent. Additionally, participants with a neglectful father or both parents neglectful scored higher on depression and lower on life satisfaction than participants without a neglectful parent. This

finding further highlights the significant role played by fathers in the adaptive development of their adolescent child.

The current study highlights the importance of examining process-oriented agents as part of the broader interest in well-being variations in adolescents. In general, it is evident that the interconnection between maternal and paternal parenting styles and well-being is a complex one that appears to be dependent on many variables and that may function differently at differing developmental stages. This interconnection is further evidence for the need to examine specific relationships in the context of the entire social network system. The dynamic nature of social relationships and the importance of assessing these integrated processes have been the focus of several recent theoretical and empirical investigations (Levitt et al., 1993, 1994; Magnusson & Stattin, 1998).

There are several limitations to the current study that future work in this area should address. First, the study does not solve the direction-of-effects problem. There is a possibility that the relationship between parenting styles and well-being is due to the influence of individual differences in adjustment on parenting styles, rather than the reverse. Additionally, the present results may not generalize beyond the homogeneous sample included in the study. Previous studies reported ethnic differences in parenting styles (Quah, 2004; Shek, 2001). Future work should use a sample drawn from a more urban, multiethnic community to assess the generality of the interconnection between parenting and well-being. Furthermore, utilizing a median split for classifying parenting styles, in addition to relying on the participants' perceptions of parenting styles, does not provide a classification in any absolute terms. The current classification must be viewed in relation to the perceptions of other individuals in the sample. Finally, based on new developments in systems theory and the interconnection between support providers and adjustment, future work must examine the outcomes associated with specific relationships in the context of the entire social network system. As Magnusson (1998) acknowledged, "the developmental processes of an individual cannot be understood by studying single variables in isolation from other, simultaneously operating variables" (p. 38).

CONCLUSION

Our results indicate that parenting practices are related to well-being in adolescence. Additionally, the current study breaks new

ground by examining the interconnection between maternal and paternal parenting styles and their association with adolescent well-being. Finally, when the current findings are viewed within the context of previous results on parenting practices and adolescent adjustment, there is some indication that these dynamics may be associated with developmental changes in these relationships across childhood and adolescence (McHale, Updegraff, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000). These developmental issues must be addressed in future research on parenting practices and adolescent well-being.

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