

Parental Influences on the Development of Adolescent Autonomy and Identity

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Two studies were undertaken to examine parental influences on autonomy and identity development. In Study 1, 262 adolescents in seventh and eleventh grades were given Kurtines's autonomy measure, Simmons's identity measure, and Elder's questions regarding the adolescents' perceptions of their parents' autocratic, democratic, or permissive parenting styles. Study 2 was a replication with 168 subjects. Across both studies it was found that sex-role socialization is more influential for autonomy development than is either level of parental power or age. Both age and father's use of democracy were the most influential variables on identity development.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been little research concerning parental child-rearing effects on adolescent autonomy and identity development. The classic work of Elder (1962, 1963) on the structural differences in child-rearing relationships continues to provide the prototypic description of alternative parenting styles, or levels of power, and their concomitant effects on adolescent autonomy. Similar research on identity development is notably lacking.

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Three parenting styles have been of particular interest in the literature, and are defined as follows:

- Autocratic: The youth is not permitted to express his/her views on issues concerning him/her or to take initiative in self-regulation.
- Democratic: The adolescent is encouraged to freely contribute to the discussion and solution of relevant issues, but the ultimate responsibility for the discussions remains invariably with the parents.
- Permissive: The adolescent has a more influential role in making decisions on matters which concern him/her than do the parents.

The above three styles are ordered on a power continuum, autocracy representing the most parental power. In general, adolescent autonomy is negatively related to level of parental power, although the frequency of parental explanation seems to be an ameliorating variable (Baumrind, 1968; Elder, 1962, 1963). Democratic parents, who encourage the contribution of their child to decision making while they retain some responsibility for the adolescent's decision, are likely to encourage responsible independence. Autocratic parents, on the other hand, tend not to encourage autonomous behavior, while the permissive parent encourages autonomy but not responsibility (Conger, 1977).

Surprisingly little research, however, has analyzed the differential effects of parental models on adolescent autonomy from a developmental perspective. Current research seems not to speak to the issue of whether child-rearing practices demonstrated in parental levels of power have differential effects on the emergence of autonomy at different periods in the adolescent developmental sequence.⁵ For example, autocratic parenting may not adversely affect the young adolescent's autonomy, since the adolescent may not yet be seeking or need independence since he/she will not be leaving home for several years. Only in late adolescence, when the person needs freedom, may parental autocracy become growth inhibiting. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the mother's or the father's parenting styles is most influential on autonomy development.

Because there are unanswered questions regarding the child-rearing and adolescent autonomy relation, we know little of the child-rearing and ego identity relation. In theory, since autonomy and identity are related personality constructs, parenting style should play a significant part in the adolescent's achievement of ego identity (Erikson, 1968; Gallatin, 1974). For instance, Newman and Newman (1978) theorize that parenting styles which encourage independence are best for the achievement of identity, but no data directly pertinent to their hypothesis are presented. Marcia (1966) has shown that

⁵ Although Elder (1963) examined some relations developmentally (e.g., parental power and desire to model the parent across seventh and twelfth grades), he collapsed across age when examining the autonomy and parental power relation.

adolescents who acquiesce to parental values do not achieve identity. The latter research, however, does not demonstrate whether particular parenting styles such as autocracy lead to identity foreclosure.

The purpose of this research is to examine parental influences on both adolescent identity and autonomy in both early and late adolescence. Two studies are reported, one in the Midwest and the other in the Northeast.

STUDY 1

Subjects

Subjects for the first study were recruited from two grades in a small midwestern school district. There were 69 male and 70 female seventh-grade students and 62 male and 61 female students in the eleventh grade, giving a sample total of 262 subjects.

Instruments

The identity, autonomy, and child-rearing variables were assessed by objective and standardized paper-and-pencil measures. The autonomy measure employed was developed by Kurtines (1978) from an item pool of the California Personality Inventory (Gough, 1969). This scale consists of 28 true and false items balanced for autonomy. Examples of test items demonstrating high positive correlations with autonomy ratings are the following: "I would be willing to describe myself as a pretty 'strong' personality." "I have no dread of going into a room by myself where other people have already gathered and are talking." Test items negatively related to rated autonomy are these: "People can pretty easily change me though I thought that my mind was already made up on the subject." "Criticism or scolding makes me very uncomfortable."

The results of validation analyses across three samples have provided evidence for the content, criterion-related, and construct validity of the scale, while the average reliability coefficient as determined by Hoyt's analysis of variance method was 0.61 (Kurtines, 1978).

The instrument employed to measure identity status, the Identity Achievement Scale (IAS), was designed by Simmons (1970). The IAS, a modification of Marcia's (1966) procedure, consists of 24 incomplete sentences, each of which is followed by two possible completions. Subjects are asked to select the completion item that best typifies their "true feelings." One completion item for each pair is scored for identity achievement. Examples of IAS items are the following:

It makes me feel good when

- a. I look back on the progress I have made in life.
- b. I can be with my friends and know they approve of me.

If one commits oneself

- a. one must know oneself.
- b. he should finish the task.

In both examples alternative b would receive positive scores for identity achievement. This is so in the first example because a clear, focused self-understanding is demonstrated, and in the latter example because an unequivocal endorsement of fulfilling commitments is preferred to a vague, ambiguous response. A test-retest reliability coefficient for the IAS as determined by the Pearson product-moment formula corrected for length was 0.76. The IAS has been significantly correlated with seven subscales of the Shostrom (1966) Personal Orientation Inventory and to two subscales of the Edwards (1954) Personal Preference Schedule. In addition, it has been found that IAS scores related to identity status through interview procedures (Simmons, 1969).

Levels of parental power in child-rearing relationships were assessed according to Elder's (1963) questionnaire method. This procedure poses two questions regarding parental child-rearing practices to each subject. The questions inquire how decisions are made between the subject and his/her father and between the subject and his/her mother. There are three answers presented in a multiple-choice format for each child-rearing interrogation, each choice response representing either a democratic, permissive, or authoritarian parenting style. The following is an example of a child-rearing question regarding father:

In general, how are most decisions made between you and your father?

- a. I have considerable opportunity to make my own decisions, but my father has the final word. (democratic)
- b. I can make my own decisions but my father would like for me to consider his opinion. (permissive)
- c. My father just tells me what to do. (autocratic)

Estimates of the reliability of this testing procedure have not typically been calculated in previous research because of its nominal structure and small number of items, although it seems to possess a considerable degree of face validity. In addition, this scale has been used extensively as an index of parenting style (Elder, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1971; Lesser and Kandel, 1969).

Procedure

Each subject was administered the scales in a randomized order to control for order effects. As a control for order effects in the Elder measure, two forms of the test were used, each form listing the three child-rearing alternatives for both father and mother in a randomized order. All measures were completed anonymously and in a group setting. Test scoring for each instrument was according to standard instructions.

Table 1. Study 1 Means and Standard Deviations for Identity and Autonomy as a Function of Grade, Sex, and Father's Parenting Style^a

Group	Father's parenting style											
	Autocratic			Democratic			Permissive			Parenting style collapsed		
	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N
Autonomy												
Seventh grade	8.85	2.27	28	8.84	2.50	58	9.38	3.14	49	8.88	2.75	135
Males	9.25	2.26	16	9.17	2.31	29	10.24	3.53	21	9.57	2.78	66
Females	8.33	2.27	12	7.72	2.50	29	8.75	2.70	28	8.20	2.57	69
Eleventh grade	10.37	3.83	16	10.75	2.62	44	10.51	2.87	55	10.51	2.94	115
Males	9.66	4.66	9	11.22	2.64	23	11.36	3.08	28	10.96	3.18	66
Females	11.28	2.43	7	10.24	2.57	21	9.63	2.89	27	10.05	2.62	55
Grade collapsed	9.41	2.98	44	9.44	2.78	102	9.93	3.06	104	9.63	2.95	250 ^a
Males	9.40	3.24	25	10.08	2.65	52	10.87	3.29	49	10.24	3.04	126
Females	9.42	2.69	19	8.78	2.80	50	9.11	2.60	55	9.03	2.75	124
Identity												
Seventh grade	10.83	2.79	28	11.26	3.17	58	10.96	3.39	49	11.06	3.13	135
Males	9.94	2.38	16	11.96	3.05	29	10.81	3.71	21	11.11	3.15	66
Females	12.00	2.95	12	10.55	3.19	29	11.07	3.19	28	11.00	3.13	69
Eleventh grade	12.50	4.27	16	12.41	3.09	44	12.49	3.09	55	12.48	3.18	115
Males	11.55	5.13	9	12.34	2.82	23	12.14	2.87	28	12.09	3.18	66
Females	13.71	2.75	7	12.47	3.43	21	12.85	3.32	27	12.88	3.16	55
Grade collapsed	11.43	3.45	44	11.75	3.17	102	11.76	3.29	104	11.73	3.22	250 ^b
Males	10.52	3.59	25	12.13	2.93	52	11.57	3.29	49	11.58	3.19	126
Females	12.63	2.92	19	11.36	3.39	50	11.93	3.32	55	11.87	3.26	124

^aMaximum autonomy = 28, maximum identity = 24.

^bTwelve subjects did not have fathers. They were not included in this analysis.

Results

The data were analyzed to determine the effects of autonomy and identity achievement scores across grade as a function of level of parental child rearing and gender. Autonomy and identity analyses are presented independently. Within either of the latter variables, father's style is analyzed separately from mother's style.

Autonomy. In order to examine the effect of child rearing practices by father on autonomy, a $2 \times 3 \times 2$ (grade \times father \times sex) analysis of variance was performed. Because the unequal distribution of subjects among the variable cells would lead to spurious conclusions regarding higher order interactions, the analysis of variance was calculated in this and in subsequent analyses so that the three-way interactions are pooled with the error sums of squares (Nie *et al.*, 1975). The analysis revealed significant main effects for grade, favoring eleventh-graders, $F(1, 240) = 21.15, p < 0.01$; and for sex, favoring males, $F(1, 240) = 11.15, p < 0.01$. No interaction reached significant levels (see Table I for means and standard deviations). As Table I shows, autonomy scores increased with age, and males were more autonomous than females.

The effects of child rearing by mothers was assessed via a grade \times mother \times sex ($2 \times 3 \times 2$) analysis of variance, which again indicated significant main effects for grade, $F(1, 252) = 20.20, p < 0.01$; and sex, $F(1, 252) = 11.40, p < 0.01$, but not for any two-way interaction. Means and standard deviations for mother's parenting style are shown in Table II. Together with the previous analysis, the present data indicate that parenting style had no measurable influence on the autonomous behavior of adolescents, although autonomy did increase with age, and males were slightly more autonomous than females.

Identity. Two analyses were performed to determine the effects of parenting style on identity achievement. Child rearing by father was assessed by a grade (2) \times father (3) \times sex (2) analysis of variance, which revealed significant effects for grade, $F(1, 240) = 8.02, p < 0.01$ (see Table I) and for the father \times sex interaction, $F(2, 240) = 3.18, p < 0.04$. A *post hoc* analysis of this interaction using the Scheffé procedure indicated that autocratic fathering style was significantly different ($p < 0.05$) from democratic fathering style across sex.⁶ An inspection of the means in Figure 1 shows that male identity was best under democratic and worst under autocratic fathering, while female identity was better under autocratic fathering. Furthermore, permissive child rearing by father seemed to have no differential effects on males' or females' identity

⁶The Scheffé procedure for analyzing significant interactions involves calculating (for example) the mean difference between sex under one level of parenting style (e.g., autocratic) and contrasting this value with the sex mean difference under another level of interest (e.g., democratic). Thus the autocratic-democratic contrast across sex would involve this comparison: $(\bar{X}_{ma} - \bar{X}_{fa}) - (\bar{X}_{md} - \bar{X}_{fd})$, where m = male, f = female, a = autocratic, d = democratic.

Table II. Study I Means and Standard Deviation for Identity and Autonomy as a Function of Grade, Sex, and Mother's Parenting Style

Group	Mother's parenting style											
	Autocratic			Democratic			Permissive			Parenting style collapsed		
	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N
Autonomy												
Seventh grade	8.81	2.50	21	8.90	2.60	63	8.89	3.04	55	8.88	2.75	139
Males	10.00	2.32	11	9.91	2.70	32	9.00	3.03	26	9.57	2.77	69
Females	7.50	2.07	10	7.87	2.06	31	8.79	3.11	29	8.20	2.57	70
Eleventh grade	10.00	3.67	5	10.31	2.85	59	10.76	2.99	59	10.51	2.94	123
Males	6.50	3.50	2	10.94	2.96	31	11.31	3.26	29	10.97	3.18	62
Females	12.33	0.57	3	9.61	2.60	28	10.23	2.66	30	10.05	2.62	61
Grade collapsed	9.04	2.72	26	9.58	2.80	122	9.82	3.17	115	9.63	2.96	262
Males	9.46	2.69	13	10.41	2.86	63	10.22	3.37	55	10.24	3.04	131
Females	8.61	2.78	13	8.69	2.47	59	9.45	2.98	59	9.03	2.75	131
Identity												
Seventh grade	10.43	2.84	21	11.28	3.20	63	11.03	3.17	55	11.06	3.13	139
Males	9.91	2.21	11	11.78	3.12	32	10.81	3.41	26	11.11	3.15	69
Females	11.00	3.43	10	10.77	3.25	31	11.24	2.98	29	11.00	3.13	70
Eleventh grade	12.60	2.61	5	12.13	2.93	59	12.83	3.46	59	12.49	3.18	123
Males	11.00	2.82	2	11.81	2.61	31	12.48	3.75	29	12.09	3.17	62
Females	13.67	2.31	3	12.50	3.25	28	13.17	3.19	30	12.88	3.16	61
Grade collapsed	10.85	2.88	26	11.69	3.09	122	11.95	3.42	115	11.76	3.22	262
Males	10.08	2.22	13	11.79	2.86	63	11.69	3.65	55	11.58	3.19	131
Females	11.61	3.33	13	11.59	3.34	59	12.20	3.19	59	11.87	3.26	131

achievement. As Table I shows, there was a significant identity increase with age, although (as noted in the interaction in Figure 1) the relative developmental change in identity from seventh to eleventh grade was mediated by autocratic or democratic parenting style by father and gender.

To assess the effect of parenting style of mother on identity achievement status a three-way (grade \times mother \times sex) analysis of variance was performed. The results of this analysis indicated only a significant main effect for grade, $F(1, 252) = 11.71, p < 0.001$ (see Table II). As noted earlier, this result reflects the general trend of increasing identity achievement scores with increasing age.

Discussion

In this study both autonomy and identity achievement scores increased with age. Gender differences in autonomy occurred regardless of the parenting style of either mother or father, with males being more autonomous than

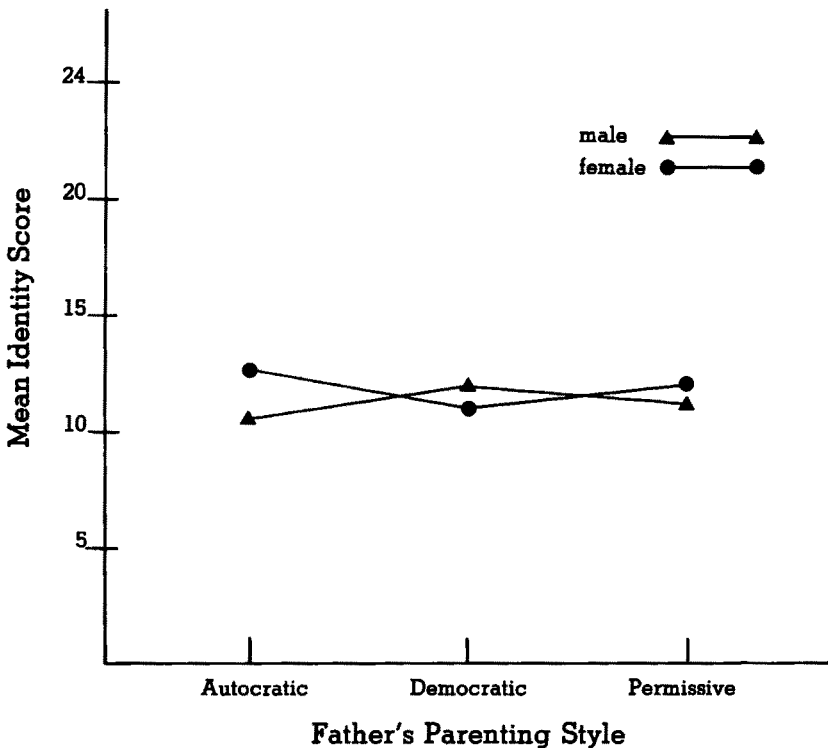


Fig. 1. Study 1 mean identity achievement as a function of father's parenting style and sex.

females. These sex differences are consistent with previous sex-role socialization research (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). Sex was interactive with father's child-rearing style in the identity analysis in that autocratic fathers promoted identity achievement in females, but not in males; while identity was enhanced in males when father was democratic. Mother's child-rearing style, on the other hand, had no measurable effect on identity achievement. Similarly, parenting style had no appreciable influence on the autonomy of the adolescents tested in this study. This latter finding contradicts previous empirical research. Where Elder (1962) found a negative relationship between adolescent autonomy and level of parental power, none was found here.

STUDY 2

Because of the complex nature of Study 1, it was thought necessary to replicate the findings before conclusions were drawn regarding parenting styles and autonomy and identity development. Study 2, therefore, is a replication in a different milieu to increase generality of the findings.

Subjects

Subjects for the second study were recruited from the seventh and eleventh grades in a school district located in a working class suburb of a large city in the Northeast. There were 54 male and 46 female seventh-graders, and 33 male and 35 female eleventh-graders, giving a sample total of 168 students.

Instruments and Procedure

The measures used to index autonomy, identity achievement, and type of parenting style in the previous study were again employed. The same procedure as in Study 1 was used here.

Results and Discussion

Analyses were performed to assess the effects of child-rearing practices, gender, and grade level on autonomy and identity achievement. As in Study 1, there are three levels of parenting styles (autocratic, democratic, permissive) and two levels of grade.

Autonomy. A three-way (grade \times father \times sex) analysis of variance was calculated to determine the influence of father's parenting style on adolescent autonomy. This analysis revealed a significant sex main effect, favoring males, $F(1, 156) = 13.42, p < 0.01$ (see Table III); and a significant father \times sex

Table III. Study 2 Means and Standard Deviations for Identity and Autonomy as a Function of Grade, Sex, and Father's Parenting Style

Grade	Father's parenting style												Parenting style collapsed				
	Autocratic			Democratic			Permissive			\bar{X}	SD	N					
	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N	\bar{X}	SD	N								
Autonomy																	
Seventh grade	10.41	4.15	17	10.68	2.87	34	10.97	2.51	49	10.78	2.94	100					
Males	13.25	3.80	8	11.00	2.82	17	11.00	2.53	29	11.33	2.90	54					
Females	7.89	2.52	9	10.35	2.98	17	10.95	2.54	20	10.13	2.90	46					
Eleventh grade	10.67	4.93	3	9.82	2.40	22	10.19	2.47	41	10.25	2.67	66					
Males	13.00	-	1	11.10	2.23	10	11.05	2.62	21	11.30	2.62	32					
Females	9.50	6.36	2	8.75	2.05	12	9.30	2.00	20	9.26	2.36	34					
Grade collapsed	10.45	4.13	20	10.33	2.71	56	10.62	2.51	90	10.56	2.84	166 ^a					
Males	13.22	3.59	9	11.04	2.57	27	11.02	2.54	50	11.32	2.78	86					
Females	8.18	3.09	11	9.69	2.71	29	10.12	2.41	40	9.75	2.69	80					
Identity																	
Seventh grade	9.76	4.25	17	12.38	2.51	34	10.49	2.85	49	11.01	3.16	100					
Males	10.50	3.58	8	11.82	2.67	17	10.34	3.14	29	10.83	3.08	54					
Females	9.11	4.88	9	12.94	2.27	17	10.70	2.43	20	11.22	3.27	46					
Eleventh grade	11.00	2.00	3	12.00	2.56	22	12.56	2.72	41	12.29	2.62	66					
Males	11.00	-	1	12.40	2.45	10	11.90	2.02	21	11.97	2.11	32					
Females	11.00	2.83	2	11.67	2.71	12	13.25	3.21	20	12.60	3.02	34					
Grade collapsed	9.95	3.97	20	12.23	2.52	56	11.43	2.96	90	11.52	3.01	166 ^a					
Males	10.56	3.36	9	12.04	2.56	27	11.00	2.81	50	11.26	2.80	86					
Females	9.45	4.52	11	12.41	2.50	29	11.97	3.09	40	11.81	3.22	80					

^aTwo subjects did not have fathers. They were not included in this analysis.

interaction, $F(2, 156) = 6.33, p < 0.002$. The Scheffé *post hoc* analysis of this interaction revealed that autocratic parenting by the father was significantly different from democratic and permissive parenting (see Figure 2). Male's autonomy was better under autocratic fathering, females' under permissive. An examination of the means suggests that permissive fathering seemed to minimize sex differences. As Figure 2 suggests, autonomous performance by females increased in a linear fashion from autocratic to democratic to permissive fathering style. This seems to indicate that fathering levels of power can be ordered in terms of the probability of increasing autonomy in females.

To index the effect of child rearing by mother on autonomy, a similar three-way (grade \times mother \times sex) analysis of variance was performed. The results indicated a significant main effect for sex, favoring males, $F(1, 156) = 14.42, p < 0.01$ (see Table IV), and a significant mother \times sex interaction, $F(2, 156) = 4.36, p < 0.014$. The Scheffé analysis of this interaction showed that autocratic mothering was significantly different from democratic. As

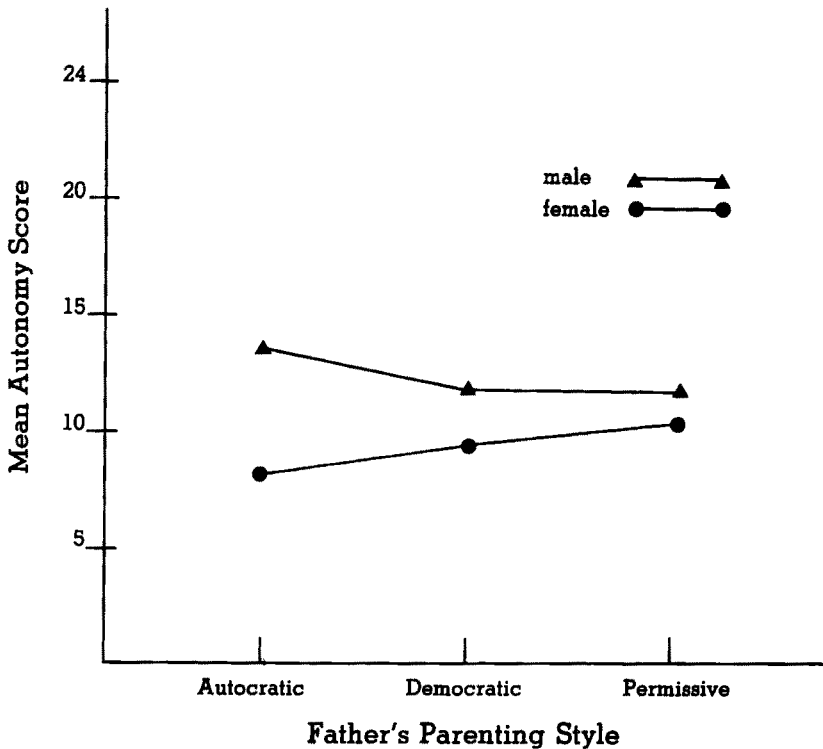


Fig. 2. Study 2 mean autonomy performance as a function of father's parenting style and sex.

Table IV. Study 2 Means and Standard Deviations for Identity and Autonomy as a Function of Grade, Sex, and Mother's Parenting Style

Grade	Mother's parenting style												Parenting style collapsed		
	Autocratic				Democratic				Permissive						
	\bar{X}	SD	N		\bar{X}	SD	N		\bar{X}	SD	N		\bar{X}	SD	N
Autonomy	9.92	3.23	13		10.11	2.67	28		11.28	2.97	57		10.78	2.94	98
Seventh grade															
Males	11.67	2.18	9		10.00	2.74	13		11.80	3.12	30		11.33	2.90	52
Females	6.00	0.86	4		10.20	2.70	15		10.70	2.72	27		10.13	2.89	46
Eleventh grade	10.00	4.24	2		10.33	2.82	15		10.23	2.64	51		10.25	2.67	68
Males	10.00	4.24	2		12.40	2.79	5		11.19	2.53	26		11.30	2.62	33
Females	-	-	- ^a		9.30	2.30	10		9.24	2.42	25		9.25	2.36	35
Grade collapsed	9.93	3.24	15		10.19	2.69	43		10.78	2.85	108		10.56	2.84	166 ^b
Males	11.36	2.46	11		10.67	2.89	18		11.52	2.85	56		11.32	2.78	85
Females	6.00	0.81	4		9.84	2.54	25		10.00	2.66	52		9.75	2.69	81
Identity	9.38	4.35	13		11.07	3.27	28		11.35	2.77	57		11.01	3.16	98
Seventh grade															
Males	9.55	3.54	9		10.69	3.37	13		11.27	2.91	30		10.83	3.08	52
Females	9.00	6.48	4		11.40	3.27	15		11.44	2.66	27		11.22	3.27	46
Eleventh grade	12.29	2.62	2		12.93	3.35	15		12.14	2.37	51		12.29	2.62	68
Males	11.50	3.53	2		11.40	2.79	5		12.11	1.96	26		11.96	2.11	33
Females	-	-	- ^a		13.70	3.46	10		12.16	2.78	25		12.60	3.02	35
Grade collapsed	9.67	4.20	15		11.72	3.38	43		11.72	2.61	108		11.52	3.01	166 ^b
Males	9.91	3.45	11		10.89	2.16	18		11.66	2.53	56		11.26	2.80	85
Females	9.00	6.48	4		12.32	3.47	25		11.79	2.72	52		11.81	3.22	81

^aAs noted previously, because some cells had an insufficient N, interactions involving such cells were pooled with the error sums of squares.

^bTwo children did not have a mother. They were excluded from this analysis.

Figure 3 shows, females did better in autonomy under democratic mothering, males under autocratic. The pattern suggested in Figure 3 for mothering is similar to that for fathering in Figure 2. Male autonomy did not seem to be highly influenced by a particular parenting style. Female autonomy, however, seemed to be suppressed by autocratic parenting, while it increased in a monotonic fashion by democratic and permissive parenting, respectively. It seems, then, that for this sample, level of parental power was a more crucial variable for females', than for males', autonomy development.

Identity. The effect of child rearing by father on identity achievement was assessed via a grade \times father \times sex analysis of variance. The result indicated a significant effect for grade, favoring the eleventh-graders, $F(1, 156) = 5.76$, $p < 0.02$; for father, $F(2, 156) = 3.78$, $p < 0.03$; and for the two-way grade \times father interaction, $F(2, 156) = 2.88$, $p < 0.059$. The mean identity scores across grade for fathering style are in Table II. The significant main effect for fathering

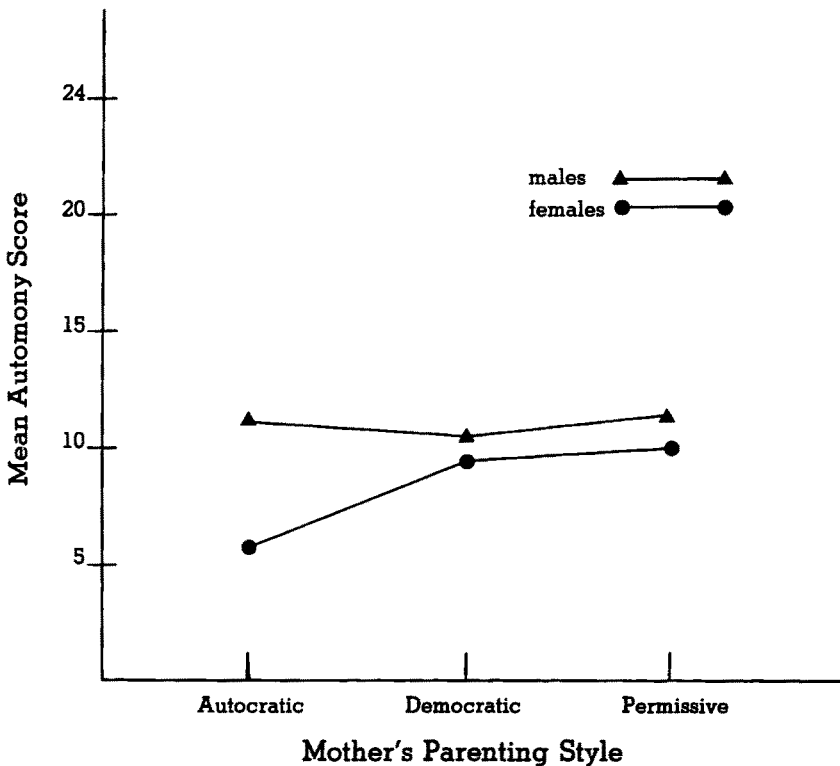


Fig. 3. Study 2 mean autonomy performance as a function of mother's parenting style and sex.

was further assessed via a *post hoc* Scheffé, which indicated that democratic fathering produced significantly higher identity scores when compared to autocratic or permissive parenting (see Table III). The grade \times fathering interaction analyzed via the Scheffé method indicated a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between democratic and permissive fathering across grade. As Figure 4 suggests, seventh-graders do well in identity under democratic fathering, but not as well under permissive or autocratic.

As can be noted in Figure 4, identity achievement scores within the eleventh grade showed only a modest improvement for the democratic and permissive child-rearing style when compared to the autocratic style. For this grade permissive fathering yields the highest incidence of identity achievement. One conclusion which follows from this analysis is that although identity formation generally improves throughout adolescence, the progression is complex and mediated by the particular expression of parental power by father. Young adolescents seem to require a balance of discretion and structure, which the

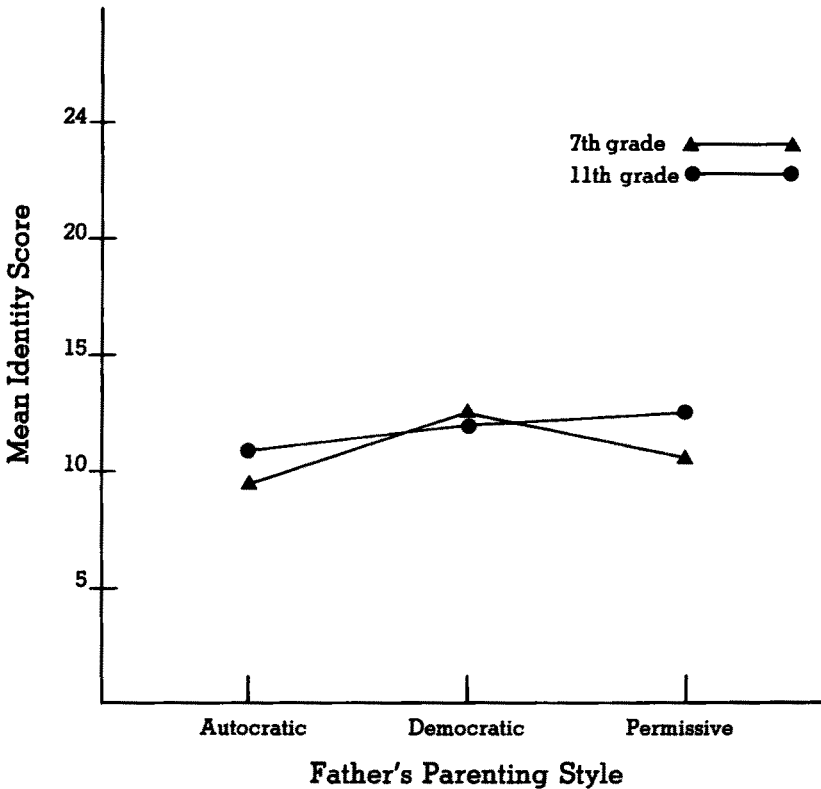


Fig. 4. Study 2 mean identity achievement as a function of father's parenting style and grade.

democratic regime provides, in order to maximize identity achievement. Too much or too little structure, on the other hand, corresponding to autocratic and permissive rearing, respectively, may not be useful at this age. As in Study 1, there were no influences of mother's parenting style on identity achievement.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

When one examines the results across both studies a number of revealing commonalities and differences emerge. For the autonomy analyses in both Study 1 and 2, the most crucial variable mediating autonomy development in adolescence was gender. Generally, males had higher autonomy scores than females. This result is most likely attributed to differential sex-role socialization in that males are encouraged to be assertive and autonomous, while females are rewarded for passivity and dependence (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974).

In addition to the sex main effect for autonomy reported for both samples, the sex differences that emerged in Study 2 were more complex. In this study permissive parenting by both mother and father tended to minimize sex differences in autonomy development. This conclusion is drawn from Figure 2 and 3, which report the father \times sex and mother \times sex interactions. Thus, there is a replication within Study 2 regarding the efficacious effects of permissive rearing, but not between studies. Although some samples of adolescents may benefit in autonomy by a permissive parenting style, a general conclusion to this effect is not warranted due to a lack of between-sample replication. While benefits of permissive rearing found here support Elder's (1962, 1963) previous research, the lack of complete replication of Elder's findings may be due to differences in the one-item method for assessing autonomy which he employed and the longer, objective procedure used here. In other words, different operational definitions of autonomy may lead to different conclusions.

An additional autonomy result that did not replicate between samples was the significant effect for grade. In Study 1 there was evidence that autonomy improves significantly from seventh to eleventh grades, suggesting that autonomy may follow a developmental progression from early to late adolescence. Such an effect was not found in Study 2. Thus, no definitive conclusions regarding the developmental nature of autonomy can be advanced here.

For the identity analyses, the clearest finding across both studies involved the consistent improvement in identity achievement with increasing age. Identity appears to be a developmental phenomenon as suggested not only by the data reported here but also by the epigenetic maturation theory of Erikson (1968). Autonomy, on the other hand, seems to be more influenced by socialization pressure as revealed by the lack of developmental replication and by the marked sex effects found in both studies.

Parenting influences revealed that only the fathers had a clear influence on identity achievement. This is seen in the father \times sex interaction of Study 1, the father main effect of Study 2, and the father \times grade interaction of Study 2. One possible explanation is the speculation by Marcia and Friedman (1970) that identity as defined by Erikson (1968) and operationalized by Marcia (1966) and Simmons (1970) constitutes male achievement in Western culture. If this is the case, then one would expect the father, not the mother, to be the predominant influence for both males' and females' identity development. If the male orientation is correct, however, one might also expect sex differences in identity achievement which did not occur here.

One explanation for this apparent contradiction is that fathers, by an as yet unknown mechanism, predominantly socialize both their male and female children for commitment. As an even more specific conclusion, the data suggest that the father's democratic style may best facilitate identity development in both male and female adolescents. This is reflected in the father's democratic influence on males in Study 1, the father's democratic influence as a main effect in Study 2, and the predominant influence of the father's democratic parenting for seventh-graders in Study 2.

In summary, while the existing literature has stressed the importance of parenting style on autonomy, the present studies have found more consistent parenting influences on identity. Autonomy seems to be more influenced by sex-role socialization than by level of parental power. Although little attention has been given to the parent-identity relation, the data here warrant further study. In the future, the differences in the way fathers and mothers use democracy should be explored. The conditions under which fathers, as opposed to mothers, employ this strategy may shed further light on the development of adolescent identity.

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