

# The Role of Parenting and Attachment in Identity Style Development

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study set investigates the role of the parent-child relationship in identity formation using a sample of 264 students collected from two high schools in the central Florida area. Maternal responsiveness fosters both the informational and normative identity style, as well as positive attachment. Such results suggest that a warm and loving maternal figure allows children to feel safe in their environment, which encourages exploration. Furthermore, positive attachment was found to significantly predict a normative identity style. Despite both responsiveness and attachment independently predicting a normative identity style, issues were raised in regards to multicollinearity of the variables utilized in this study. That is, although the measures claim to be measuring two different constructs, attachment and responsiveness do not act differently statistically.

**KEYWORDS:** parenting, attachment, identity style, adolescence, maternal responsiveness

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## INTRODUCTION

According to Erikson's (1956) theory of psychosocial development, identity is the crowning achievement of adolescence. That is, teenagers are faced with the challenge of answering the overwhelming question: who am I? While some adolescents address issues related to their sense of self, others remain ambivalent and rely on external cues to dictate their identity. In either case, many studies have shown that the formation of a carefully constructed identity is related to mental soundness and general well-being (e.g., Sroufe, 2005; Waterman, 2007; Berman, Weems, & Stickle, 2006). Furthermore, as proposed by Erikson (1950), one's identity guides each subsequent stage of psychosocial development. Given the importance of identity formation, one might wonder what factors determine how this challenge is resolved.

A variety of elements have been studied in regard to their role in identity development, such as peers, culture, school context, and psychopathology; however, one of the strongest influences lies in the earliest form of socialization: the parent-child relationship (e.g., Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002; Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2009; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985). Associations have been established between aspects of parenting and university students' identity processing styles (Berzonsky, 2004; Smits et al., 2008; Soenens, Berzonsky, Dunkel, & Papini, 2011). This study, however, is the first to investigate the tie between parenting style and identity style in high school students to see if exposure to a certain parenting style influences the ways in which adolescents synthesize incoming identity-relevant information, which is eventually used to construct their sense of self. Given Erikson's (1968) conceptualization of identity as a construct that guides later development, such influential factors are pivotal to researchers' understanding of identity formation as a whole.

### *The Identity Crisis*

Before one can examine how adolescents discover their sense of identity, a broader understanding of psychosocial development must be understood. Erik Erikson is most well-known for his work on psychosocial development throughout the life cycle (1950). Erikson proposed that, at various points throughout life, individuals encounter a crisis relative to the social demands of their respective age group. Each stage has two outcomes that fall on either end of a spectrum. On one end of the continuum, there

is an adaptive result, in which case, a virtue is learned and on the other end, the virtue is not learned and the result is a maladaptive outlook on the world in terms of the virtue, known as a core pathology.

Of Erikson's psychosocial stages, Identity vs. Role Confusion has received the most attention. As with the other crises, one may end up at any point along a continuum between identity and role confusion, in which the outcome is dependent on the extent to which an individual has committed to such things as an occupation and an ideology. Erikson (1950) holds that the successful outcome, the formation of a sense of ego identity, is a homogenous set of intra- and interpersonal characteristics, perceptions, and ideals represented by continuity and stability. Moreover, Erikson (1956) speculated that the ego identity, being comprised of all of our childhood experiences, should appropriately prepare us to deal with the challenges of adulthood. Following the conceptualization of the psychosocial theory, and in particular, identity development, researchers have followed up with different categorizations and modalities to describe the identity development process. In the following sections, the way that current research thinks of identity and how one forms an identity will be explored.

### Identity Status

Operationalizing some of Erikson's ideas, Marcia (1966) defined four identity statuses based on the level of identity exploration (i.e., the degree to which one has looked at and tested alternative beliefs) and commitment (i.e., the degree to which one displays continuity in his or her values) that an individual participates in during the identity journey. The identity statuses he described are known by identity researchers as diffusion (low exploration / low commitment), foreclosure (low exploration / high commitment), moratorium (high exploration / low commitment), and achievement (high exploration / high commitment).

### Identity-processing Style

Identity-processing style is the way in which an individual digests, interprets, and utilizes identity-relevant information (Berzonsky, 1989; Berzonsky, 1992). Three categories of identity-processing styles have been identified: informational, normative, and diffusive-avoidant. Before making any one commitment, individuals with an informational processing style tend to

enthusiastically seek out applicable identity information as self-motivated explorers. Individuals who adhere to the informational identity style tend to critically evaluate and select information from the sources around them to construct an identity. In a sample of university students, Berzonsky and Neimeyer (1994) found that due to the individual's tendency to explore his/her options, the informational identity style has been positively related to both the achievement and the moratorium statuses. On the other hand, the normative identity style is characterized by a tendency to uncritically adopt ideas of prominent figures in the adolescent's life. These prominent figures include peers, teachers, and parents. Furthermore, individuals of the normative identity style are likely to firmly adhere to their beliefs once instilled and will defend against contradicting viewpoints. The rigid adherence to belief, coupled with the consumption of ideas that require little exploration, results in the normative identity style being closely linked to the foreclosed identity status. Finally, diffuse-avoidant individuals may be bombarded with information, with which they are likely to do nothing. These individuals tend to procrastinate when making decisions related to their identity until contextual factors force a decision by indecision (e.g., it becomes too late to take advantage of an opportunity). The diffuse-avoidant identity style has been related to the diffuse identity status due to the combination caused by procrastination (which leads to a lack of commitment) and low motivation to explore philosophies.

These identity styles have been linked, both directly and indirectly, to a number of outcomes. The informational and normative identity styles are largely the most adaptive due to their tendency to elicit the least amount of neuroticism (Dollinger, 1995) and highest degrees of well-being (Vleioras & Bosma, 2005). Further, the informational and normative identity styles are linked to the stable identity statuses characterized by high identity commitment (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994). Commitment to an identity has largely been linked to lower levels of anxiety (Berman, Weems, and Stickle, 2006), maladjustment (Thoits, 1999), and distress (Berman, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2004). Such complications that arise as the result of a lack of identity commitment (typically the function of a diffuse-avoidant identity style [Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994]) stress the importance of identity development for psychological health. Given this evidence that suggests that identity is related to key clinical concerns such as anxiety and other intrapersonal distress, what influences identity

development is of great concern. However, there is a significant lack of knowledge in the literature pertaining to younger adolescent populations. This may raise questions concerning how younger adolescents form their identity and if the significant factors related to identity development in university samples are similar to those found in the younger adolescent population.

### *Parenting*

As mentioned in the introduction, parents and parenting styles have been identified as strongly influencing identity. Baumrind (1971) placed parents into three categories according to the degree to which they display two variables—responsiveness (warmth, love, support, care) and demandingness (control, supervision)—during child rearing. The first of Baumrind's categories is the authoritative (high responsiveness/high demandingness) parenting style. Authoritative parents set boundaries, explain punishments, and allow the child to actively participate in the family decision making process. In Baumrind's next category, the authoritarian parenting style (low responsiveness/high demandingness), parents tend to wield absolute power in the household. They value obedience, and expect the rules and restrictions they set to be closely followed. Baumrind's final parenting style is indulgent/permissive parenting (high responsiveness/low demandingness). This laissez-faire approach encourages the expression of the child's autonomy and dreams, but does not set boundaries. Maccoby and Martin (1983) expanded Baumrind's paradigm by identifying a fourth parenting style, known as uninvolved/negligent parenting (low responsiveness/low demandingness). Other than providing the child with his basic necessities, negligent parents are likely to practice a hands-off approach to parenting. The theoretical variations in parenting style, which result from different combinations and degrees of warmth and control, have been examined by multiple researchers who have related these combinations to various adolescent outcomes, such as school success, adaptability, and competence (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992).

### *Attachment*

Attachment, as defined by Bowlby (1969), is a deeply emotional bond between two people. It was speculated that attachment developed in children as a survival tool to gauge when exploration of the environment was safe. Bowlby also suggests that an internal working model

develops, in which children form expectations about how they may be treated by others in later social settings as a result of their experiences in early social interactions (e.g., parenting). This internal working model proposes that individuals learn that they are either loveable or unlovable and that others are either capable or incapable of loving others.

Adult attachment styles share almost the same qualities as the attachment experienced as a child with primary caregivers (Shaver & Hazan, 1993). Adults falling into the secure attachment category tend to have healthy, compassionate, trusting, and helpful relationships with others. These individuals tend to see themselves as both loveable and others as capable of love and generally trustworthy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). According to Bartholomew and Horowitz, all other individuals are generally classified as insecure. That is, they either do not perceive themselves as loveable, others as capable of love, or both. Those fitting into the preoccupied attachment style desire close and intimate relationships, but are likely to not believe in their own deservingness of love, which results in clinginess and high anxiety in close relationships. The dismissive and fearful attachment styles tend to fall into Shaver and Hazan's avoidant category and are characterized by their tendency to circumvent close relationships due to their general belief that others are not capable of love and trust. The difference, however, is that while dismissive individuals are generally confident about their ability to love others and about their deservingness of love, fearful individuals are not.

#### **LINKS AMONG PARENTING STYLE, ATTACHMENT, AND IDENTITY STYLE**

##### *Parenting as Related to Identity Style*

The link between parenting and identity style was first investigated by Berzonsky (2004). In a sample of university students, he found that the informational identity style was positively predicted by the authoritative parenting style. The normative identity style, although most strongly and positively predicted by the authoritative parenting style, was also positively predicted by the authoritarian parenting style. Finally, the diffuse-avoidant style was positively predicted by both the authoritarian and indulgent parenting styles, but negatively predicted by the authoritative parenting style. That is, parents who are democratic in their parenting style (i.e., deliver punishments within a warm,

accepting, and empathic context that recognizes the adolescent as an autonomous individual) elicit the most psychologically adaptive identity styles. Alternatively, parenting styles that emphasize warmth without control, and control without warmth, tend to elicit a diffuse-avoidant identity style, which has been linked to various psychological maladjustments in prior literature (e.g., Dollinger, 1995, Vleioras & Bosma, 2005, Thoits, 1999).

##### *Parenting as Related to Attachment*

In line with Erikson's psychosocial theory, nonfamily relationships (e.g., romantic partners and peers) become more influential than parents on an individual's development as they age (e.g., Ávila, Cabral, & Matos, 2012; Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011), particularly in the realms of relational commitment and exploration (Meeus et al., 2002). It is because of this progression that little research exists on how parenting influences later attachment styles. From the literature that does exist, a clear pattern emerges. Autonomy-supportive parenting (evidenced by high levels of authoritative parenting) tends to be positively related to self-reported current and retrospective parental attachment in adolescents and young adults (Quintana & Lapsley, 1987; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Kerns, Tomich, Aspelmeier, & Contreras, 2000).

##### *Identity Status and, by extension, Identity Style as Related to Attachment.*

In a study by Campbell, Adams, and Dobson (1984), researchers looked at identity status and emotional attachment among undergraduate students. Their results suggest that those with the highest degree of attachment to their parental figures fall into the identity achieved, moratorium, or foreclosure status. Inferring from the findings of Berzonsky and Neimeyer (1994), the individuals within these statuses should adhere to either an informational or normative identity style. Campbell, Adams, and Dobson also found that the final status, diffusion (and by extension, the diffuse-avoidant identity style), was most typical among individuals who claimed to have the least amount of emotional attachment to their parents. Taken as a whole, it seems that those with greater attachment also display a willingness to actively construct their identity (i.e., adopt an informational identity style), or adopt values from those around them (i.e., adopt a normative identity style, whereas those with low attachment to their parents tend to procrastinate in their identity formation (i.e., adopt a diffuse-avoidant

identity style), which may lead to higher levels of identity distress and heightened levels of anxiety over meaning of life (Berman et al., 2004; Berman et al., 2006).

## PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

Given the evidence to support the relationships among parenting, parental attachment, and identity, questions remain about the mechanisms through which these relationships function. The purpose of the present study is to replicate and expand on Berzonsky's (2004) parenting and identity style study by introducing a third variable, parental attachment, to the picture. Further, the present study aims to close a current gap in the literature concerning how younger adolescents form their sense of self. As in the case of Berzonsky (2004) and much other prior literature, two trends typically occur: university students are often the population of choice due to convenience, and parents are commonly examined as an aggregated unit.

The first trend represents a unique issue because once an individual decides to attend college, parental exposure is reduced. At the high school age, individuals are starting to become autonomous and to determine their identity. Parents, if they so choose, have a significant impact in their child's daily activities and decisions. Although this study does not delve far into various parental dimensions, we believe in the contributive value of examining the younger population, who are still exposed to their parents on a frequent basis. It is for this reason that the present study examines how the relationship between parenting and identity style appears in a younger, high school-aged population, where it is theorized that peak identity development is occurring and it is believed that parental influence is most salient.

The second trend is addressed by teasing out the differences between maternal and paternal influence on identity style by analyzing the parenting data separately. Mothers and fathers may have a differential impact on early adolescent identity formation, and the goal of the present study is to observe and describe this difference, should one exist, so that identity intervention programs and family-based therapeutic approaches can better address issues related to adolescent identity diffusion and distress (Berman, Kennerley, & Kennerley, 2008). These issues are particularly important due to the negative psychological and psychosocial outcomes related to an unstable, disjunctive identity.

## Hypotheses

H1: Identity style would be significantly dependent on parenting style. Moreover, it was hypothesized that both the normative and the informational identity style would be significantly and positively predicted, whereas the diffuse-avoidant identity style would be significantly and negatively predicted, by parental responsiveness and demandingness.

H2: Both parental responsiveness and demandingness would positively predict attachment.

H3: Parental attachment would positively predict the informational and normative identity style and negatively predict the diffuse-avoidant identity style.

H4: Attachment mediates the relationship between parenting and identity style.

## METHOD

### Participants

Data from 264 participants were collected from two high schools in the central Florida area. No identifying information was collected from the participants other than basic demographic information. The sample consisted of 155 female and 109 male participants, with ages ranging between 14 and 19 years ( $M = 16.10$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ). Participants were fairly evenly distributed among the four grade levels surveyed: 12.5% of the sample were high school freshman (9th grade), 27.3% of the sample were sophomores (10th grade), 35.2% of the sample were juniors (11th grade), and 24.2% of the sample were seniors (12th grade). The majority of the sample, 70.5% ( $n = 186$ ) were White, non-Hispanic. Furthermore, 57.6% ( $n = 152$ ) of the sample reported that they consider both their mother and their father to be their primary caregivers.

### Materials

#### Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire, developed for the purposes of this study, was administered to the students to assess age, grade standing, gender, ethnicity, and family dynamics (i.e., who the adolescents identified as their prominent caregiver[s]).

### Identity Style Inventory – 3

The ISI-3 is a 40 item measure that assesses three social-cognitive styles related to identity exploration (ISI-3; Berzonsky, 1992). Participants were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with statements associated with how they resolve personal issues and utilize decision-making strategies using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree”(1) to “Strongly Agree”(5). The three styles measured on the ISI include: the informational-style (e.g., “I’ve spent a lot of time and talked to a lot of people trying to develop a set of values that make sense to me”); the normative-style (e.g., “I’ve more or less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up”); and the diffuse-avoidant style (e.g., “When I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible to see what will happen”). Reported test-retest reliability ( $N = 94$ ) of the scales in this measure were found to be .87 (Informational), .87 (Normative), and .83 (Diffuse-Avoidant) for each of the separate subscales (Berzonsky, 2003). Further, Cronbach’s alpha has been reported as .78 (Informational), .61 (Normative), and .78 (Diffuse-Avoidant) in prior students. In this study, Cronbach’s alpha for the subscales were found to be .71 (Informational), .65 (Normative), and .72 (Diffuse-Avoidant) for the various subscales.

### Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Parent Subscale)

The IPPA was developed to measure attachment in older adolescents (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). For this study, only the parental attachment scale was used and participants were asked to complete this measure twice to measure maternal and paternal attachment independently. Each item was reworded to reflect the gender of the parent in question (e.g., “My father accepts me as I am,” “Sometimes I wish I had a different mother.”). For each of the 28 items assessing parental attachment, respondents were required to rate the degree to which each item is true for them on a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Never true’ (1) to ‘Always true’ (5). In this study, both the maternal and paternal attachment subscales had the same Cronbach’s alpha (.91).

### The Authoritative Parenting Index

The API is a 16 item measure used to assess parental responsiveness (e.g., “My parents want to hear about my problems”) and demandingness (e.g., “My parents have rules for me to follow”) (API; Jackson, Henriksen,

& Foshee, 1998). For the purposes of this study, the scale was duplicated to measure maternal and paternal influence separately. Changes made to the measure were limited to rewording pronouns/nouns to match the gender in question. Using a four-point Likert scale, participants were asked to evaluate statements based on how closely their parent matches the description. Responses range from “Not like her/him” (1) to “Just like her/him” (4). In the present study, it was found that Cronbach’s alpha was sufficient, with a score of .88 for the maternal responsiveness subscale, .80 for the maternal demandingness, .87 for the paternal responsiveness, and .84 for the paternal demandingness.

### Procedure

Following approval of the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board, students were recruited based upon enrollment in classes at two high schools in central Florida. Approved parent informed consent documents were given to participating instructors to distribute to students approximately one week prior to assessment day. Students who returned a signed parental consent form were allowed to participate in the study. No monetary compensation was offered to the participants. After obtaining both parental consent and participant assent, the students completed the one-session anonymous survey in group settings of approximately thirty students. The survey battery lasted approximately forty-five minutes. A brief set of directions were read to the students and researchers stood by to give assistance as needed.

## RESULTS

### *Hypothesis 1*

To determine if parenting style was related to identity style, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was run with participant gender and parenting style as the independent variables and the identity styles as the dependent variables. Results showed that there was a significant main effect for maternal parenting style ( $F[9, 696] = 3.60, p < .001$ ). The informational identity style,  $F(3, 232) = 4.62, p = .004$ , and the normative identity style,  $F(3, 232) = 6.12, p = .001$ , were found to be significantly dependent upon maternal parenting style. A Fisher’s LSD post hoc analysis revealed that those with an authoritative or an indulgent mother had significantly higher informational and normative identity style scores than those with a negligent or an authoritarian mother.

### *Hypothesis 2*

To determine if parental responsiveness and demandingness would predict their respective attachment scores, a multiple regression analysis was run with age and sex entered on Step 1, maternal responsiveness and demandingness entered on Step 2, with attachment as the dependent variable. This process was repeated for paternal prediction value. In terms of the maternal regression, results indicated that the overall model was significant,  $R^2 = .75$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .75$ ,  $F[4, 234] = 175.28$ ,  $p < .001$ . When measuring for paternal effects, results showed that again the overall model was significant,  $R^2 = .70$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .70$ ,  $F[4, 187] = 110.51$ ,  $p < .001$ . Results of these regressions, including changes in  $R^2$  at Step 2 and beta-weights, can be found in Table 2 (See Appendix). A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed a significant main effect for maternal parenting style on adolescent attachment score,  $F(3, 238) = 79.94$ ,  $p < .001$ . Adolescents who identified their mother as either neglectful or authoritarian felt significantly less attached than adolescents who identified their mother as indulgent or authoritative ( $p < .001$ ). Adolescents who reported their mothers as authoritative reported significantly higher attachment scores ( $p < .005$ ) than adolescents who indicated an indulgent mother.

An ANOVA also showed a significant main effect for paternal influences on paternal attachment,  $F(3, 190) = 55.61$ ,  $p < .001$ . Adolescents who reported their father as authoritative showed significantly higher attachment scores than those who claimed that their father was neglectful ( $p = .001$ ) or authoritarian ( $p = .002$ ).

### *Hypothesis 3*

No significant results were seen when the informational identity style and the diffuse-avoidant identity style were entered as the dependent variable; however, when the normative identity style was the dependent variable, results indicated that the overall model was significant ( $R^2 = .32$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .10$ ,  $F[4, 186] = 5.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). At Step 2, the change in  $R$ -square was also significant ( $\Delta F[2, 186] = 9.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .09$ ) with standardized beta coefficients reaching significance for maternal attachment ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $t = 3.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No significance was found for paternal attachment and any of the identity styles.

### *Hypothesis 4*

To test the final hypothesis, that parenting style predicts identity style development but this relationship is mediated by parental attachment, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. As proposed by Holmbeck (1997), three significant relationships must first be established prior to testing for mediation. Variable A (parenting style) must predict Variable B (attachment), Variable B must predict Variable C (Identity Style), Variable A must predict Variable C, and finally, Variable A and B together must be entered together to predict Variable C, but Variable A's relationship with Variable C should no longer reach significance once controlling for Variable B. That is, parental attachment should have a direct effect on identity style whereas parenting style has an indirect effect on identity style only through parental attachment. For each regression analysis, sex and age were entered on Step 1 with the appropriate predictor variable(s) entered on Step 2.

As tested in Hypothesis 2, Variable A (maternal responsiveness and demandingness) was shown to predict Variable B (maternal attachment). As tested in Hypothesis 3, Variable B (maternal attachment) was shown to predict Variable C (only the normative identity style).

For the next regression, only maternal parenting style was considered in regard to identity style due to Hypothesis 1's findings. When normative identity style was entered as the dependent variable, results indicated that the overall model was significant,  $R^2 = .10$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $F[4, 236] = 6.83$ ,  $p < .001$ . At Step 2, the change in  $R$ -square was also significant ( $\Delta F[2, 236] = 12.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .10$ ) with standardized beta coefficients reaching significance for maternal responsiveness ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = 4.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In the final regression to test for mediation, Variables A and B (maternal responsiveness and maternal attachment) were entered on Step 2 to predict Variable C (the normative identity style). An overall significant model was shown,  $R^2 = .10$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .08$ ,  $F(4, 235) = 6.37$ ,  $p < .001$ , as well as a significant change model,  $\Delta F(2, 235) = 11.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .09$ , but maternal responsiveness ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $t = 1.71$ ,  $p = .089$ ) and attachment ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $t = .86$ ,  $p = .39$ ) were no longer significant when entered together on this last step.

## DISCUSSION

While significant relationships among parenting style, attachment, and identity style were found, the findings of this study suggest that attachment does not mediate the relationship between parenting and identity style, as hypothesized. That is, parenting style seems to be directly related to identity style rather than acting through parental attachment. This could be due to a number of reasons; however, the most likely cause is due to multicollinearity of the attachment and responsiveness variables. During preliminary analysis, an extremely high correlation coefficient ( $r > .80$ , see Table 1) was observed between maternal responsiveness and attachment, as well as between paternal responsiveness and attachment.

Furthermore, Chen, Ender, Mitchell, and Wells (2003) propose that variables with high condition indexes (above 30) and low eigenvalues, both of which were seen in the case of our data, point to significant multicollinearity as well. This suggests that although the measures claim to be measuring different constructs, the IPPA's attachment and the API's responsiveness scale do not act with any statistical difference. Research on parental responsiveness and attachment should take such results into consideration when designing future studies. Although these scales can independently produce the appropriate variables, when utilized together in the same study, the overlap is too great to distinguish between the two. Despite the second set of hypotheses being supported by these results, responsiveness could predict attachment simply because the two constructs are one and the same. Future research should undertake construct validity studies using both the API and the IPPA to tease out the true relationship between these two variables.

Nonetheless, significant relationships between parenting style, attachment, and identity style exist. Most surprisingly out of line with this study's hypotheses is the lack of significance between the paternal role and identity. The normative and informational identity styles were shown to only be dependent upon maternal parenting style, and only the normative identity style was shown to be significantly predicted by maternal attachment/responsiveness. Such results could be attributed to the fact that mothers have traditionally been more catering to the emotional components of child rearing than fathers (Goldberg & Easterbrooks, 1984). Furthermore, research on parenting has shown that mothers tend to act like the gatekeepers—determining the role of the father

in the child's life and dictating how much interaction he has with his child (De Luccie, 1994). Because of these relationships, future research may want to focus on clarifying what variables keep fathers from sharing significant relationships with identity style.

### *Limitations and Areas for Future Research*

#### **Survey Length**

A consistent piece of feedback received from the students indicated they tended to lose focus towards the end of the questionnaire. It was through the various addendums made to the measures (i.e., duplicating the IPPA [Armsden & Greenberg, 1987] and API [Jackson et al., 1998] to measure maternal and paternal parental characteristics separately) and adding additional measures for future analyses that the length of the questionnaire greatly increased. Future research may aggregate the parenting data to overcome the problem of survey length, but by doing so, differences between maternal and paternal styles would no longer be observed. Parenting constellations have been linked to many outcomes, such as higher levels of adaptive emotional adjustment in adolescents with at least one authoritative parent (McKinney & Renk, 2008) and lower levels of self-esteem in individuals who have at least one neglectful parent (Milevsky, Schlechter, Klem, & Kehl, 2008). Variables such as these that affect well-being have been linked with identity style and overall development (Vleioras & Bosma, 2005), so observing parenting style concordance is still important.

#### **Perspective**

In the case of our study, as is the case in much of the previous research conducted on this subject, only data from children were obtained. This presents a significant problem because the data relies on perceived parental responsiveness and demandingness rather than on actual degrees of responsiveness and demandingness. The data may become contaminated due to the biases (whether they be positive or negative) through which these adolescents view their parents' behavior. In future research, a combination of reports (e.g., self-report, parent report, clinical interview, and/or observation) should be used to get a clearer picture of the kind of parenting occurring in the household.



### Correlation and Causation

The analyses conducted in the present study were correlational, which does not imply causation. Longitudinal studies on the effects of parenting on identity style may be helpful in this regard. Correlationally-based studies such as the one described here may be used to form hypotheses in future research because it has been demonstrated that parenting characteristics such as warmth and support are related to the identity styles, as well as other aspects of identity development.

**Table 1. Intercorrelations of all Continuous Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	--									
2. Maternal Responsiveness	.03	--								
3. Maternal Demandingness	-.22**	.23***	--							
4. Paternal Responsiveness	.02	.38***	.27***	--						
5. Paternal Demandingness	-.14*	.25**	.47***	.08	--					
6. Maternal Attachment	-.07	.85***	.32***	.35***	.25***	--				
7. Paternal Attachment	-.02	.42***	.27***	.82***	.17*	.53***	--			
8. Informational Identity Style	.11	.20**	-.01	.11	.00	.18**	.07	--		
9. Normative Identity Style	-.08	.29***	.17**	.16*	.07	.28***	.16*	.18**	--	
10. Diffuse-Avoidant Identity Style	-.03	-.16*	-.12	-.11	-.06	-.16*	-.10	-.32***	-.02	--
11. Identity Commitment	.04	.25***	-.15*	.26***	.04	.23***	.19**	.42***	.56***	-.39***

Note: \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 2. Parenting Dimensions Predict Parental Attachment**

		Variables	B	S.E.B.	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
Criterion: Maternal Attachment	Step 1	Age/Sex				.00	
	Step 2	Maternal Responsiveness	25.43	1.03	.83***		
		Maternal Demandingness	3.50	1.17	.10**	.75	.75
Criterion: Paternal Attachment	Step 1	Age/Sex				.02	
	Step 2	Paternal Responsiveness	25.06	1.25	.81***		
		Paternal Demandingness	3.08	1.13	.11**	.70	.68***

Note: \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

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