



# Parenting Styles and Self-esteem: Clarifying the Role of Ethnicity

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## ABSTRACT

Various studies have demonstrated that different parenting styles can predict different areas of personal development among children, such as, self-esteem. For this reason, the present study investigated the parenting styles that promote high self-esteem and low self-esteem among ninety-six college students at a small Southern California university. The study also explored whether ethnicity was a significant factor on self-esteem as it related to parenting style. Self-esteem was measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 1979), and perceived parenting styles were measured with the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Buri, 1991). Ethnicity and other demographic information was obtained through a demographic questionnaire. The first hypothesis, which predicted that there would be a relationship between perceived authoritative parenting and self-esteem among college students, was found significant. The second hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and low self-esteem, looking at Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics separately. However, results showed no relationship between authoritarian parenting and low self-esteem among the three different ethnicity's. The last hypothesis predicted a relationship between perceived permissive parenting and self-esteem among Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics, however, no relationships were found when examining each ethnicity independently. Due to the currently limited amounts of research relating ethnicity, self-esteem and parenting styles, it is important that these factors and their relationships continued to be studied. Implications of the present study and directions for future research are also discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

•The most common styles of parenting have been defined by Baumrind as authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting, and permissive parenting (Hickman, Bartholomae, & McKenry 2000).

•In Roberts and Steinberg (1999) study, authoritative parenting was associated with higher self-esteem among adolescents. Whereas, in Hickman et al. (2002) study, authoritarian and permissive parenting were related to lower self-esteem among college freshmen.

•Establishing that certain parenting styles can be predictive of self-esteem in children is knowledge that can be utilized in many different ways. Therefore, the question becomes whether researchers can generalize their findings across all ethnic backgrounds.

•Studies that choose to examine parenting styles and ethnic differences are often too focused on looking for differences in parenting styles, that they overlook variables such as self-esteem that might reveal a significant finding. For example, Amato and Fowler (2002) conducted a study where their main purpose was to find if effective parenting identified in prior research could be generalized to diverse families, including specific ethnic backgrounds.

•An example of a study that combines the three variables, self-esteem, ethnicity, and parenting styles has been conducted by Ruiz, Roosa, and Gonzales (2002). They examined the link between parenting and self-esteem among European Americans and compared their results to Mexican Americans. The study revealed that cultural background might interact with parenting practices to reduce the influence that it has on the children's self-esteem. Therefore, previous research that focused primarily on European parenting styles in deciding what factors effected their children's self-esteem may not apply to Mexican Americans. Clearly, one can not generalize these findings to all other ethnic groups.

•The purpose of this current study is to examine the effects that different parenting styles can have on college students' self-esteem, emphasizing ethnicity as a variable to examine any differences or similarities among groups. Although many factors might be responsible for the current self-esteem of students who are attending college, previous research supports the importance of parenting styles in predicting college students self-esteem.

## HYPOTHESES

The present study proposes three hypotheses:

- It is predicted that there will be a relationship between perceived authoritative parenting and self-esteem among college students.
- It is predicted that there will be a negative relationship between perceived authoritarian parenting and low self-esteem among White/Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos.
- It is predicted that there will be relationship between perceived permissive parenting and self-esteem among White/Euro-American, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos.

## METHOD

### Participants

|                                      |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Sample Size</b> (96 participants) | <b>Age</b>              |
| -16.7% African American              | $M=22.95$ ( $SD=6.85$ ) |
| -3.1% Asian American                 | <b>Gender</b>           |
| -43.8% Latinos/Hispanics             | 83.3% Female            |
| -26% Euro-Americans/White            | 16.7% Male              |
| -8.3% Other                          |                         |
| -2.1% Decline to state               |                         |

### Independent Variable

- Perceived parenting styles  
Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)
- Ethnicity  
Demographic section of the survey

### Dependent Variable

- Self-esteem  
Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSE)

## RESULTS

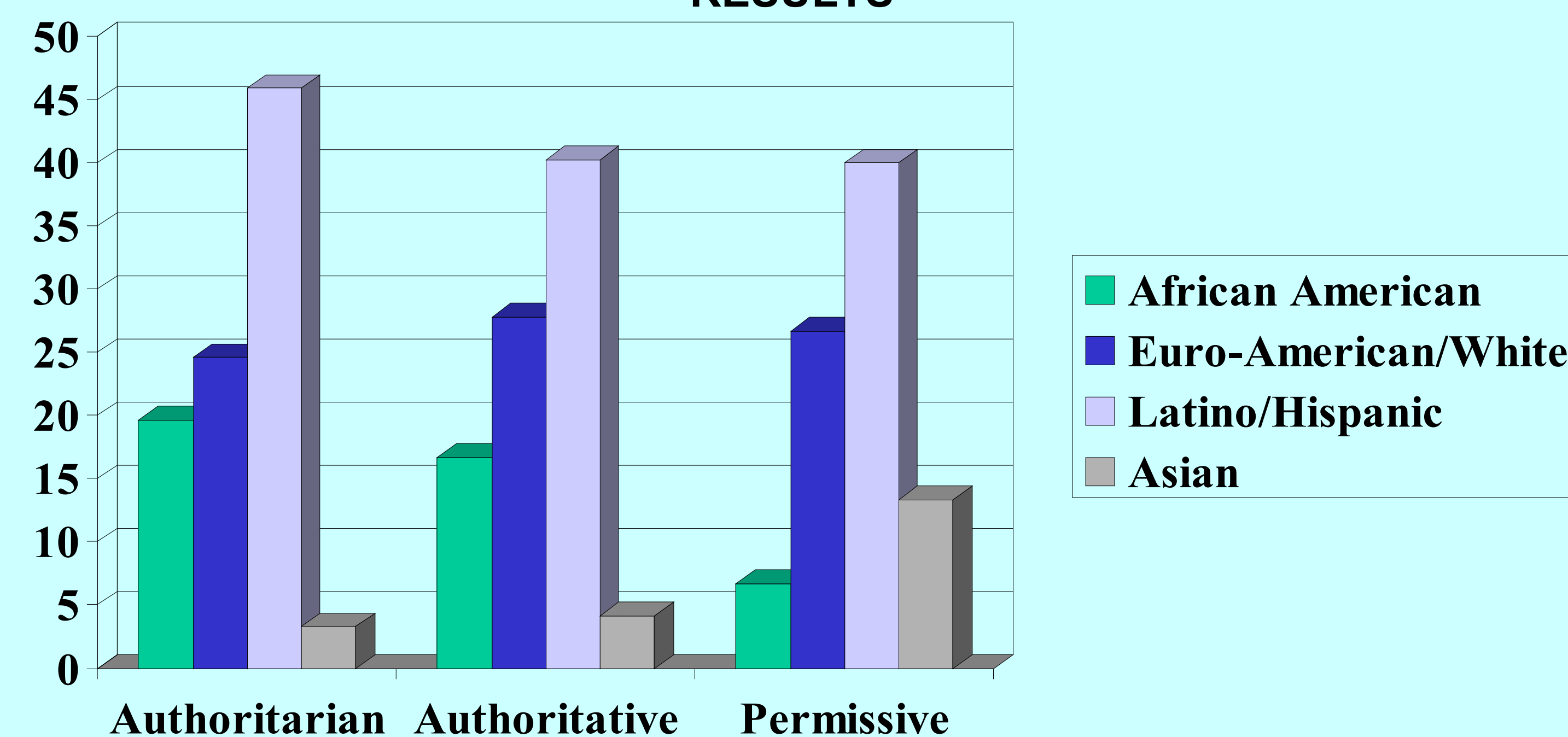


Figure 1. Percentage of African Americans ( $n=16$ ), Euro-Americans/White ( $n=25$ ), and Latino/Hispanics ( $n=42$ ) who reported authoritative, authoritative, and permissive parenting.

Table 1

### Correlations for authoritative parenting and self-esteem

|                         | Authoritative parenting | Self-esteem |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Authoritative parenting | --                      | --          |
| Self-esteem             | .17*                    | --          |

$n=96$ ;  $p<.05$

Table 2

### Pearson r correlations for African Americans on self-esteem and parenting styles

|                         | Self-esteem |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Authoritarian parenting | -.13        |
| Permissive parenting    | .13         |

$n=16$ ;  $p=.32$ ;  $p=.32$

Table 3

### Pearson r correlations for Hispanics/Latinos on self-esteem and parenting styles

|                         | Self-esteem |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Authoritarian parenting | -.22        |
| Permissive parenting    | .11         |

$n=42$ ;  $p=.08$ ;  $p=.25$

Table 4

### Pearson r correlations for Euro-Americans on self-esteem and parenting styles

|                         | Self-esteem |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Authoritarian parenting | .06         |
| Permissive parenting    | -.15        |

$n=25$ ;  $p=.39$ ;  $p=.24$

## DISCUSSION

### Summary

•Authoritative parenting is related to college students' self-esteem. However, authoritarian and permissive parenting were not associated with self-esteem.

•Ethnicity was not found to be significant when examining self-esteem as it related to perceived parenting styles.

### Limitations

- Sample size
- College students
- Perceived parenting styles
- Ethnic breakdown

### Implications

•Perceived parenting styles might lose validity in predicting different areas of personal development as a child becomes a young adult.

•One might suggest that ethnic background is indifferent when looking for a relationship between parenting styles and self-esteem. However, due to the limited and inconsistent studies that have incorporated these three variables, the decision to ignore possible ethnic variations might be a precipitated one.