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Examining the Parental Authority Style of Fathers Within Various Family Configurations

Michael E. Laws

EXAMINING THE PARENTAL AUTHORITY STYLE

OF FATHERS WITHIN VARIOUS FAMILY CONFIGURATIONS

Michael E. Laws, B.S.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

The discipline style of one's parents is often discussed as a factor toward various behavioral outcomes of their children. In some literature, certain types of families, "step"- families for example, have been labeled as exhibiting a particular parenting style perhaps more than some other type of family. In this project 3 parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) are reviewed and examined in relation to 3 types of families (blended families, single parent families, and families with 2 biological parents present in the home). In particular, the parenting style of the fathers or stepfathers was examined. Parenting style was determined in the families of 50 college students by administering a Parental Authority Questionnaire to the students, thus judging style from the perspective of the student. It was determined that there was significant disagreement between parenting styles as compared with family types, indicating that there is some relationship between the two.

EXAMINING THE PARENTAL AUTHORITY STYLE

OF FATHERS WITHIN VARIOUS FAMILY CONFIGURATIONS

Michael E. Laws, B.S.

A Culminating Project Presented to the Graduate School

of Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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1997

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This project, and the degree to which it leads, is dedicated to God, who led me on this journey and on whose guidance I await to continue ...

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Chapter I

Introduction

For over 30 years Diana Baumrind (1966, 1991) has been researching the effects of various styles of parental authority on children and adolescents. She, along with other researchers, have studied parenting styles in conjunction with a variety of outcome measures in an effort to determine the scope of parental influence. During this time, concepts such as competence, delinquent behavior, substance abuse, academic achievement, and depression have been examined in relation to parenting style (Baumrind, 1966, 1991; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989).

Baumrind (1971) has gone to great lengths to define different parenting styles, focusing on three general categories: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. She describes an authoritarian parent as one who is a strict disciplinarian; someone who exerts a high level of control with low levels of warmth or nurturance. By contrast Baumrind indicates that a permissive parent is someone who maintains very little control on their child, allowing them to do what they wish most of the time. As a more balanced approach, or compromise, she offers the authoritative parenting style as her preference. Her research found that this style of parenting is the most effective at achieving positive outcomes in children and adolescents. This type of parent places controls on their child's behavior, yet also provides them with warmth and understanding, often explaining the reasoning for their actions to their child. An authoritative parents allows for an exchange of ideas with the child instead of wielding heavy handed, unbending control.

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As mentioned, Baumrind (1966, 1991) and others, have examined parenting style measured against a variety of child outcomes, however, literature was not located by this researcher indicating that Baumrind or her colleagues compared parenting style to various family structures other than the two-parent biological style. This absence might suggest the question, "Does family constellation effect parenting style or a child's perception of parenting?" Before exploring this question, one first might examine more closely other family structures which are prevalent in our society.

For several years the United States has been moving away from having an overwhelming majority of traditional, two-parent, families in lieu of other family models, such as remarried couples or single parents. For example, it is not difficult to determine that remarriage in the United States is becoming more of the norm than the exception. A look at the 1995 Information Please Almanac (1994), for example, which obtains statistics from the Department of Health and Human Services, reveals that more than 40% of marriages in the United States involve a second or higher-order marriage for the bride, the groom, or both (see also Walsh, 1992). Literature further reveals that about 60% of these remarriages involve children from the previous marriage of one or both spouse (Darden & Zimmerman, 1992, Pink & Wampler, 1985). Perhaps remarriage itself is not a problem, however, these same sources indicate that remarriages are statistically less stable than first marriages.

Newman and Newman (1994), as well as others, indicate that remarriage families face numerous and complex challenges as a new family joins together, however, this research will address one particular issue that is often listed as a major source of disharmony in remarriages; the relationship

between children and their stepparents (Crosbie-Burnett, 1984; Mills, 1984; Walsh, 1992). This relationship, with adolescents in particular, is described in related literature as an especially difficult bond to develop (Newman, 1994; Pink & Wampler, 1985; Visher & Visher, 1979). Because the stepfather family is the most common form of remarriage family (Robinson, 1984), this type of stepfamily is specifically addressed in this research.

It should be noted here that, although the "step" designation sometimes is thought to present a negative connotation (Bray, 1995, Darden & Zimmerman, 1992; Walsh, 1992), in this work it is used simply for clarity of relationship and terminology, and should not be considered as expressing any other implications.

This project also considers parenting styles in single-father families. Benson and Roehlkepartain (1993) indicate that this family type has been increasing by over 90% during the past 15 years, therefore, this family pattern should not be ignored in research. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau (1990) reported that 40% of all "male-headed" households were headed by single-fathers. Although, this comprised only 3.4% of all family units in the country at the time, the steady increase of this model warrants inclusion in research pertaining to a father's influence on his children.

Purpose

To address the issue of parental authority, this research explores various family patterns and demographics. Since, as mentioned previously, step-father families are the most common remarriage family (Robinson, 1984), single-father families are a rapidly growing family type (Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1993), and because biological fathers are often presumed to

head traditional, two-parent families, this project focuses on the parenting style of the father-figures in samples from these various family models. Parenting style will be described by adolescents and young adults from these families. If particular relationships are identified, these may provide implications for further research and perhaps offer therapists direction when counseling families in which a father or stepfather's parenting style is deemed to be problematic.

The instrument used in this project to measure parenting style, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1989), identifies a style of parental authority based on the triad described by Baumrind's work (1971): authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting. The Parental Authority Questionnaire is designed to rate parenting style from the perspective of an older adolescent or young adult living in or recently moved from the household.

How universal are these parenting styles in the various types of families found in our society? Are the "myths" of the overbearing step-parent (Schulman, 1972; Visher & Visher, 1979) or the lackadaisical single-parent (Richards & Schmiege, 1993) actually true? Are these patterns, if they are true, similar across racial barriers? Furthermore, does a subject's gender influence how they perceive their father's style of authority?

These are some questions this research attempted to answer.

Seeking to answer these questions should clearly address the general null hypothesis that family type (step-father, single father, etc.) has no relationship to an adolescent or young adult's perception of his/her father's parenting style. While examining this basic null hypothesis, the following, more specific, sub-hypotheses, were addressed:

1. There is no relationship between families with two biological parents in the home and the father's permissive parenting style.

2. There is no relationship between families with two biological parents in the home and the father's authoritarian parenting style.

3. There is no relationship between families with two biological parents in the home and the father's authoritative parenting style.

4. There is no relationship between stepfather families and the stepfather's permissive parenting style.

5. There is no relationship between stepfather families and the stepfather's authoritarian parenting style.

6. There is no relationship between stepfather families and the stepfather's authoritative parenting style.

7. There is no relationship between single-father families and the single father's permissive parenting style.

8. There is no relationship between single-father families and the single father's authoritarian parenting style.

9. There is no relationship between single-father families and the single father's authoritative parenting style.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Parenting Styles

Dr. Diana Baumrind, a developmental psychologist at the University of Berkeley (CA) has been researching parenting styles and discipline since 1960 (Baumrind, 1966). While many researchers examine parenting styles, they quite regularly refer to Baumrind's work in their reports. Moore (1992), in fact, calls Baumrind's research "particularly noteworthy"(p.1). Baumrind's studies concentrate on three general patterns of parental authority: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Although other types of parental discipline have been described, such as conflictual (Anderson, Lindner, & Bennion, 1992) and disengaged/neglectful (Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996), the most common disciplinary styles discovered in relevant literature come from Baumrind's writings (Ganahl, 1994). This review will initially address Baumrind's classifications, look at some variations of her views, then discuss how these constructs might relate to varying family situations found in America, particularly those headed by fathers.

Perhaps the strongest parenting style, in terms of discipline alone, is the authoritarian style (Baumrind, 1971). An authoritarian parent is a strict disciplinarian who attempts to control his/her child by force. Baumrind (1966) writes that the "authoritarian" label began developing this negative connotation in the late 1940's and early 1950's in part due to publications such as, "The Authoritarian Parent" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) where the term was used to describe controlling parents. This parent makes the rules with no input from the child and the child is expected to follow

those rules without question. Negotiation is not an option. According to Baumrind, if the child fails to follow the set directives, an authoritarian parent will respond with harsh reprimands and/or physical punishment. In fact, this parent will generally inflict punishment anytime the child's will conflicts with their own.

Purporting to train their children from high, often theologically-based, standards, the authoritarian parent dictates duty, obedience, respect for authority, and respect for hard work (Baumrind, 1971). Baumrind believes, however, that this style of discipline comes from a parenting ethic of an earlier time, centuries ago perhaps, a time when "discipline was directed at teaching the child to do the will of God" (Baumrind, 1966, p. 890), thus the aim of this form of parenting was to curb the self-will of the child. Unfortunately, authoritarian parenting does just that. A study comparing adolescent competence and adjustment to parenting style (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991) found that, while teens reporting an authoritarian parent were less likely to participate in delinquent behavior, they were also found to be less confident than their peers "in terms of self reliance and ...perceptions of their own social and academic ability" (p. 1062). Lamborn, et al., felt that these youth "paid a price" for their behavior and suggested they were "overpowered into obedience".

It is interesting to note that, although Baumrind (1966) indicates that authoritarian parents often believe they are following a "higher power" when directing their children in this harsh manner, Ganahl (1994) argues that "God's discipline is authoritative" (p. 45), including not only limits, but also love, consistency, and warmth. Ganahl's report indicates that parents who provide

"warmth", or nurturance, have emotionally better adjusted children than parents who do not provide this aspect of discipline. Moore (1992) would agree, indicating that nurturance is an important part of child-rearing discipline that the authoritarian parent is lacking.

In other studies comparing styles of discipline to various outcome measures, children who perceived their parents as authoritarian were also found to have higher levels of codependency (Fischer & Crawford, 1992), especially with authoritarian fathers; had restricted personal development (Baumrind, 1991); and were often more depressed (Radziszewska, et al., 1996). Baumrind, for example, found that because these parents are frequently less "rational, consistent, and considerate" (1991, p. 72) than authoritative parents, their children were more likely to develop problematic emotional responses (internalizing) which can inhibit their performance in various tasks, such as school work.

Baumrind (1966) has reported on the effects of strict, authoritarian-style, punishment. She indicated that "punitive ... nonempathic disciplinary practices are associated clearly ... with cognitive and emotional disturbance in the child" (p. 896). She went on to report that these disturbances can occur in the form of withdrawal, acting out, nervousness, and reduced academic achievement. The latter was also supported by a later study by Steinberg, et al. (1989) which broadened the results to include adolescents. Baumrind also discovered evidence that "paternal punitiveness" was more detrimental than that of the mother, perhaps because the father's punishments were more severe. Baumrind's research further indicated that an authoritarian style of discipline, such as close supervision and high demands accompanied by a repressive or

hostile attitude of the parent, often provokes rebelliousness, especially in teenagers. Supervision and parental requirements were much more accepted by adolescents, however, when they were accompanied by a "rational concern for the child's welfare" (p. 898).

Based on the research findings that an authoritarian parenting style can be detrimental to a child or adolescent's development, a parent might decide to allow the child more freedom and let them make their own decisions. Baumrind (1966, 1977) discussed this permissive approach situated at the opposite end of a parental authority "continuum". These parents accept the child's wishes and do not use force to change the child's behavior. They regularly discuss family policy with the child and make very few demands of the child. Considering the balance of parental control versus warmth or nurturance, the permissive parent is very low on control and generally rates high on warmth and acceptance.

According to Baumrind (1966), permissive parenting is in line with the early writings of Benjamin Spock (1946) which suggested that children should be allowed unlimited freedom at home and at school. Spock apparently changed his mind, however, as later research was conducted on this type of parenting. Baumrind quoted a 1957 edition of Spock's then-popular book "Baby and Child Care" by writing, "...nowadays there seems to be more chance of a conscientious parent's getting into trouble with permissiveness than strictness." (1966, p. 888). Baumrind seems to agree with Spock's later opinion. She examined other research for that time period (late 1950's) and found that in tests with younger children, the presence of a "non-interfering" adult actually increased exhibition of aggressive acts toward other children. Apparently the lack of corrective action was perceived as approval by the children.

Lack of attention and behavior monitoring might also be included in a description of permissive parenting (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). These authors found that failure to monitor the travels and acquaintances of their children was a "significant determinant" of multiple delinquent activities (p. 1305). They recommended that parents be very aware of where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing.

An approach to parenting where the parent does not supervise the actions of their child might be a different type of "permissive" parent, according to Lamborn, et al. (1991). Lamborn and her colleagues indicated that permissiveness could be classified in at least two different ways. First, a permissive parent may allow their child great amounts of freedom, while still providing them with warmth and support, such as Spock originally suggested. A second permissive style, discussed by Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984), involves disassociation from the child or complete neglect. Failure to address this differentiation, which Lamborn, et al., labels as "indulgent permissiveness" and "neglectful permissiveness" (p. 1050), ignores the measure of warmth in the classification of parenting style. Indulgent parents are considered higher in warmth than neglectful parents. The neglectful, or "disengaged" parenting style, as classified by Radziszewska, et al. (1996), has been correlated with delinquency, substance abuse, and school misconduct, therefore is considered a "risk factor in child development" (p. 290).

It is possible for a parent to be somewhat disengaged from their children, yet not intending to be neglectful. Anderson, et al. (1992) explains that single parents after separation or divorce are often coping with "task overload" (p. 179), or are trying to do themselves what had been done

previously by two parents. During these transitional times it is not unusual, according to Anderson and his colleagues, for the single parent to become more lax than normal in monitoring and controlling their children. Radziszewska, et al. (1996) also described the possibility that a group of parents, classified in their work as "unengaged", might have at one time attempted to control their children using an ineffective discipline style, then because these measures were not working, the parents simply quit trying. In any case, all authors researched for this review found that a permissive parenting style was less effective at guiding children's positive development than a parenting style which involves a higher measure of control.

Since problems have been reported using an authoritarian and permissive styles of discipline, it seems logical to seek out a compromise between these two extremes. Baumrind (1966) classifies this compromise as the authoritative parenting style. She describes the authoritative parent as one who uses power to guide their children's actions, albeit a more moderate form of control than that of authoritarian parents, yet at the same time, this parent offers their children reasons for their rules, and allows the children to offer input into some decisions; a process Baumrind calls "verbal give and take" (p.891). This type of parent expects a child to comply with their directives, but, they still respect the child's autonomy. An authoritative parent maintains a balance of moderate control and nurturance. They provide the child generous warmth and acceptance while still setting distinct boundaries and guidelines. Moore (1992) describes authoritative parents as having a more lenient approach to parenting than authoritarian parents because they try to avoid the more extreme forms of punishment while providing much more support.

Steinberg, et al.(1989) explain that the authoritative parenting style is a more "multifaceted" (p. 1425) pattern of discipline. They indicate that the authoritarian parent concentrates on power and control, while the permissive parent focuses on acceptance. Steinberg and his colleagues expand on Baumrind and Moore's descriptions by describing authoritativeness as a combination of parental responsiveness and demandingness. They further state that this pattern includes a high level of behavioral control in conjunction with a high degree of warmth, acceptance, and increased psychological autonomy. Lamborn, et al., (1991) go on to add that authoritative parenting provides warmth, inductive discipline, nonpunitive punishment practices, and consistency in child rearing. Anderson, et al. (1992) calls it "legitimate parental authority" and explains that authoritative parenting "has been shown...to be very beneficial for children" (p.178).

In her studies of nurturance as a part of parenting style, Moore (1992) discussed the benefits of authoritative parenting in more detail. She found that children who perceive a high level of nurturance from their parents (a large part of the authoritative pattern) receive benefits beginning from birth. She reported that the nurtured child achieves secure attachment feelings which grow throughout childhood, "predispose the child to return love to the parent" (p. 2) and motivate the child to live up to the expectations of their parents and model this warmth with others.

Numerous researchers have reported that the benefits of a firm, yet caring, parenting style continue throughout childhood and into adolescence. Baumrind (1991), for example, studying the correlation of parenting style with adolescent substance abuse, found that this type of parenting seemed to protect

the teens from excessive drug use. Perhaps not a physical protection, however, youth of these authoritative parents reported less substance abuse than those of parents using other discipline styles. Baumrind also found that authoritative parenting "consistently generates adolescent competence" and helps deter other problem behavior (1991, p. 91). That report helped to verify results of her earlier work (Baumrind, 1966) which offered provisional support that authoritative control can achieve responsible conformity with group standards (eg. reduced drug abuse). Additionally, her research revealed that this behavior change could be achieved without the loss of individual autonomy.

Radziszewska, et al. (1996) also reported on the benefits of an authoritative style of parenting. She and her colleagues focused their research on the influence parenting style had on adolescent depression, tobacco use, and academic achievement. During this recent study, Radziszewska discovered several correlations. For example, she found that adolescents from authoritative homes did better in school and reported fewer depressive symptoms than teens from either unengaged/permissive or authoritarian families. Although, there was little difference noted in the smoking habits between youth with authoritarian and authoritative parents, the teens in unengaged homes were much more likely to use tobacco. Anderson, et al. (1992) has also examined parenting style in relation to adolescent behaviors and found that "authoritative parenting style was associated with significantly higher levels of both social and scholastic competence and with lower levels of externalizing behavior than either the authoritarian/conflictual or disengaged styles" (p. 185).

During Steinberg's research (1989) of the influence of authoritative parenting on adolescent school performance, he discovered that parents who treat their teens firmly, yet warmly and democratically helped to improve their children's self-image and beliefs about their own abilities. Steinberg found that because of this increased self-efficacy, these children were more likely to do better in school than the children who did not report being treated in this manner. Lamborn, et al. (1991) would seem to agree, writing in particular that the "parental acceptance and involvement" factors of authoritative parenting may be the primary contributors to development of positive self-conceptions (p. 1063).

Radziszewska, et al. (1996) seems to summarize several of these authors when she writes that there is "consistent evidence that the authoritative style ... is associated with the best outcomes in many domains of child development including psychosocial functioning, school competence, emotional well-being, and behavioral adjustment" (p.290). Overall, these writers indicate that authoritative parenting is "a significant determinant for producing emotionally healthy children" (Ganahl,1994, p.43).

Anderson, et al. (1992) called it "a strong concurrent correlate of children's adjustment..." (p. 196) and reported that his research reemphasized "the pervasively beneficial effects of authoritative parenting" (p. 196).

Cultural Considerations

Another factor that Radziszewska, et al. (1996) discussed, though it is somewhat beyond the scope of this project, was the influence of demographic variables, such as gender and cultural differences, on parenting style and the effects of that style on children's behavior. She found that generally the effects

of parenting styles appear to be similar across ethnicity and gender with just a few exceptions. Radziszewska discovered three high risk groups for depressive symptoms among the sample used in her research. African-American males and Asian-American females, each with parents reported to be unengaged (permissive); and Asian-American females in authoritarian homes.

Other authors have noticed discrepancies between the reports given for parenting influence in primarily white sample groups and those for some ethnic minority groups. Chao (1995), for example, found that Asian-American students had high academic achievement, yet scored highest on authoritarian parenting style. This would differ from the research mentioned previously from Anderson, et al. (1992), Radziszewska, et al. (1996), and Steinberg, et al. (1989), all of whom had samples consisting of a White ethnic majority. Chao suggested that Baumrind's parenting style constructs may not be adequate for general use when studying an Asian population. In another example, Hill (1995) verifies that Baumrind's concepts are appropriate for use with African-American families, as long as those families are not compared to white cultural standards. She feels that parenting type in both cultures may be similar, however, the meanings and implications of those styles on child development may be different.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) report that current research presents a "remarkably consistent picture" (p. 487) of the type of parenting conducive to successful socialization of children in the dominant culture of the United States, however, Steinberg, et al. (1989) has acknowledged that "it would seem far more important, given the changing demography of American adolescents, to see whether patterns of socialization effects observed in white,

middle-class samples hold true in other groups" (p. 1435). He admitted that his research had been culturally limited, as is this project, and confessed that "it remains to be seen whether the same parenting practices have similar benefits in other populations" (p. 1435).

Family styles

The changing appearance of a "traditional" family in the United States suggests that research should address alternatives to what has been considered "typical" in past years. Although "the primary model for 'normal' family life has been the nuclear family, which consisted of two 'natural' parents and their children" (Walsh, 1992, p. 709), this can no longer be considered the only "normal" structure in our society. Walsh indicates that although "the nuclear family remains the standard in American culture, it is no longer the norm." (p. 713). He indicates that other family styles, such as remarriage families or single parent families, may not be the most common family pattern, but these should no longer be considered "abnormal".

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau (1990) can provide some insight into the breadth of what Walsh (1992) was discussing. At the time of the 1990 Census, there were over 64 million families in the United States and almost 93 million children. The figures further indicate, however, that only 73 million of these children lived in a two-biological-parent family, leaving about 20 million (22%) children living in "other" types of family situations. This seems to support Walsh's contention that "normal" two-parent families are not the only families researchers should consider, however, authors disagree as to how, or if, family style relates to parental influence on children in the family. Anderson, et al. (1992), for example, wrote that parenting style was "related to children's

adjustment in similar ways across family types" (p. 196), although in a previous, contrasting report, Hetherington (1987) reports that "the types of parenting patterns and their impact on children vary for children in divorced, nondivorced, and remarried families." (p. 203). It seems that further research in this area would be beneficial.

Stepfamilies

The traditional biological-parent family may still be in the majority in this country, but remarriage families with children ("step"-families) are quickly becoming a dominant family structure (Walsh, 1992). The relationship between the marriage and divorce rate may explain why. Statistics from the Department of Health and Human Services (in the Information Please Almanac, 1994) indicate that although the marriage rate in the United States has fluctuated over the years, in 1990 it was just slightly higher than it was at the turn of the century (see Figure 1). The divorce rate on the other hand has risen fairly steadily. A closer look at the data indicates that a large percentage of 'marriages' are actually 're'-marriages.

Figure 1, U.S. Marriage and Divorce Rates (per 1,000 population)
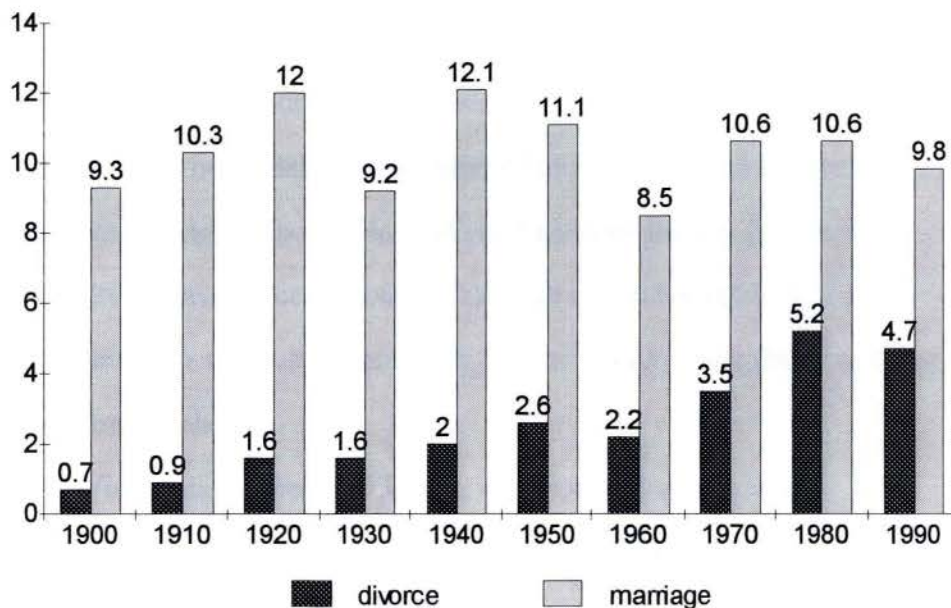
When children are included in one of these remarriages, the partner

who becomes a new 'parent' faces an "especially unique and difficult challenge"

(Walsh, 1992, p. 711). Pasley and Dollahite (1995) indicate that the role of

stepparent is even more difficult than traditional parenting because it is less

clearly defined. Johnson and Rosenfeld (1990) explain that each person enters

a remarriage family with their own ideas and expectations of what being a

"family" entails. Society has set certain roles and standards for parents,

however, this is not so for stepparents. Bray (1995) stated, for example, that

"stepparents are often unclear about what kinds of affection and bonding are

appropriate because there is a general lack of socially defined roles for

stepparents" (p. 69). This lack of clarity has resulted in increased occurrences

of sexual abuse between stepparents and stepchildren. Societal restrictions,

though possibly inferred, are not as obvious.

Discipline of the children also falls into a "gray area" that is not specifically determined for the new stepparent. Cherlin (1981) reported that some stepparents are not sure how severely they can discipline their stepchildren, or even their own children. He further explained that some stepparents discipline their biological children more harshly than their stepchildren to avoid accusations of favoritism. In other families, the stepparents have difficulty establishing themselves as a disciplinarian with their stepchildren at all.

Visher and Visher (1995) have done extensive research on stepparenting and advise that new families come together with prior "parent-child alliances" and that the stepparent enters the family "as an outsider and a comparative stranger to the children" (p. 31). In these instant families, a couple has no time to create a bond with the children as do biological parents. Newman (1994) describes trying to become an instant parent as "one of the traps" stepparents fall into, and further state that "it doesn't go over very well" (p. 133).

Discipline problems, in fact, are often cited as the most troublesome difficulty in a remarriage family (Bray, 1995; Hetherington, 1987; Pasley & Dollahite, 1995). Adolescents, in particular, "warrant special attention" according to Pasley and Dollahite (p. 88), who describe adolescent discipline in stepfamilies as "one of the most stressful aspects" of stepparenting (p. 92). Walsh (1992) added that "...conflicts over discipline and childrearing rank first on the list of problems in remarriage units" (p. 710). He stated that stepparents generally take one of three approaches to discipline: inattentive and disengaged, actively involved and overly restrictive, or tentative ("walking on

eggshells). He reported that "none of these strategies is particularly successful, because each acts to inhibit the development of an open and trusting relationship." (p. 711).

Houmes and Meier (1985) explained that children in divorce/separation situations may feel psychologically abandoned because they lose a parent, they may lose friends or even their house. In other situations, children may have to learn to share their house and remaining parent with new stepsiblings. Children may retreat or withdraw in anger according to Houmes and Meier and this occurs even more so in adolescence.

There can also be an issue of loyalty in remarriage families, particularly with adolescents. Walsh (1992) found that some children in remarriage families believe that their biological parents may become angry or hurt if they express affection toward their stepparent. He wrote that this can create a "double bind" situation in that the more adolescents care for a stepparent, the worse they feel" (p. 710). Atkinson (1990) added that "a child likes to know where he stands, even if he doesn't care for certain disagreeable rules and regulations, for it gives him a sense of stability and continuity" (p.12).

Bray (1995) went on to explain that many stepparents "desire a close relationship with their stepchildren and expect that this closeness will develop quickly", however, this relationship often takes several years, according to Bray. He added that it is important for stepparents to give relationship building adequate time to grow. Walsh (1992) agreed, affirming that it takes time to build emotional bonds, which in some cases never occur. He went on to explain that just because two adults care for each other and choose to marry does not mean the children will share warm feelings toward the new spouse.

Houmes and Meier (1985) wrote that in their rush to return to "normalcy" and "feel like a family again, stepparents may lose sensitivity to the individual needs of children" (p. 70). This, of course, exacerbates the problem. As a result, Visher and Visher (1995) report that stepparents experience a great deal of rejection and feelings of alienation during the early stages in a remarriage family.

In spite of much negativity in the literature surrounding stepfamily research, most researchers have found that remarriage families are not some sort of "lost cause". Bray (1995) for example, reported that children from stepfamilies have a "higher risk of developing psychological problems ... than children from first-marriage families" (p. 59), however, most children adjust to their parent's remarriage and "function within a normal range" (p. 60). Dahl, Cowgill, and Asmundsson (1987) interviewed several remarriage families who reported the beginnings of their remarriage as "troublesome", yet they found equal accounts of improvement within 2-3 years. The children and adolescents in these families reported positive feelings toward their stepparents reporting that they valued their stepparent as "consultant, coach, mediator, friend" (p. 41). In their report, Dahl, et al., advised stepparents to try for "mutual courtesy" before attempting to discipline their stepchildren.

An important factor to consider seems to be not forcing a remarriage family into the mold of a traditional family. Pasley and Dollahite (1995) found that "the way problems between parents and children are resolved in first families may not work in stepfamilies" (p. 91). Visher and Visher (1995) further describe the hurdle professionals must cross if remarriage families present as clients:

A basic difficulty for therapists working with step families is the tendency to use a first-marriage family as the model for family functioning. With a vision of the idealized nuclear family in mind, the chaos in remarriage families is often viewed as signaling severe pathological functioning. Stepparenting is unlike nuclear family parenting. (p. 26)

Most researchers, according to Walsh (1992), report finding that after several years of adjusting together, remarriage families do not seem to have any more significant problems than intact biological families.

Stepfathers. Fathers in remarriage families are important to include in this research because about 65% of stepfamilies with children under 18 are stepfather families (Pasley & Dollahite, 1995). Research concerning this group is also significant because "men in stepfamily situations tend to have different expectations placed on them than have women" (Visher & Visher, 1979, p. 85), therefore, research about stepfamilies in general can not necessarily be applied directly to stepdads. It is also important because, even more so than stepmothers, a stepfather's role in the new family is "particularly ambiguous and illdefined" (p. 88). Research in this area may help professionals clarify a stepfather's roles and guide them toward a better understanding of their position in the new family.

One area stepfathers are often uncertain about is how much discipline to exercise toward their stepchildren (Walsh, 1992). According to Walsh, these men find themselves in the "awkward position of enforcing discipline when they have no apparent authority" to do so (p. 711). This can lead to feelings of confusion, frustration, or failure as a father. Pasley and Dollahite (1995) also

recorded feelings of inadequacy among some stepdads in their research due to lack of respect and/or love between the stepfathers and their stepchildren. Visher and Visher (1979) have reported that "the emphasis in America that has been placed on men [is] to be action- and achievement-oriented" (p. 109) and when this goal is frustrated in the family, stepdads may tend to overcompensate with an authoritarian disciplinary style.

Visher and Visher (1979) related that because of the pull between an ambiguous role and the need for control, stepdads often become harsh disciplinarians. They warned that this can result in the stepfamily becoming "fragmented" because the stepchildren often rebel and "the wife/mother feels torn between her children and her husband" (p. 114). Hetherington's report (1987) disagreed with that of the Vishers. Hetherington indicated that stepfathers "tend to be ... more disengaged than are fathers in non-divorced families" (p.197).

Table 1 records the results of Hetherington's study comparing parenting styles in divorced and non-divorced families. She found that discipline style tends to change as the marriage progresses. Though she discovered that a disengaged parenting style was prevalent among stepfathers in her sample, the more positive authoritative style increased with time for boys, yet diminished for girls. The girls in her sample reported that disengagement increased with time.

Other researchers have reported that girls in stepfamilies have more problems with their stepfathers than do boys. Clingempeel, Brand, and Ievoli (1984), for instance, indicated that stepparent-stepdaughter families were more problematic in that girls displayed lower "love" scores and higher

Table 1. Number of responses in various types of parenting styles

	Permissive		Disengaged		Authoritarian		Authoritative	
	mom	dad	mom	dad	mom	dad	mom	dad
Nondivorced								
boys	6	3	4	3	4	8	16	16
girls	4	1	5	7	4	2	17	20
Divorced								
boys	8	--	5	--	10	--	7	--
girls	8	--	3	--	4	--	15	--
Remarried early								
boys	6	5	4	14	8	7	12	4
girls	6	7	5	10	5	4	14	9
Remarried late								
boys	7	3	5	15	4	4	14	8
girls	3	1	4	20	7	5	16	4

(Hetherington, 1987, p. 198)

"detachment" scores (toward their stepdads) than boys. In their study, girls also showed less positive verbal behavior and more negative problem-solving behavior toward their stepfathers than boys. Boys, on the other hand, showed more warmth to their stepfathers than girls.

In comparison, Bray (1995) has reported that both girls and boys in stepfather families had a "higher incidence of behavioral and emotional problems" (p. 59). He was measuring such externalizing behaviors as noncompliance, aggression, substance abuse, and problems with social relationships, as well as, internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression. Pasley and Dollahite (1995) report that "the conflictual relationship between stepfathers and adolescent children was often provoked by the children's hostility, resistance, and coerciveness toward the stepparent" and they concluded that the children's negative attitude made it more difficult for the

stepparent to become authoritative or to develop a closer relationship with the stepchildren.

Anderson, et al. (1992) has indicated that this authoritative parenting style has led to the lowest levels of externalizing behaviors and the highest levels of competence in children of both fathers and stepfathers. Hetherington's study (1987) disagreed. She found that both authoritative and authoritarian parenting in stepfathers was related to high rates of behavior problems in both stepdaughters and stepsons, at least in the first three years of remarriage. Hetherington wrote that after two years "authoritative parenting by stepfathers [was] related to fewer behavior problems and greater acceptance of the stepfather by stepsons but [was] not at [that] time significantly related to stepdaughters behavior" (p. 198).

Unfortunately, according to Bray (1995) the connection between stepfamily relationships and presenting behavior problems may not be readily apparent at the beginning of a remarriage. He states that in most cases, however, the "interactional patterns in the stepfamily create or contribute to the child's psychopathology, and the solutions to these problems lie in understanding and changing stepfamily functioning." (p. 61).

Therapists can assist these struggling stepfathers find appropriate ways to parent their stepchildren, although Visher and Visher (1979) admit that "help from an outside person ... is not a need men acknowledge easily" (p. 113). They reported that fathers and stepfathers do not usually feel the same individual responsibility for interpersonal relationships within the family as do the mothers. Walsh (1992) concludes, though, that "stepfathers are more likely to be successful disciplinarians when they take a slow, gentle, flexible approach

and develop a friendship to foster the child's participation." (p. 711). Family counseling can help foster this relationship.

<u>Single Parents</u>

Single parents are also a growing population in the United States and span virtually all sub-cultures in the country. Depending on the sources quoted, single-parent families account for between 20-27 % of all families in America with children under the age of 18 (eg. Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1993; Richards & Schmiege, 1993; Ronningen, 1992), and although a large majority of these families are headed by women, this fact is changing in that more fathers are seeking, and gaining, custody of their children. There has also been an increase in single-parent adoptions in recent years. Benson and Roehlkepartain indicate that between 1980-1991, while the number of single-parent families headed by women increased by 25 %, single-parent families headed by men increased by 92%. These dads may be single by choice (eg. adoption), or their "single-ness" may not be of their choice, such as after death or divorce. Perhaps they have never been married and always had the responsibility of rearing their child/ren (which is more often the case with single-mothers), or they may have had a parent-partner for several years and are now having to cope with rearing the children alone. In any case, singles encounter problems in addition to the "normal" trials of parenting that make parenting more difficult. Often they are trying to maintain an overly hectic schedule since they are doing all, or at least most, household tasks by themselves. They find themselves so overworked that they have little quality time to spend with (or adequately monitor) their children and no time for their personal needs or for leisure activities (Richards & Schmiege, 1993).

Coping with single-parenting in general is not only emotionally trying for parents, but it is also very difficult for the children involved, particularly when the situation results from divorce or separation. During these times, when children and adolescents need the support of their parents, the parents are often emotionally drained to the point that they are unable to provide that support (DeVaney, 1988).

Single Fathers. The minority family type among families with fathers is certainly the single dad families. The U.S. Census (1990) reported only 1.6 million single father families among the 64 million families in the country and although this figure is small by comparison to other family types, it is certainly large enough to consider when discussing parenting style of fathers in various types of families. This small number may account for the small body of research available on single father families (Richards & Schmiege, 1993). Most data located addressed the reasons that fathers gained custody of their children since mothers traditionally have been awarded primary custody (there are over 7 million single moms).

Richards and Schmiege (1993) conducted research on the problems encountered by single parents, however, they reported too few single fathers in their sample of subjects to be "statistically significant" (p. 279). They did indicate that their findings could be suggestive of single father problems in a larger population. The fathers in their research reported less worries about money than single moms for example. While the mothers were often forced to make a transition from housewife to working mother, the fathers generally were already established in the workforce. Men, on the other hand, reported more problems with ex-spouse than did the women. "This is perhaps not too

surprising when considering the reasons why the fathers have custody."
(Richards & Schmiege, p. 282). These researchers indicated that the men in
their study were awarded custody of their children because the mothers were
shown to have mental health or substance abuse problems.

Perhaps the biggest issue presented by the single fathers in Richards
and Schmiege's research was that they often felt odd as a single parent
"because fathers are not commonly seen as involved and committed parents"
(1993, p. 282). These men reported feeling as though they are considered "a
non-normative, less accepted type of single-parent family" (p. 283). Strangely,
this seems to be in disagreement with Visher and Visher's earlier research
(1979) during which they found that "many fathers are now willing to accept
their nurturing qualities, and are beginning to take a more active role in family
relationships" (p. 120). This inconsistency is possibly due to the varied
population of single dads, which would suggest that it is "impossible to
generalize the experiences of all single fathers" (Richards & Schmiege, p. 278).
This variation in parenting backgrounds likely influences the discipline style of
these fathers as well.

Parenting style during adolescence

Introduction of a new parent-figure into the life of a child can be
problematic, as has been described, however, the most difficult age for
discipline problems stemming from the introduction of a new "parent" is
between the ages of 12/13 and 17/18 (Hart, 1989). During this time, the
desires of the new stepparent for unity and emotional closeness often conflict
with the needs of the adolescent for increased autonomy (Pasley & Dollahite,
1995). The teenage years are already a time of exploring identities, limit-

testing, and conflict. The introduction of different family structures, which involve new values and boundaries, often exacerbates the teen's adjustment in this period of their life (Smetana, Yau, Restrepo, & Braeges, 1991, p. 1007).

Research has indicated that conflicts, bickering, and disagreements with parents normally increase during adolescence (Smetana, et al., 1991). Teens from families other than the "traditional" style seem to be at greater risk. Smetana, et al., has found that "adolescents in divorced families engage in more deviant behavior...than do adolescents in married families" (p. 1008) and also reports that "adolescents in one-parent families are at greater risk for negative outcomes than are adolescents from married families" (p. 1009). Their later findings, based primarily on lower grade and poorer communication among the teens, supported their earlier reports.

Smetana, et al., (1991) goes on to state that "adolescence is the stage at which the child has the most ability to resist change" (p. 1008). If confronted with an authoritarian stepparent who has not taken time to build a relationship with the teen, they are likely to withdraw, mask their feelings, and create what Smetana called, "a protective armor for himself or herself, a facade of toughness, excessive indifference, reserve, and denial" (p. 1008). This barrier slows down the process of adjustment in the new family and hampers efforts of the stepparent at becoming closer to the adolescent.

Implications for a new stepfather

How does a new stepfather hope to fit into the family? It is apparent that expecting "instant relationships" and "parent" behavior does not take into account the time it takes to develop these interpersonal bonds. Visher and Visher (1995) stress that the stepdad needs to come to a point where he has

earned recognition as having an "authoritative and trustworthy position" in the eyes of the children (p. 26). They further recommend that stepfathers consider the effects divorce has on parenting. Task overload and a breakdown in behavior monitoring, for example, can be a detriment to the effectiveness of one's parenting.

Newman (1994) wrote that a "united front" might seem to be the best approach to parenting, but warns that this strategy can present problems. She indicates that teenagers are likely to resent a stepparent telling them what to do or not do and advises new stepdads to expect the retort "You're not my father!" at some point during their adjustment into a new stepfamily (Newman, p.142). Visher and Visher (1995) would agree and indicate that this response is more common from older children who are "particularly upset" when a stepfather enters the family and begins to discipline them (p.94).

Johnson and Rosenfeld (1990) remind stepfathers (and stepmothers alike) that it is more difficult to handle children during and after a divorce because of the shifting waves of emotion that both adults and children are experiencing. These authors suggest that it is common for children to be subjected to two (or more) sets of rules after a divorce and stress that "consistency ... is extremely important" (p. 119).

Johnson and Rosenfeld (1990) go on to explain that if a stepparent enters the family and tries to get involved in disciplining the children, "the kids may resent it so much that they deliberately misbehave to cause problems in the home" (p. 120). Anderson, et al. (1992) found that both authoritarian and authoritative stepfathers who try to take immediate control in a new family are less than successful.

Hetherington (1987) instructs new stepfathers to "first work at establishing a relationship with the children and support the mother in her parenting (p. 198) before trying to take charge. She reported that even then the stepdad might receive double message from the biological mother. On one hand she wants help with discipline, yet, on the other, she wants to protect her children. Furthermore, the mother might perceive withdrawal from the children as total disinterest in which case she may feel let down or deserted (Visher & Visher, 1979).

Newman (1994) suggests that stepparents need to develop a "base of influence" (p. 134) in which trust is established with their stepchildren before they get involved in the disciplinary process. She further explains that this will help build a degree of comfort between stepparent and stepchild which is needed before they attempt discipline. Visher and Visher (1979) report that some stepfathers find the waiting difficult. They feel "emasculated" (p. 95) by the lack of control, yet, a sudden takeover of authority is usually very disturbing according to the Vishers. They indicated that "becoming a friend to the stepchild is crucial" (p. 95) and only then will discipline be accepted because the person being disciplined wishes the approval of the person enforcing the rules.

Agreeing with Visher and Visher (1979), Hetherington (1987) makes this approach clear in her report yet warns again of the problems sometimes encountered between a stepfather and a stepdaughter:

> Attempts by the stepfather to directly exert control, even
> authoritative control, over the child's behavior or
> disengagement early in the remarriage are associated with

rejection of the stepfather by the children and with children's problem behavior. A stepfather who first establishes a warm relationship with the stepson and supports the mother's parenting and later moves into an authoritative role has a greater probability of gaining acceptance and facilitating the adjustment of stepsons. In contrast, even when the stepfather is supportive and gives appropriate response to a stepdaughter, her acceptance is difficult to gain. (Hetherington, 1987, p. 204)

Each family, of course, should be considered individually, but it seems that how a parent approaches discipline means more than how many parents (and which) live in the house. Borrine, Handal, Brown, and Searight (1991) studied this and supported this hypothesis. They compared physical wholeness (two parent families) with psychological wholeness and verified that "adolescent adjustment was related to the level of perceived family conflict" (p. 754) not the parent's marital status.

Chapter III

Method

Participants

Participants for this research were contacted at a local college and asked to participate in this project. The subjects ranged in age from 17 to 28 with a mode for the sample of 19 (see Table 2). In all, 62 students were contacted. However, all responses were not useable. One student completed the demographic questions on the cover letter (see Appendix A), but did not answer all items on the main questionnaire rendering the overall results unusable. Two other students chose to abstain from participation completely and 2 subject's questionnaires were deleted because their age was outside the range being examined in this project. Seven of the remaining students indicated in the demographic information that they had no father-figure in their home and their responses pertained to single mothers. Since this project focuses on fathers, the data received concerning only mothers was not considered. This left 50 completed questionnaires pertaining to fathers or other father-figures for use in this study.

Table 2. Stem and leaf plot of participants age.

Frequency	Stem	Leaf
1	17	0
5	18	00000
17	19	00000000000000000
6	20	000000
6	21	000000
5	22	00000
2	23	00
1	24	0
2	25	00
2	27	00
2	28	00

A tally of demographic data obtained from the instrument cover letter revealed that about one third (34 %) of participants in this study were Caucasian males coming from families with both biological parents present (see Figure 2). The classification percentages for this sample are similar to those of the U. S. population; however, there are variations. For example, U.S. Census data (1990) indicates that this country is slightly over 80% Caucasian and the percentage for this sample was approximately 64%. This would need be considered before any results from this study were generalized for a larger sample of U.S. residents. The total frequency figures of cultural groups represented in this study are furnished in Table 3.

Figure 2. Crosstab of sex by culture in families with two biological parents.

		Culture				Row
	Count					Total
Sex		Afr Am	Asian	Hisp.	Cauc.	
	Female	3	1	1	6	11
	Male	6	3	1	17	27
Column	Total	9	4	2	23	38

In contrast to the lower percentage of Caucasians participating in relation to the U.S. population, this sample contains a higher percentage of males than in the U.S. population. Census data (1990) indicates that males and females in America are almost evenly divided (49% male / 51% female) whereas this sample includes 62% male participants. Based on these figures, it seems apparent that, though similar, this sample is not accurately representative of the American population, however, the data obtained can still be helpful in examining parental styles within various types of families.

Table 3. <u>Frequency table of participants' cultural background.</u>

Value Label	Frequency	Percent
African American	09	.18
Asian	05	.10
Caucasian	32	.64
Hispanic	04	.08
Total	50	100

Instrument

The "Parental Authority Questionnaire" (Buri, 1989) was used to identify the fathers' parenting style of subjects participating in this project. The instrument is designed to evaluate the parenting from the perspective of the research subjects. Adolescents themselves are important sources of information regarding their own behavior and emotional issues, in fact, they have been called "indispensable informants" in that regard (Verhulst, Achenbach, Ferdinand, & Kasius, 1993). In another study, researchers reported that adolescent adjustment in stepfather families was related to their *perception* of parenting style (Fine, Donnelly, & Voydanoff, 1991), yet, the literature they located revealed very few studies that examined life in stepfamilies from the perspective of the adolescents in the family. This study was designed to add to that aspect of research.

While Baumrind (1971) has outlined specific categories for various parenting styles, her measurements to determine a parent's style have been based solely on interviews with, and observations of, parents and children (Buri, 1989). To provide a more standardized method for determining

parenting styles in accordance with Baumrind's concepts, Buri developed the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). The PAQ is given to adolescents or young adults to measure their perception of their parent's style of authority.

The PAQ was produced by first examining Baumrind's (1971) parenting style classifications, then creating a pool of possible instrument questions (Buri, 1989). Buri examined the content validity of the 48 original items by submitting them, along with detailed descriptions of Baumrind's constructs, to authorities in the fields of social work, education, sociology, and psychology (N=21). According to Buri, if 95% of these professionals indicated that an item clearly identified one of Baumrind's parenting style concepts, the item was accepted for possible inclusion in the final questionnaire. Thirty-six of the original 48 items met this criterion, two-thirds with 100% agreement. Thirty of the accepted questions were selected to produce the completed PAQ; ten each in the three parenting style categories (authoritative, authoritarian, & permissive). Subjects respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Appendix A presents the "father" version of the completed PAQ which was used in this study. A similar version is available for examining a mother's parenting style. Because of the high level of agreement on the final items, Buri asserts a high level of content validity for the PAQ.

To begin testing the reliability of the PAQ, Buri (1989) administered the questionnaire to 62 college psychology students. Two weeks later, he gave the PAQ again with 61 of the original group participating. Buri then calculated the test-retest reliability and discovered r = .77 for father's permissiveness, r = .85 for father's authoritarianism, and r = .92 for father's authoritativeness. He

felt these coefficients were "highly respectable" (p. 6) considering that there are only 10 items on each scale.

Buri (1989) also tested several facets of "criterion-related validity" (Gregory, 1992) pertaining to the PAQ. Determining criterion from Baumrind's (1971) research, Buri determined that authoritative parents reared children who were "more independent, self-reliant, responsible, and goal-oriented" (p.7) and the children of authoritarian parents exhibited lower levels of these qualities, which, he explained, were also attributes of self-esteem. He concluded, therefore, that if the PAQ measured authoritativeness and authoritarianism, it should also accurately measure self-esteem on a similar continuum. Using this assumption, Buri tested a group of college students (N = 230) using both the PAQ and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale obtaining the following bivariate correlations; father's authoritativeness, $r = +.38$ ($p <$ .0005); father's authoritarianism, $r = -.18$ ($p < .005$); and father's permissiveness, $r = -.08$ ($p < .10$), indicating that the PAQ can accurately predict children's self-esteem based on their parents style of authority.

Buri (1989) similarly tested the criterion of parental nurturance (warmth) with another sample of students ($N = 123$) using the Parental Nurturance Scale. He reported that authoritative fathers were highest in nurturance ($r = +.68$, $p < .0005$), authoritarian fathers were lowest ($r = -.53$, $p < .0005$), and permissiveness was statistically unrelated to nurturance in his study (p.9). Using these results, Buri contends that the PAQ is valid on the criterion of parental nurturance correlated with parental authority.

When considering the reliability and validity of the PAQ, Buri (1989) also predicted a clear divergence among scores for authoritativeness,

authoritarianism, and permissiveness if, in fact, the PAQ accurately measured these traits. Buri's results, listed in Table 4, illustrate that the fathers' authoritativeness and authoritarianism in his study were both inversely related to the fathers' permissiveness as he expected.

Concerned that some responses on the PAQ may be influenced by "social desirability" (Buri, 1989), Buri administered the PAQ to another sample of college students ($N = 69$), along with the Marlowe-Crowe Social Desirability Scale. After examining the results, Buri reported that none of the correlation values were statistically significant, suggesting that the PAQ "does not appear to be vulnerable to social desirability response biases" (Buri, 1989, p.11). Based on these findings, Buri advocates that the PAQ is a highly valid and reliable instrument to evaluate parenting style from the perspective of an adolescent or young adult.

Table 4. Intercorrelations of PAQ scores for Fathers (in Buri's research)

	1	2	3
1. father's permissiveness	1.00		
2. father's authoritarianism	-.50***	1.00	
3. father's authoritativeness	.12	-.52***	1.00

***$p < .0005$ (Buri, 1989)

Procedure

Subjects participating in this research were located in three entry-level English Composition classes at a college in St. Charles, Missouri. The classes chosen were each taught by the same instructor to maintain the consistency of

that influence. The students were informed of the nature of this study in accordance with ethical standards set forth by the American Counseling Association (Herlihy & Golden, 1990) and they were informed that participation was strictly voluntary. They were further informed of the confidentiality of the research and advised that their identity would not be disclosed to either this researcher or to anyone examining this report.

A PAQ questionnaire was administered to each class along with the cover letter asking for various demographic data on each student participating in the project. The material was introduced to the participants uniformly by this researcher and the forms were completed at the time they were explained. There were 3 Asian students participating in this project who use English as a second language. However, they each had electronic language translators for their use in case of any misunderstanding of the language in the materials. When the materials were completed, each was collected at that time by this researcher to be hand-scored, then evaluated in the Chapter IV of this report.

Chapter IV

Results

This research sought to examine the null hypothesis that family configuration has no relationship to the parenting style of the father, or "father-figure", in the home, from the perspective of an older adolescent or young adult. Parenting style, as discussed in Chapter 3, can effect a variety of measurable outcomes in the life of an adolescent. The researcher in this project hoped to consider the differences between family types to determine if fathers in any particular family representation were prone to a specific parenting style. For the total sample, the null hypothesis was rejected, although results for individual family groups varied.

As is evident in Table 5, the frequencies of stepfather and single father families are relatively small compared to families with both biological parents present. Because of the small percentage of these "alternative" family types, examining the independence of "parenting style" and "family type" as nominal variables is statistically difficult. For example, a chi-square tabulation would result in low expected frequencies in too many cells to permit reliable calculation. Alternatively, the numerical PAQ scores were converted to an ordinal ranking and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (Howell, 1992) was used to examine score agreement within family groups and for the total sample.

Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) measures the degree of agreement among several subjects judging a particular variable. In this project, subjects were asked to rate their father's parenting style using Buri's PAQ (1989) which results in 3 numerical scores; 1 each for permissiveness,

Table 5. <u>Frequencies of Family Type</u>.

Type	Frequency	Percent
Both Biological Parents	38	76
Stepfather Families	10	20
Single-father Families	2	4
Total	50	100

authoritativeness, and authoritarianism. These scores were then converted to a 1-2-3 ranking and, using this ranking, the researcher calculated a W score of .1036 for the total group of subjects ($N = 50$). This figure was then converted to a chi-square (x^2) value of 10.36 using the conversion formula found in Howell (1992, p. 281). This value is greater than the critical value of 5.99 at an alpha (α) level of .050 (in Howell, p. 637) indicating a significant difference among the scores, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected for the total sample. Examining individual family type in a similar fashion resulted in the following results.

Table 6. <u>Kendall's coefficient and chi-square scores for individual family styles</u>.

	W	x^2 (2 df)	α	H_o
2 Bio. Parents	.096	7.296	.050	rejected
Stepfather families	.28	5.6	.050	accepted
Single father families	(number of responses too small to calculate W or x^2 reliably)			

Figure 3 provides actual frequencies of the various parenting styles reported by subjects in each family type in this sample. Examination of the overall figures would seem to validate the statistical results that there are differences between reported parenting styles; in particular, permissiveness is reported less often overall. By contrast, the parenting style frequencies among stepfather families do not seem to agree with the statistical results. There is certainly variation between parenting styles in this group and one might speculate that the statistical acceptance of the null hypothesis is due to a small number of these families in this sample. However, this certainly suggests further research is needed with a larger sample of this particular family type. Further research with a larger group of single father families would be needed as well if reliable results on this group were desired.

Figure 3. Crosstab of Parenting Style by Family Type.

		TYPE			
	Count				Row
		2 Par	Step	Single	Total
	Permissive	1	1	1	3
STYLE	Authoritative	21	3	0	24
	Authoritarian	16	6	1	23
	Column Total	38	10	2	50

These figures indicate that 94% of the subjects in this sample report having a father-figure who is either authoritarian or authoritative. For the total sample, these two styles are almost equally divided; however, (as mentioned above) when subdivided by family style, some differences become apparent.

For example, twice as many stepfathers were reported to be the more strict authoritarian style than authoritative, although the small number of stepfathers in the study limits reliability of the comparison. The authoritarian stepfathers were evenly divided between male and female students, but were skewed in regard to culture. One Hispanic stepfather was considered authoritarian, while all other authoritarian stepfathers (5) were recorded by Caucasian students.

Comparison of parenting style results to some other demographics revealed a similar distribution to that of family type, however, there were some differences. For example, comparing parenting style with cultural background of the respondent shows (in Figure 4) a relatively even distribution of the authoritative and authoritarian style across cultural groups in this sample.

Figure 4. Crosstab of Parenting Style by Culture

		CULTURE				
		Afr Am	Asian	Hisp	White	
	Permissive		1		2	3
STYLE	Authoritative	4	3	2	15	24
	Authoritarian	5	1	2	15	23
		9	5	4	32	50

In contrast, examining parenting style with gender of the reportee indicated that males presented a slightly wider division (by 2%) between authoritative and authoritarian, than female subjects (see Figure 5) but in the opposite direction. Forecasting this distribution difference into the total population, of course, would be speculative without examining larger samples.

Figure 5. <u>Crosstab of Parenting Style by Sex (of the respondent)</u>.

	Count Col Percent	SEX		
		Male	Female	
STYLE	Permissive	1	2	3
		3.0%	11%	6%
	Authoritative	16	8	24
		52%	42%	48%
	Authoritarian	14	9	23
		45%	47%	46%
	Column	31	19	50
	Total	62%	38%	100%

<u>Divergent responses</u>

When Buri (1989) was evaluating the validity and reliability of the PAQ, he calculated the correlation between the parenting style scores measured in the instrument He believed that if the instrument were accurate, researchers should expect divergent results from the 3 scales. In other words, if a subject scored their father high on authoritarianism for example, they would also score him low on permissiveness as these two parenting styles are dissimilar (eg. one is more strict than the other). Buri indicated that he found this to be true in his research (refer back to Table 4, p. 38). The correlational coefficient for permissive and authoritarian fathers obtained in the current data (see Table 7) was almost identical to that calculated by Buri for these variables, however, the other scores (authoritarian / authoritative and permissive / authoritative) differed from Buri's results.

The figures in Table 7 indicate that there is a negative correlation between father's authoritarianism and father's authoritativeness, as Buri (1989) also discovered, however, the current results are not as strong as he obtained.

Table 7. Intercorrelations of PAQ scores (for this project).

	1	2	3
1. father's permissiveness	1.00		
2. father's authoritarianism	-.5082**	1.00	
3. father's authoritativeness	.4233**	-.3474*	1.00

1-tailed significance: * - .01 ** - .001

The coefficient for permissiveness and authoritativeness on the other hand was quite different from that which Buri obtained. Buri found very little relationship between these two scores ($r = .12$) as he expected, however, in this research data, as the plot on page 46 helps illustrate, a fairly strong positive relationship exists between permissiveness and authoritativeness   ($r = .4247$). This would suggest, that subjects in this sample who score their father high on the permissive scale also scored him relatively high on the authoritative scale.

Figure 6. Correlation Plot: Permissiveness with Authoritativeness.
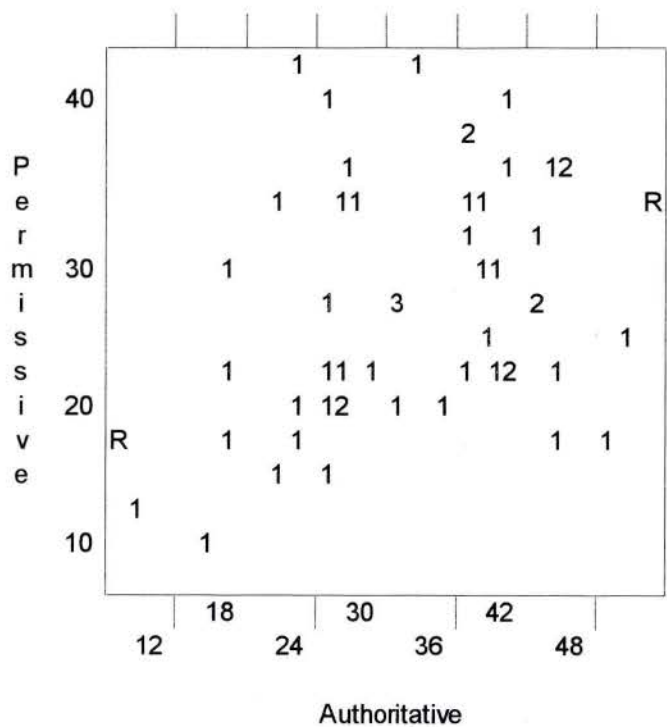
[calculated by the researcher using SPSS PC+ (Norusis, 1991)]

Chapter V

Discussion

The null hypothesis for this project was that family type has no relationship to an adolescent or young adult's perception of the parenting style of his or her father, or "father-figure". The method of sample selection used by the researcher resulted in small sub-samples of some family types which, therefore, presented a cumbersome limitation to this research. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the null hypothesis for the overall sample was rejected.

The sample selected for this project was quite similar demographically to the total population of the United States. This would explain why, in a sample this size ($N = 50$), sub-samples of some family types were too small to statistically examine reliably. For example, approximately 3/4 (76%) of the students in this sample reported being from a family with both biological parents present in the home (see Table 5, p. 37). This is just slightly lower than the 78.5% reported for the U.S. population in 1990 (U.S. Census).

In retrospect, based on these figures, a similarly diverse sample of about $N = 260$ would be needed to obtain at least 15 subjects from each of the 3 types of families discussed herein. Alternatively, 15 students from each family type would have to be hand selected from some pool of possible subjects to have enough subjects to evaluate results from each family type more reliably. Hand selection would, in turn, introduce several possible confounding variables into the research, such as how the subjects were selected and from what population. The sampling method used in this project more resembled a random selection. The data presented in Table 5 does suggest a continuing

prevalence of two-parent families in the population represented by this sample even though literature mentioned in Chapter 2 (eg., Benson & Roehlkepartain, 1993; Walsh, 1992) indicate that other family types are on the increase.

By comparison, Hetherington's research (1987) utilized a similar sized sample   ($N = 61$) and, although her results were similar in some respects, she recorded some differences. Condensing Hetherington's data (from Table 1, p. 21) into a crosstabulation similar to Figure 5, reveals more diverse results between the 3 parenting styles. Authoritative and authoritarian styles were closely matched among boys, however, there was a larger percentage of permissive fathers than in the current project.

Figure 7. Condensed crosstab of Hetherington's (1987) style by sex data (for fathers).

	Count	SEX		
	Col Percent			
		Male	Female	
STYLE	Permissive	8	8	16
		26.0%	27%	26.0%
	Authoritative	12	13	25
		39%	43%	41.0%
	Authoritarian	11	9	20
		35%	30%	33.0%
	Column	31	30	61
	Total	51.0%	49.0%	100%

Hetherington's data also recorded more girls reporting authoritative fathers than authoritarian, almost matching with permissive. This also differs from the current project results which records slightly more girls with authoritarian fathers than authoritative and very few permissive fathers.

Implications for further research

The differences between these two reports of similar sample size

suggests several ideas for additional research on this topic of parenting style. For example, Hetherington's sample consisted of younger children (around age 10) and examined length of marriage in the remarriage families, whereas this research focused on older adolescents and young adults without the consideration of remarriage time frames. Furthermore, this research sampled only college students and Hetherington's group was selected from pre-college age students.

The fact that all subjects chosen for this research are in college might suggest a sample with higher academic abilities than a non-college-attending group; yet another variable to consider. Of course, the assumption that a student's presence in college indicates higher scholastic achievement than someone not in college might lead to a totally different question for future exploration. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 indicated that some authors (eg., Baumrind, 1966; Steinberg, et al., 1989) found that an authoritarian parenting style leads to poor academic achievement, whereas others (eg., Anderson, et al., 1992; Radziszewska, et al., 1996) discovered that an authoritative style brings about improved scholastic performance. On the surface then, one might expect to find a higher percentage of authoritative parents reported by college students than authoritarian parents. It was interesting to note that this was not the case in this project. In this sample these two styles were reported almost equally. Some literature, Chao (1995), for example, might suggest that cultural diversity in the sample could effect this balance. Chao's research indicated that Asian students of authoritarian parents scored higher scholastically. In the current project, however, only 1 Asian student (of 5) reported having an authoritarian father, so perhaps culture

would not explain the difference in this group of students (or perhaps cultural differences may effect how the students described their fathers). One might also explain the proportion of parenting styles in this college-student sampling by theorizing that students of authoritative parents are encouraged to attend college; students of authoritarian parents are forced to attend college; and permissive parents leave the decision of college attendance up to their children without encouragement, so the children often do not attend.

Other implications for further study might include: occupation of parent, upbringing of the parent (relating to learned parenting style), or correlation of parenting style to a child's behavior at varying age levels. Anderson, et al. (1992) even suggested further research "to investigate the different ways which adolescents' behavior shapes parenting" (p. 198). Obviously research concerning the parenting patterns of mothers in various types of families would also be a logical topic for further study.

Research limitations

Some limitations to this research have already been discussed. For example, the method of sample selection only involved students from the general college population where this project was initiated. This resulted in unequal amounts of subjects from each family type and too few single parent families to reliably evaluate. The fact that the sample was drawn from college age students in itself might also have added a confounding variable to the research. At the age of these students, many have already moved from their parent's home and may have a different perspective of their father's discipline style than when they lived with him.

The method of parenting style evaluation for this project (Buri's PAQ) was limited to the opinion of one child from each of the families represented. A more in-depth evaluation could be obtained by contacting all children in the home and/or conducting what Achenbach (1993) called a "multiaxial approach" (examining the research question from several standpoints). For example, when studying child behavior, Achenbach uses his Child Behavior Checklist, which evaluates behavior from the perspective of a teacher; as well as uses other instruments that provide reports from parents, from the children themselves, and from personal observations of the professional. Houmes and Meier (1985) would agree with this approach, but emphasizes the self-report, reporting that what a person thinks about their own problem "most definitely determines how they deal with the problem" (p. 67). This would indicate that the personal perspective of the subject is an important piece of any research.

Conclusion

Consideration of these limitations and ideas for additional research might suggest that more questions were raised by this project than actually answered. The research did find differences in parenting styles among various family types but the results also suggested numerous alternative variables about which researchers might hypothesize. In other words, is the type of father-figure in the home (step-dad, single dad, etc.) truly responsible for that parent's style of discipline? The answer to this question is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this project, however, the study did reveal some helpful information for professionals involved with family therapy.

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 revealed overwhelming support for the use of an authoritative parenting style. Baumrind (1966,1991),

Anderson, et al. (1992) and others have reported prolific research findings that this style of discipline results in many positive outcomes in children and adolescents. This should certainly encourage professionals in the counseling field to take advantage of Baumrind's long history of research and educate their parent-clients in this regard. She would encourage authoritative parenting in all types of families.

Examining the results of this study might suggest that therapists should caution stepparents against an authoritarian approach in their new blended families. Perhaps these parents are not more strict or "heavy-handed" as this label might suggest, however, these results imply (at least in this small sample) that older adolescent and young adult stepchildren often perceive their stepparent as authoritarian. Previous research has reported that a milder approach to discipline is more effective, at least at the beginning of a new family relationship.

These implications for counselors to teach fathers may be of little use in many families since Visher and Visher (1979) report that men generally do not seek, or want, outside assistance in family matters. However, as attitudes change and more men become accepting of this assistance, professionals need to be prepared to offer sound counsel.

Of course, neither a biological parent or a stepparent is perfect or "knows all" just because they have a child (by birth or marriage). Good parenting skills take time, learning, and adjustment. Rosin (1987) and others have stated that children do not come with a set of rules, but parents (of any variety) must learn/create their own place in the family and counselors can certainly provide helpful guidance.

Appendix A

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Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to help me with my research project.

In an effort to respect your privacy and maintain strict confidentiality, you are not requested to include your name on this form or the attached questionnaire. There are, however, a few descriptive items of information that I do request so that I can more thoroughly evaluate the data received in this study. These are located below.

Please return both this cover sheet and the questionnaire when they are completed. Thank you again for your assistance.

Michael E. Laws

(check one each)

Gender: Male   _____
                 Female   _____

Current age: _____

Cultural background: African-American _____
                     Asian   _____
                     Caucasian (white) _____
                     Hispanic   _____
                     Other   _____   _____

Type of family you have lived in during your adolescent years:

        Lived with both biological parents   _____
        Lived with adoptive or "step"-parent _____ (father ___ mother ___)
        Lived with single-parent   _____ (father ___ mother ___)
        Other "father-figure" in home   _____ (describe) _____
        No "father-figure" in home   _____

Appendix B

Parental Authority Questionnaire
(version pertaining to fathers)

Instructions: For each of the following statements, circle the number on the 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that best indicates how that statement applies to you and your father. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your father during your years of growing up at home. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

1. While I was growing up, my father felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do. 1   2   3   4   5

2. Even is his children didn't agree with him, my father felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what he thought was right. 1   2   3   4   5

3. Whenever my father told me to do something as I was growing up, he expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions. 1   2   3   4   5

4. As I was growing up, once family policy had been established, my father discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.
1   2   3   4   5

5. My father has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable. 1   2   3   4   5

6. My father has always felt that what the children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want. 1   2   3   4   5

7. As I was growing up, my father did not allow me to question any decision that he had made.
1   2   3   4   5

8. As I was growing up, my father directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline. 1   2   3   4   5

9. My father has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to. 1   2   3   4   5

10. As I was growing up, my father did <u>not</u> feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.
1   2   3   4   5

11. As I was growing up, I knew what my father expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with my father when I felt that they were unreasonable.
1   2   3   4   5

12. My father felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family.   1   2   3   4   5

13. As I was growing up, my father seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.   1   2   3   4   5

14. Most of the time as I was growing up, my father did what the children in the family wanted when making family decisions   .   1   2   3   4   5

15. As the children in the family were growing up, my father consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective ways.   1   2   3   4   5

16. As I was growing up, my father would get very upset if I tried to disagree with him.   1   2   3   4   5

17. My father feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.   1   2   3   4   5

18. As I was growing up, my father let me know what behaviors he expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations he punished me.   1   2   3   4   5

19. As I was growing up, my father allowed me to decide most things myself without a lot of direction from him.   1   2   3   4   5

20. As I was growing up, my father took the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but he would not decide for something simply because the children wanted it.   1   2   3   4   5

21. My father did not view himself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.   1   2   3   4   5

22. My father had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but he was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.   1   2   3   4   5

23. My father gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and he expected me to follow his direction, but he was always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.   1   2   3   4   5

24. As I was growing up, my father allowed me to form my own point of view on family matters and he generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do.   1   2   3   4   5

25. My father has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and forcibly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up.   1   2   3   4   5

26. As I was growing up, my father often told me exactly what he wanted me to do and how he expected me to do it.   1   2   3   4   5

27. As I was growing up, my father gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but he was also understanding when I disagreed with him.

         1   2   3   4   5

28. As I was growing up, my father did <u>not</u> direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.   1   2   3   4   5

29. As I was growing up, I knew what my father expected of me in the family and he insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for his authority.

         1   2   3   4   5

30. As I was growing up, if my father made a decision in the family that hurt me, he was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if he made a mistake.

         1   2   3   4   5

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