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Parenting styles related to levels of empathy in sixth grade children

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**PARENTING STYLES RELATED TO LEVELS OF EMPATHY
IN SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of

Child Development

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Sharon Ann Murphy

December, 1994

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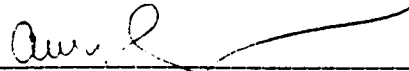
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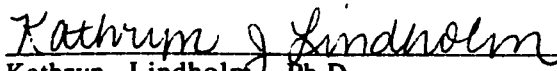
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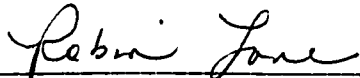
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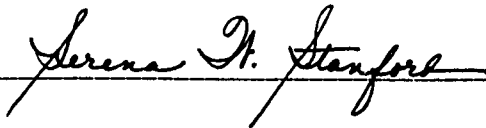


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ABSTRACT

PARENTING STYLES RELATED TO LEVELS OF EMPATHY IN SIXTH GRADE CHILDREN

by Sharon Ann Murphy

This study assessed the relationship between empathy and three parenting styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) in sixth grade children. Parenting styles of the students' experience, academic achievement, and empathy levels were determined by self-report questionnaire responses. Additionally, analyses evaluated ethnic and gender differences in the relationship of parenting styles to empathy levels and academic achievement. A total of 235 sixth grade students of mixed ethnic backgrounds from one middle school participated in the study. In agreement with previously reported data, authoritative parenting was the only style positively related to academic achievement, except for African Americans. Similarly, the authoritative parenting style was the only parenting style positively associated with empathy levels as well, again with the exception of African Americans. Females scored significantly higher than males in empathy levels. There were no significant differences in empathy levels between ethnic groups.

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This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful husband and fantastic daughters, without whose understanding and empathy it would never have been possible. They continue to teach me more than any study could ever capture. Thanks and love to Paul, Heather, and Katie.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The development of children and the socialization factors which contribute to desirable outcomes for them have captured the interest of great thinkers for centuries. Principles and theories have been shaped as much by the sociological climate of the times as by observations of the children themselves. As climates have changed, so have the perspectives of interest and inquiry changed. Each new approach has added knowledge and insight to the understanding of development, which the Greeks considered central to understanding the essence of human nature, its origins and ultimate purpose (Fox, 1977). This study responds to the social context of today and contributes to the understanding of development by assessing parent socialization styles relative to empathy levels in sixth grade children.

Past centuries have viewed the parenting role differently according to the influences of the current social climate. Until the mid 18th century, religious beliefs that children were born evil generated a punitive and authoritarian approach to child rearing (Maccoby, 1980). The Age of Enlightenment attributed a new importance and value to children. This climate contributed great significance to parent socialization practices. Locke and his followers viewed the parent as the ultimate designer of the child's development (cited in Maccoby, 1980), while Rousseau and his followers viewed the parent as primarily supportive of the child's natural and spontaneous development (cited in Maccoby, 1980).

In this century also, different parenting emphases have emerged in response to social contexts. Following World War II, concern focused on the socialization conditions which permitted the inhumane behaviors witnessed

during the war. Authority, and its power to direct such atrocities, had acquired a repugnant interpretation. The authoritarian syndrome, the subject of a comprehensive study by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levison, and Sanford (1950), was found to be a significant characteristic of individuals scoring high in prejudicial, ethnocentric behavior. Baumrind's studies of parent socialization practices were motivated, in part, by this social interest (Baumrind, 1989). Baumrind sought to distinguish the parent socialization antecedents of children's behaviors. By clustering child behaviors in groups, from the most to the least competent, she identified three clusters of related parenting behaviors (Baumrind, 1967). Children whose behaviors were withdrawn, discontented, distrustful, and controlling had parents whose childrearing was primarily demanding. This parenting style was called *authoritarian*. Children whose behaviors were immature, the least self-reliant, explorative and self-controlled had parents whose behaviors made few demands and issued few restrictions. This parenting style was called *permissive*. Children whose behaviors were the most competent and content had parents whose childrearing was both responsive and demanding. This parenting style was called *authoritative* (Baumrind, 1971). Baumrind's work and subsequent related studies have concluded that the *authoritative* parenting style predicts cognitive and emotional competence in children more than either the *authoritarian* or *permissive* styles (Baumrind, 1989).

The social context of recent decades is characterized by a rapid rate of technological advances and a competitive market place which make intellectual achievement a child outcome of particular interest. Consequently, many recent investigations have sought to determine the aspects of parent behavior that predict academic success in their children. Baumrind's

categories, which capture the parenting concepts studied by many and operationalize them in terms of their demanding and responsive characteristics, have proven to be effective in predicting many child outcomes. The *authoritative* parenting style has been upheld as predictive of academic success for White middle class children, and a growing body of evidence explicates its role in other ethnic groups. Chapter 2 reviews the specific research studies.

Statement of the Problem

The attainment of academic competence is an exciting goal. However, there has not been a balanced recognition of its function as a tool for the enhancement of the human condition and for the improved exercise of the more important capacity to relate and to care. As valuable as academic achievement is, today's global interactions also require the exercise of sensitivity and motivation to engage in cooperative behaviors across diverse ideologies. The ability to perceive, understand, accept and respect differences, and simultaneously recognize commonalities and discover mutual goals, has become increasingly critical for group cooperation. By infusing cooperative efforts with these capacities, the intellectual achievements we have worked so hard to ensure will be able to actualize functional benefits for the world society.

Empathy may be one universal capacity which transcends ethnic, cultural, and ideological differences, providing a common source of information and a basis for mutual understanding and consensus in global interactions (Hoffman, 1987). Empathy is the interaction between the perception of and the affective response to another person (Bryant, 1987). The defining properties of empathy, perception and affective response, could

facilitate sensitive awareness of cultural differences and similarities and motivate responsive behaviors to arrive at and execute cooperative goals. Additionally, some evidence indicates that academic achievement itself may be dependent on empathically governed conditions of the educational environment and the teacher-student relationship (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985; Robinson, Wilson & Robinson, 1978). Furthermore, the affective responsiveness of empathy is one of our fundamental human needs (Bryant, 1987) and provides insight into the understanding of human nature itself (Batson, 1991; Batson, Fults & Schoenrade, 1987). The very survival of the human organism requires empathy-driven attachment and relatedness to others throughout the life span, and several significant relationships have been found between empathy and indices of mental health (Bryant, 1987).

The fundamental role of empathy in human functioning makes understanding its development in our children critically important. While we have extensive empirical evidence indicating the parenting behaviors most predictive of academic success in children, we are lacking a comparable understanding of the parent socialization antecedents of empathy development.

Some work has been done relating parent socialization behaviors to levels of empathy in children (Barnett, 1987; Barnett, Howard, King & Dino, 1980a; Barnett, King, Howard & Dino, 1980b; Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky & Braungart, 1992; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978; Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). Although there are conceptual similarities in the parenting behaviors assessed, none of the studies have utilized the behavioral categories defined by Baumrind which have been extensively studied and particularly valued as predictors of academic and other outcomes in children. Additionally,

Baumrind's *authoritative* category captures the inductive principles considered particularly salient to understanding the consequences of one's behavior from another person's perspective (Baumrind, 1971). Because empathy relies upon the perspective taking capacity, Baumrind's *authoritative* parenting category is particularly likely to be associated with its development.

Purpose of the Study

The specific aim of this study is to contribute knowledge about which parent behaviors predict empathy development in children. This will be accomplished by relating the parenting style categories defined by Baumrind to levels of empathy in sixth grade children. Sixth grade children have attained the full cognitive capacities of perspective taking necessary for empathy, and they have not yet entered the egocentric phase of adolescence which could diminish their empathic inclinations. In order to provide a link to previously reported studies, parenting styles will also be related to academic achievement. The data will be analyzed to evaluate ethnic and gender differences in the relationship of parenting styles to levels of empathy and academic achievement.

Hypothesis

This study tests three hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that there will be a stronger positive correlation between *authoritative* parenting and levels of empathy in sixth grade children, than between *authoritarian or permissive* parenting and levels of empathy. This hypothesis is based on literature showing that the *authoritative* parenting style models the perspective taking function of empathy toward the child and toward others. The child's point of view is recognized and given consideration in parent-child interactions, providing an opportunity for the child to receive empathic treatment. In

interactions involving others, the parent educates the child to others' points of view and guides the child's activities accordingly. *Authoritative* parenting is also warm and responsive, modeling the affective response of empathy (Barnett et al., 1980b; Baumrind, 1971).

The second hypothesis is that girls will score higher than boys in empathy levels as measured in this study. This hypothesis is expected on the basis of literature reporting such differences (Adams, Schvaneveldt & Jenson, 1979; Barnett et al., 1980a; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Hoffman, 1977), and because self-report data tend to heighten gender differences (Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987).

The third hypothesis is that *authoritative* parenting will be positively associated with empathy levels across ethnic groups. This hypothesis is expected on the basis of literature reporting similar responses to parenting styles across ethnic groups, particularly in areas of social competence (Baumrind, 1972; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbusch, 1991).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is the aim of this study to relate Baumrind's (1971) parenting styles to levels of empathy in sixth grade children. Additionally, analyses will be performed to uncover gender or ethnic group differences in the nature of the relationship between parenting style and empathy. The data will be placed in the context of previous work by assessing the relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement.

This chapter will first review the literature which has related Baumrind's parenting styles to academic achievement and other areas of competence in children. Much of the research on parenting styles since Baumrind's original formulations has served to refine the conceptual understanding of her parenting categories and to support their use as predictor variables of socialization outcomes in children, particularly academic achievement. Next, a review of the literature will explore the concept of empathy, its developmental course and gender variations, and the limited work regarding socialization influences which predict its development. These two reviews will provide a basis for the use of Baumrind's parenting style categories as a means of understanding the socialization antecedents of empathy.

Parenting Effects on Child Outcomes

Baumrind's pilot studies (Baumrind, 1967; Baumrind & Black, 1967) looked at the behaviors of children and established three categories of child outcomes from the most to the least self-reliant, self-controlled, explorative and content. Parents' behaviors were related to each child outcome category. The corresponding clusters of parenting behaviors were isolated and defined

as *authoritative*, *authoritarian*, and *permissive*. An *authoritative* parent is one whose behaviors are characterized by high demandingness and high responsiveness. An *authoritarian* parent is highly demanding but low in responsiveness, while a *permissive* parent is low in demanding behavior but highly responsive (Baumrind, 1989). These profiles have served as criteria for sorting parent behavior in numerous subsequent studies, in particular, to predict academic competence.

Baumrind's work involved preschool and elementary age children. Grolnick and Ryan (1989) also studied children at the elementary level to evaluate parental antecedents of academic competence. They chose to differentiate autonomy support and involvement, which are behavioral expressions of responsiveness, and the provision of structure, which is a specific expression of demandingness. Autonomy support was found most consistently predictive of school achievement as well as of self-regulation and adjustment. Involvement and the provision of structure primarily related to children's sense of control in academic endeavors.

Two studies (Pratt, Kerig, Cowan & Cowan, 1988; Pratt, Green, MacVicar & Bountrogianni, 1992) involving preschool and elementary children found the mediating element between *authoritative* parenting and achievement to be the effective use of scaffolding techniques in these parents' tutoring styles. Scaffolding refers to the practice of assisting with tasks that are beyond the capacities of the child, but withholding assistance as the child's capacities grow to meet the task. *Authoritative* parents exhibited a natural proclivity to provide information and support contingent on the child's needs.

At the adolescent level, Steinberg, Elmen, and Mounts (1989) differentiated the expression of *authoritative* parenting behavior into three

dimensions: acceptance and psychological autonomy as determined by the subscales of the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory, and behavior control as determined by a check list of decision making freedoms in areas relevant to adolescents. The longitudinal character of their study suggested a causal relationship between parenting style and academic performance. Each of the three dimensions studied was found to contribute positively and independently to academic success. The link between parenting style and academic performance is mediated in part by the parenting style effect on psychosocial maturity development, especially the development of autonomy. Self-reliance, identity, self-direction, and the development of a motivation to work hard were the specific elements of autonomy shown to be critical. Parents who exhibit warmth and acceptance while expecting increasing self-mastery and self-reliance within clearly defined guidelines and limits have children who exercise confidence, initiative and dependability in their academic efforts.

Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) specifically differentiated the elements of *permissiveness* into indulgent and neglectful parenting practices. They found that children experiencing either of these parenting behaviors were relatively disengaged from school, exhibiting higher drug/alcohol use and school misconduct. However, children from indulgent homes were not any more involved in serious delinquency than children from *authoritative* or *authoritarian* homes. They were, in fact, among the highest in social competence and self-confidence. On the other hand, children from neglectful homes were lacking in competence, exhibited psychological distress, and were significantly worse off than children from *authoritative* homes.

Baumrind's socialization patterns were established in an essentially White middle class population. However, several studies have utilized them across a variety of ethnic groups, each having the potential for different norms, values and behavior effects.

Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, and Darling (1992) utilized a multi-ethnic sample to differentiate parental involvement and encouragement as aspects of *authoritative* responsiveness. Involvement, encouragement and parenting style were each scored separately. Their data suggested a causal relationship between parental involvement coupled with *authoritative* parenting and academic success. Encouragement alone only predicted academic performance for Asian Americans and school engagement for Hispanic Americans with no effect for Whites or African Americans. Encouragement coupled with *authoritative* parenting predicted academic performance for all but the African Americans.

Two other studies examined parenting styles associated with academic success across ethnically diverse populations. Dornbusch et al. (1987) studied adolescents from four ethnic groups: Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. Although the positive correlation of *authoritative* parenting to school performance was strongest for Whites, it was generally applicable across gender, age, parent education, family structure, and ethnic categories. Although differences were found in the magnitude of the correlations, *authoritarian* and *permissive* styles were associated with lower grades, and the *authoritative* style was associated with higher grades. However, compared to Whites, Asian American parents scored higher on *authoritarian* and lower on *authoritative* styles and, yet, their children received higher grades.

Steinberg et al. (1991) found that parents who are accepting, firm, and democratic, that is, *authoritative* parents according to Baumrind's categories, tend to have adolescents with higher grades, more self-reliance, and less anxiety, delinquency, and depression. The effect was found to be greater among White and Hispanic Americans than among African Americans and Asian Americans for grades, but was found to be equal on measures of self-reliance, distress and behavior problems.

Baumrind (1972) examined the difference in competence outcomes of one ethnic group more closely. She found that parental behavior characterized as *authoritarian* by White middle class standards was associated with unexpected assertiveness and independence in African American girls. Nevertheless, these *authoritarian* practices were not associated with academic achievement. These African American families represented a lower SES than the other predominantly White, relatively advantaged families of the study. Whether the differences in response to Baumrind's categories are due to social class or ethnicity cannot be concluded because of the confounded data (Padilla & Lindholm, 1992).

Additional studies have explored various components of parenting style as related to child outcomes other than academic achievement. The qualities of Baumrind's *authoritative* parenting can be seen in the parental antecedents of these positive outcomes as well. For example, challenge, positive feedback and support for autonomous behavior contributed to intrinsic motivation whereas control, rewards, deadlines and surveillance led to extrinsic motivation (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993). Parents who were indirect and persuasive, using verbal strategies such as suggestions and explanations with support,

encouragement and reinforcement, had children with higher sociometric status than parents who offered fewer positive responses, were more critical with little information toward improvement, and exercised more demands, prohibitions and physical take overs (Dekovic & Janssens, 1992). Self-concept was related to parental warmth but not parental restrictiveness (Parish & McCluskey, 1992) and the stability of parental nurturance remained predictive of self-esteem through the child's young adulthood (Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier & Komar, 1992).

In this body of empirical data, parent behaviors have been operationalized in a variety of ways and child outcomes have been consistent with Baumrind's prediction. Those parent behaviors which are characteristic of Baumrind's *authoritative* category predict positive child outcomes more than the behaviors of either the *authoritarian* or *permissive* categories. The consistency of this evidence supports the use of Baumrind's parenting categories in this study as a means of assessing parent behaviors in order to evaluate their socializing effects on another child outcome, empathy.

Empathy

In this next section, the concept of empathy will be defined and its development will be examined. Understanding the development of empathy requires understanding the influence of cognition on affective expression and the relationship between empathy development and prosocial development. In addition, gender differences in empathy levels, as determined by empirical studies, will be examined. Finally, studies which have sought to determine the parenting behaviors conducive to empathy development will be reviewed.

Concept. Empathy is the interaction between the perception of and the affective response to another person (Bryant, 1987). The interaction of affect and cognition makes empathy a complex construct, but a very useful tool for studying affective-cognitive interactions (Hoffman, 1984b). An understanding of empathy is made difficult by the varying degree of cognitive or affective emphasis differing theorists employ in their definitions. Feshbach's (1987) three component model of empathy integrates the cognitive and affective elements. Two cognitive components, the ability to perceive and understand the emotional cues of another and the capacity to take another's perspective, are intertwined with the third affective component, an emotional response congruent with the other's emotion. Empathy, then, is an affective response to a cognitive perception.

Additional confusion arises from the inconsistency and interchangeable usage of the terms empathy, sympathy, and personal distress. Because empathy is a distinct capacity which may be a precursor to the others, it is important to clarify the fine, but significant, distinctions between these terms. Empathy involves the sharing of congruent emotions in response to those perceived in another, "feeling with" another (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). The emphasis in empathy is on the other or, in Hoffman's words, "an affective response more appropriate to someone else's situation than to one's own" (Hoffman, 1987, p. 48). Sympathy, on the other hand, is a "feeling for" someone, as in sorrow or concern, accompanied by attention toward alleviating the feelings of the other (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). Goldstein and Michaels (1985) contend that sympathy, in contrast to empathy, is more preoccupied with its own responsive feelings than the feelings of the other.

Sympathy and prosocial behavior may often be the consequence of empathy (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Krebs, 1975). Personal distress is the aversive state sometimes experienced as a consequence of perceiving another's emotion. In this case, however, the aversive state, such as anxiety or worry, is not congruent with the other's state and promotes self-oriented, egoistic action whose goal is toward alleviating one's own aversive condition (Batson & Coke, 1981). Although related in origin, personal distress is quite a different response to another's affective state than either empathy or sympathy. In spite of these distinctions, relevant writings and data sometimes reflect any or all of these distinct elements without clarification. Likewise, to date, measurements do not successfully tap into a single aspect of empathy. As a result, reported data and discussions may not always be specific and may be difficult to compare.

Development. Because empathy is an interaction of affect and cognition, its developmental course results from the combined influence of affect development and cognitive development (Hoffman, 1987). The following sections will discuss the development of affect and cognition, and their interactive influence.

Affect. Vicarious affective responsiveness is evident even in infants who cry in response to another infant's crying. The response cry may generate real distress in the responding infant. Continued pairing of the stimulus cry with the response cry/distress may condition a true empathic response to the crying cues in another (Aronfreed, 1970). Capacities for emotional contagion and personal distress appear to be present at one year of age in children who cry when someone else is hurt and seek comfort for themselves from their mothers (Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1984).

Sympathetic responses can be interpreted from two year olds who offer touches, strokes and toys to the victim (Radke-Yarrow & Zahn-Waxler, 1984). By virtue of the affective responsiveness of infants, Hoffman contends that early affective arousal modes appear to be universal and involuntary, and that "if one attends to the relevant cues, one responds empathically" (Hoffman, 1987, p. 49). Later affective arousal modes involve language-mediated associations and role taking (Hoffman, 1987). The development of affect does not adhere to stage theory progression. It does not necessarily have a hierarchical and unidirectional sequence. For example, early affective responses, such as crying when someone else cries, may persist through the development of more sophisticated affective responses. However, due to the influence of cognition and its more strictly stage-like development, empathy does follow an orderly developmental course. (Strayer, 1987).

Cognition. The development of the cognitive capacities for perception and perspective (role) taking guide the developmental progress of empathy. Perspective (role) taking skills follow the Piagetian model of cognitive development. The egocentric preoperational stage, in which one's own view of the world dominates thinking processes, is the cognitive framework that contributes to confusing another's distress as one's own. The concrete operational stage, in which one is able to recognize and incorporate other views and perspectives in addition to one's own, is the cognitive framework that contributes to the ability to recognize another's distress apart from one's own condition (Selman & Byrne, 1974).

The developmental framework for interpersonal cognitions defined by Piaget and Flavell and the framework for moral cognitions defined by

Kohlberg were integrated by Selman and Byrne (1974) to serve as a standard with which to assess the perspective taking skills of children. Selman and Byrne's (1974) empirical study confirmed an age-related progression of the perspective taking ability with developmental levels similar to those defined by Piaget, Flavell and Kohlberg. Their analysis indicated the final levels of perspective taking skills to be attained between the ages of 8-10 years of age at which time there coexist "the ability to understand the self and others as subjects [you and I are separate people and we each have our own feelings and perspectives], to react to others as like the self [if it hurts my feelings, it might hurt your feelings also], and to react to the self's behavior from the other's point of view [my enthusiasm may not be appreciated by my depressed friend]" (Selman & Byrne, 1974, p. 803). The ability to take the role of another has the long-standing distinction of being "the unique aspect of social cognition and judgment that differentiates human from subhuman functioning" (Selman & Byrne, 1974, p. 803). Because empathy is a responsive consequence of role taking, it, too, is a particularly distinguishing human capacity.

Cognitive influence on affective expression. Empathy is a function of affect and cognition not only in its developmental course, but also in its expressive manifestation. A number of cognitive capacities may participate in the empathic expression of an affective arousal (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1987). In some cases, an empathic response may require the integration of conflicting data, such as an unsympathetic character caught in an unfortunate situation. In other cases, the empathic response may be minimized by thinking of possible solutions, or maximized by imagining oneself in the other's position. The ability to take another's perspective, then, is not only a prerequisite to affective arousal, it may also be a means of

increasing empathic response. Bengtsson and Johnson (1987) observed the ability to integrate information and apply cognitive techniques to increase with age. Older children were able to consciously utilize role taking as a means of increasing their empathic response, particularly toward a disliked person.

Empathy and prosocial development. Prosocial behavior has been considered by some to be motivated by empathy (Hoffman, 1984b). The development of prosocial reasoning, then, may be a reflection of underlying empathy development. A series of studies by Eisenberg and colleagues (Eisenberg, Lennon & Roth, 1983; Eisenberg et al., 1987; Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNally & Shea, 1991) have documented that progression. Hedonistic reasoning characterized by self serving motives decreased with age, while needs oriented reasoning motivated by others' needs increased and then leveled off in middle childhood. More sophisticated types of reasoning utilizing concepts of goodness and approval were found to increase through middle childhood. Some, including role taking, appeared at approximately 9-10 years of age. At early adolescence, a decline was seen in many levels of prosocial reasoning with a resurgence of hedonistic reasoning, particularly in boys. Both level and mode of prosocial reasoning were related to empathy levels (Eisenberg et al., 1987). Adams et al. (1979) found that in the late elementary years, reasoning begins to reflect abstract principles, internalized affective reactions, self-reflective sympathy and perspective taking. The authors suggest that the development of the underlying empathic tendencies may be formalized in the elementary years and crystallized in early

adolescence. This pattern is reflected in the maturation curve of prosocial reasoning.

The preadolescent has attained a sophisticated understanding of the difference between the self and others and the ability to manipulate this distinction for purposes of role taking (Bengtsson & Johnson, 1987). The preadolescent's repertoire of experiences gives them abundant resources to recognize and relate to the emotions and needs of another given minimal cues (Hoffman, 1984b). While needs oriented and more sophisticated types of reasoning along with role taking were found to increase through middle childhood, at early adolescence a decline was seen. During the period of adolescence, empathic responses already developed may be subordinated to the egocentric emphasis of this developmental period (Eisenberg et al., 1987; Eisenberg et al., 1991).

For the mature preadolescent, cognitive and affective abilities have reached their full potential for contributing to empathic responses and are not distorted by the developmental tasks of adolescence. Differing levels of empathy at this age, then, should be an indication of other variables such as gender or parent socialization practices which may influence the development of empathy. For example, boys may be socialized to believe that they shouldn't cry. Initially, the affective expression may be inhibited to conform to this belief. Eventually the affective response itself may be extinguished through conscious effort to avoid unacceptable feelings or by unconscious conditioning against feeling responses to emotional distress.

Gender differences. The popularly held view that females are more empathic than males is not well substantiated by empirical evidence.

Assessment of the empirical data is complicated by the varied measurement techniques used, each of which may tap into differing aspects of the empathic arousal and response dynamic.

Gender differences favoring females have been the largest when the subjects' conscious control of evaluation responses was the highest, as is the case with self-report questionnaires. Under these conditions it may be that the resulting differences reflect the degree to which each gender responds according to stereotypic sex role expectations, or it may be that different socialization patterns actually yield more empathic females (Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987). When an empathy measure primarily taps emotional contagion, that is, the degree of match between the subject's response (using facial, gestural and vocal assessments) to the emotion of another (as portrayed in picture-stories, films or enactments), little gender variation has been found. On the other hand, if sympathetic responding is being tapped (by self and other reports of responsive behavior in relevant situations), females have been more emotionally reactive than males (Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987).

In most cases, the lack of clarity about exactly what aspect of the empathic response dynamic is being assessed, as well as the uncertainties introduced by methodological and socialization influences, make the meaning of this evidence only suggestive at this time. However, both sociological and psychological theories maintain that awareness and concern for others is necessary and beneficial to the feminine role and condition. These theories lend strength to the popular perception that females have more empathy than males (Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987).

From another perspective, Gilligan has reported females to exhibit more empathic approaches to moral reasoning than males (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988), and she attributes this gender difference to different socialization pressures which give males an ethic of rights and justice, and females an ethic of caring and responsibility (Gilligan, 1993). The data related to the socialization of gender differences in sympathy and empathy which might generate these different ethics are extremely scarce in spite of the wealth of research concerning gender differences in prosocial behavior, empathy (Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987), and moral development (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988).

Socialization Antecedents. Evidence and theory suggest the importance of empathy formation in the early years (Adams et al., 1979; Hoffman, 1987). Nevertheless, little specific work has been done relating parent socialization to the levels of empathy in children (Barnett, 1987).

From the limited empirical reports that are available, parental behaviors found predictive of empathy in middle childhood and adolescence have included paternal limit setting, paternal nonindulgence and maternal expressiveness in response to childhood stress (Bryant, 1987). Other studies have found that the parental behaviors expected to promote empathy, in fact, did so. Such behaviors included parental empathy levels, affection, emphasis on others' feelings, discipline style and time spent with the child (Barnett et al., 1980a; Barnett et al., 1980b).

Barnett et al. (1980b) related empathy scores of five year olds to parental empathy, discipline style, affection, and emphasis on other's feelings. Only the girls' empathy levels were related to the parental behaviors indexed: positively to the mothers' empathy scores but negatively to the fathers' scores

on empathy, affection, and emphasis on others' feelings in nondiscipline situations. In particular, daughters' empathy scores rose significantly when the mothers' empathy scores were high and the fathers' low. Boys did not exhibit parallel increases in empathy scores when fathers scored higher than mothers on empathy levels. The authors speculate that these data may indicate that empathy is seen to be more gender appropriate for girls. Boys' empathy levels were unrelated to any parent behavior indexed. The five year old girls and boys in this study did not exhibit statistically different levels of empathy as has been observed in adolescents and adults in other studies. The authors suggest that the gender differences found in older subjects begin with the higher levels of maternal affection and emphasis on others' feelings observed in this study of younger ages. Over time, these differences contribute to the development of a sex-linked socialization effect.

In a follow-up study designed to explore the sex differences in adolescent empathy levels expected on the basis of the first study data, Barnett et al. (1980a) took retrospective accounts of parental behaviors from college students scoring at the high and low extremes of a self-report empathy questionnaire. The high and low empathy students did offer significantly different accounts of their parents' child rearing behaviors. High empathy students had parents whose behaviors were higher on dimensions of parental empathy, affection, emphasis on the child's and others' feelings, and time spent with child. In this study, the mothers and daughters scored significantly higher on empathy levels than their male counterparts. There were no sex-linked effects as in the former study, but more daughters than sons reported their mothers as discussing their feelings and expressing affection.

In contrast, an earlier study (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978) found boys' rather than girls' empathy levels related to maternal child rearing behaviors that were nonpunitive, nonrestrictive, egalitarian, and that encouraged communication and set high standards. It was suggested, however, that a ceiling effect on girls' empathy levels masked the relationship between maternal behaviors and daughters' empathy levels. Other studies have found that the mother's influence on empathy development is greater than the father's influence. The fact that mothers have typically higher levels of the empathy-promoting behaviors indexed, such as being nonpunitive, nonrestrictive, egalitarian and affectionate may account for their greater influence on empathy development (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978).

In addition, Eisenberg and colleagues (Eisenberg et al., 1983) speculate that levels of prosocial reasoning which are based on empathy (Eisenberg et al., 1987) may be differentially related to parenting behaviors depending on the age of the child. For younger children, empathic, supportive mothering was most predictive of empathy development, whereas, for elementary children, maternal nonauthoritarianism and support of autonomy were most crucial. In other words, the parental practices which are most conducive to empathic reasoning are those which are in step with the developmental levels and tasks of the child. By adolescence, more mature prosocial reasoning is characterized by the internalization of values. The autonomous thinking and functioning required to develop one's own internalized values may be facilitated in adolescents by some conflict in parent-child interactions. This conflict may promote just the cognitive disequilibrium necessary for such development at this age (Eisenberg et al., 1983).

A recent study examined the effects of emotional expressiveness within the family (Cassidy et al., 1992). The child's understanding of emotions was found to be the mediating link between the family's expressiveness and the child's positive peer relations. Understanding the emotions of another and the ability to share congruent emotions is the foundation of empathy. Positive peer relations are expressive manifestations of prosocial behavior which are founded on empathic reasoning. In this study, higher levels of parental emotional expressiveness related positively to children's peer relationships as mediated by the children's understanding of emotions.

Hoffman (1987) considered parent socialization practices for empathy important not only as a contribution to the child's prosocial behavior, but also as a predisposition to the child's development of moral reasoning: "To the degree that children are empathic, they will readily internalize moral principles because they are in keeping with one's empathic leanings" (p. 71). If we are socializing gender differences in reasoning ethics, as Gilligan speculates (Gilligan, 1993), empathy differences may be the mediating variable.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature regarding parent socialization effects on child outcomes. Aspects of Baumrind's parent behavior categories as antecedent to academic achievement in children has been the focus of interest. The related data support the use of Baumrind's parenting categories as a means of assessing and sorting parent behaviors to predict child outcomes. This chapter has also examined the concept of empathy, its development, gender differences, and the limited data regarding the influence of parent socialization behaviors on its development. To date, no studies this author has

been able to locate have utilized Baumrind's typology of parent behaviors as the criterion predictors for empathy development. This study will relate Baumrind's categories of parenting behavior to levels of academic achievement and empathy development in sixth grade children. The effects of gender and ethnicity on this relationship will also be examined.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

It is the aim of this study to shed some light on the socialization antecedents of empathy by relating the parenting style categories defined by Baumrind to levels of empathy in sixth grade children, with analyses for differences according to gender and ethnic group. Baumrind's categories of parenting style have proven to be worthwhile constructs for distinguishing those parenting behaviors which predict positive child outcomes in White middle class culture, with increasing knowledge and understanding of their role in other cultures. The contemporary emphasis on academic achievement and the tendency to promote those parental behaviors which predict academic achievement has not, however, concerned itself with concurrent development of empathy or similar affective qualities. This study will address that concern.

Subjects

All sixth grade students from one middle school in the Palo Alto Unified School District were invited to participate in this study. All of the respective parents were sent letters of information and passive consent by a first class school mailing of midsemester grades. They were given two weeks to withhold consent by returning a form to the school's main office. This information was handled entirely by the principal in keeping with the anonymous and confidential nature of the data collection.

All sixth grade students attending on the day of the study whose parents had not withheld consent were invited to participate. A few students chose to abstain. The remaining students constituted the subject sample of this study. A total of 235 sixth grade students participated, consisting of 121 males and 114 females. The ethnic representation was 69.5% White, 15.9% Asian American,

8.2% African American, 3.9% Hispanic, 1.7% Native American, and .86% Middle Eastern. Because of the small numbers representing Hispanic ($n = 7$), Native American ($n = 4$) and Middle Eastern ($n = 2$) ethnic groups, they will not be included in further data analyses.

The adjusted study sample represents 218 sixth grade students; 109 males and 109 females; 160 Whites, 37 Asian Americans, and 19 African Americans. The mean age of these students was 12.64 years ($SD = .54$). Table 1 reports the parent education and academic achievement characteristics of the adjusted sample. The mean parent education level for all gender and ethnic groups was more than 4 years of college, and 93% of the adjusted sample parents had at least some college education. For the adjusted study sample, 65% reported their academic achievement as good or very good, and 22% reported themselves as excellent with a mean academic achievement level between good and very good.

Measures

Demographics. Questions used to assess demographics are from the Dornbusch et al. (1987) study (see Appendix A). These questions ascertain age, gender, academic standing, parent education, ethnicity, siblings, and family structure. The information about siblings and family structure was not used in these analyses.

Socioeconomic status. Parent education level was used as an indication of socioeconomic status, a method considered by some to be a more accurate and stable reflection of the cultural standards of a family than economic indicators (Steinberg et al., 1991). The children reported both parents' education level on an 8-point scale from 1 = some grade school to 8 =

Table 1

Parent Education and Academic Achievement Characteristics
of the Study Sample

	Total N=218	Male n=109	Female n=109	White n=160	Asian Am n=37	Af. Am n=19
<u>Parent education</u> ¹						
some college	93%	91%	94%	95%	83%	87%
	M 6.67	M 6.58	M 6.76	M 6.76	M 6.58	M 6.03
	SD (1.19)	SD (1.2)	SD (1.16)	SD (1.08)	SD (1.55)	SD (1.20)
<u>Academics</u> ²						
good/very good	65%	62%	67%	67%	69%	58%
excellent	22%	20%	24%	22%	32%	5%
mean score	M 3.64	M 3.48 * *	M 3.80	M 3.66(*)	M 3.95 * *	M 2.84
	SD (1.99)	SD (1.05)	SD (.92)	SD (.98)	SD (.94)	SD (.83)

¹ Parent education: indicated first as the percentage of students reporting their parents having some college education; second as the mean response score when 6 = 4 years college education and 7 = some school beyond 4 years of college.

² Academics: achievement indicated first and second as the percentage of students reporting themselves as good/very good, and excellent; third as the mean response score when 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, and 4 = very good, and 5 = excellent..

* * Indicates that the difference between these adjacent values is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

(*) Indicates that the difference between this value and the value for Af. Ams. is statistically significant at ($p < .05$).

There were no other significant differences between groups.

professional or graduate degree. The average of both parents' education levels was used as the parent education level score.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement level in this study was assessed by student self-report on a 5-point scale ranking school performance from poor to excellent. Dornbusch et al. (1987) analyzed a subset of their study population and found the correlation between self-report and actual achievement level to be .76.

Parenting style. Questions used to assess the parenting styles of the subjects' experience were taken from the study by Dornbusch et al. (1987) (see Appendix B). The instrument consists of three indices, each tapping one of the three behavior styles defined by Baumrind (1989). It was designed to look particularly for parenting behaviors that predict academic achievement. This index will provide some insight into whether or not parenting practices documented as antecedents of academic achievement in children are likewise conducive to the development of empathy.

While acknowledging that self-report data reflect the child's perception of the parent's behavior as opposed to an objective observation of actual parent behaviors, these subjective assessments provide a significant indication of the child's experience which yields consequential outcomes. Many studies show clear relationships between child reports and other data regarding parent-child relationships, child adjustment and school achievement among others (Schaefer, 1965). Some studies even indicate that the adolescent is a more reliable data source than the parent (Schwarz, Barton-Henry & Pruzinsky, 1985).

There were a total of 25 items, seven (#1a, 1b, 1d, 1e, 2, 3k, 4n) tapped the *permissive* (PM) style, nine (#3a, 3d, 4c, 4j, 4k, 5a, 5e, 5f, 6b) tapped the *authoritative* (AV) style, and eight (#3g, 3h, 4a, 4b, 4f, 5a, 5c, 6b) tapped the *authoritarian* (AN) style (question #5a was used for both AV and AN assessment). The reliability of each of these indices using Cronbach's alpha was found to be .70, .60, and .66 respectively (Dornbusch et al., 1987).

The score for each parenting style was the average score calculated from the subset of questions tapping that style. All scores were adjusted to a scale of 6, such that a question with the response possibilities 1, 2, and 3 was scored 1, 3 and 5 respectively. The scores for questions 2, 5a for AV parenting, 6b, and 6c were subtracted from 6 to correct for the inverted sentence construction of those questionnaire items. A score for each style was obtained for each family. The maximum score possible for AV = 9, for PM = 7, for AN = 8.

Because this method assesses each parenting style independently, a high score on one style does not rule out the possibility of concurrent high scores on other styles. In reality, parents probably exhibit combinations of parenting styles with their children. However, high scores on more than one style may dilute the influence of any one style more dominantly expressed (Steinberg et al., 1992).

Empathy level. Questions used to assess levels of empathy were developed by Bryant (1982) (see Appendix C). The instrument is a self-report questionnaire for adolescents and children comparable to the Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) scale for adults of long standing use and verification. Different assessment methods tend to operationalize empathy differently. This particular questionnaire conceptualizes empathy broadly in a manner congruent with the definitions put forth in this paper: an emotional response

to the perceived emotions of another. Bryant has also demonstrated her questionnaire scores to be uncorrelated to a measure of social desirability, giving the data more gender reliability than might be expected if sex-linked stereotypes are expected to influence self-reports (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985).

There are 22 statements of self-description, with each rated on a 7-point Likert scale of very strong disagreement to very strong agreement expressed as a scale of **NO!** to **YES!** for this study (**NO!**, NO, no, ?, yes, YES, **YES!**). Bryant (1982) reports seventh graders' scores to have a Cronbach's alpha of .79, with a test-retest reliability of .85.

An empathy score was calculated as the algebraic sum of all responses with **NO!** = -3, ? = 0, and **YES!** = +3. The construction of questions # 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, was inverted such that a strong empathy response would be indicated by **NO!** (= -3). The sign of these questions' responses was changed before the algebraic sum was calculated. The highest possible score indicating the maximum empathy level from this questionnaire would be generated by a +3 on all 22 questions, or a total score of 66.

Procedure

At a time arranged by the principal and teachers during a regular class period, all sixth grade students whose parents had not withheld consent were invited to participate. It was made clear that participation was optional and that there were no penalties for abstention. The participants were told that empathy is an understanding and feeling response to the feelings of another and that this study would relate parenting styles to levels of empathy. They were told that there were no right or wrong answers, and that their honest responses would contribute to a better understanding of sixth graders. These

students then signed an informed consent form which was collected prior to distribution of the self-report questionnaire. The completed questionnaires were collected by the teachers. At the end of the day they were taken from the school by the investigator for scoring and analysis.

Statistical Analysis

After making the necessary scoring adjustments and calculations as already described, each questionnaire yielded a score for parent education, academic achievement, each of the parenting styles, and empathy levels. One-way ANOVAs were used to assess the differences between groups. Scheffe tests were used to determine the statistical significance of differences for pair-wise comparisons. Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to determine the relationship of each parenting style with academic achievement and empathy level.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study attempted to assess the socialization antecedents of empathy development in sixth grade children. Parenting styles, as categorized by Baumrind (1971) and operationalized in the self-report questionnaire developed by Dornbusch et al. (1987), were related to empathy levels, as measured on the self-report questionnaire developed by Bryant (1982). Gender and ethnic differences in parenting styles, empathy levels, and their relationship were also examined. This chapter will report the data, and then discuss the relationship of parenting styles to academic achievement, as a link to previous work, and then to levels of empathy. The data regarding ethnic and gender differences will also be reported and discussed.

The overall results support the hypotheses that the *authoritative* (AV) parenting style, compared with the *permissive* (PM) or *authoritarian* (AN) styles, has the strongest positive correlation to levels of empathy in sixth grade children; that girls have higher levels of empathy than boys, as measured in this study; and that *authoritative* parenting is positively associated with empathy levels across ethnic groups. Differences in empathy levels were insignificant across ethnic groups, but girls had significantly higher empathy levels than boys.

Results

Academic achievement. Academic achievement across ethnic and gender groups is reported as a demographic characteristic and is found in Table 1. There were significant differences according to both gender ($F(1, 212) = 5.366$) (males $M = 3.48$; females $M = 3.79$), and ethnicity ($F(1, 213) = 8.49$) (White $M = 3.66$; Asian Am. $M = 3.95$; Af. Am. $M = 2.84$): females reported

themselves significantly higher in academic achievement than males, and African Americans reported themselves significantly lower in academic achievement than Whites and Asian Americans.

Parenting styles. The data reporting parenting styles across ethnic and gender groups is found in Table 2. For the adjusted sample evaluated as a whole or as separate ethnic and gender groups, the parenting style with the highest scores was the *authoritative* style ($M = 3.65$), followed by the *authoritarian* style ($M = 2.42$) and then the *permissive* style ($M = 1.44$). For the *authoritative* style there were no significant main effects for ethnicity ($F(2, 215) = .937$) (White $M = 3.68$; Asian Am. $M = 3.56$; Af. Am. $M = 3.62$) or gender ($F(1, 214) = .2$) (male $M = 3.64$; female $M = 3.67$). For the *permissive* style also, there were no significant main effects for ethnicity ($F(2, 215) = .117$) (White $M = 1.43$; Asian Am. $M = 1.46$; Af. Am. $M = 1.42$) or gender ($F(1, 214) = .064$) (male $M = 1.45$; female $M = 1.43$). For the *authoritarian* style, there were significant differences according to both ethnicity ($F(2, 215) = 8.04$) (White $M = 2.29$; Asian Am. $M = 2.79$; Af. Am. $M = 2.81$) and gender ($F(1, 214) = 23.896$) (male $M = 2.69$; female $M = 2.15$). Asian American parents scored significantly higher than White parents, and parents of males scored significantly higher than parents of females on the *authoritarian* style.

Empathy levels. The empathy level scores across ethnic and gender groups are also found in Table 2. There were no significant differences between ethnic groups on their empathy level scores ($F(2, 215) = .503$) (White $M = 15.29$; Asian Am. $M = 14.68$; Af. Am. $M = 18.84$). As hypothesized, there was, however, a significant main effect for gender ($F(1, 214) = 31.68$) (male $M = 10.05$; female $M = 20.95$): females scored significantly higher than males.

Table 2

Parenting Styles and Empathy Levels of the Study Sample

		Total N=218	Male n=109	Female n=109	White n=160	Asian Am n=37	Af. Am n=19
<u>Parenting style</u>							
authoritative	M	3.65	3.64	3.67	3.68	3.56	3.62
	SD	(.49)	(.51)	(.47)	(.48)	(.45)	(.59)
permissive	M	1.44	1.45	1.43	1.43	1.46	1.42
	SD	(.37)	(.38)	(.36)	(.35)	(.39)	(.40)
authoritarian	M	2.42	2.69 * *	2.15	2.29 * *	2.79	2.81
	SD	(.84)	(.88)	(.72)	(.86)	(.77)	(.49)
<u>Empathy level</u>							
	M	15.50	10.05 * *	20.95	15.29	14.68	18.84
	SD	(15.56)	(16.06)	(12.93)	(15.28)	(17.61)	(14.00)

* * Indicates that the difference between adjacent values is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

There were no other significant between group differences.

Parenting styles and academic achievement. The relationship of parenting style to academic achievement is reported in Table 3, categorized by gender and ethnicity. Across ethnic and gender groups, *authoritative* parenting ($r = .197$; $p < .01$) exhibited a stronger positive correlation to academic achievement than the *permissive* ($r = -.276$, $p < .01$) or *authoritarian* ($r = -.241$, $p < .01$) parenting styles. All of these relationships were significant.

When gender groups were evaluated separately, *authoritative* parenting was the only style positively related to academic achievement: males (AV $r = .209$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.27$, $p < .01$; AN $r = -.121$) and females (AV $r = .176$; PM $r = -.281$, $p < .01$; AN $r = -.32$, $p < .01$).

When ethnic groups were evaluated separately, *authoritative* parenting was the only style positively related to academic achievement except for *authoritarian* parenting in African American parents: White (AV $r = .166$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.307$, $p < .01$; AN $r = -.259$, $p < .01$), and Asian American (AV $r = .332$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.330$, $p < .05$; AN $r = -.324$), and African American (AV $r = .385$; PM $r = -.098$; AN $r = .226$). Although the correlation between *authoritarian* parenting and academic achievement for the African American group was not significant, the positive direction of the relationship was unlike any other group in the study.

Parenting styles and empathy levels. The relationship of parenting style to empathy levels is reported in Table 4, categorized by gender and ethnicity. As hypothesized, *authoritative* parenting exhibited a stronger positive correlation to levels of empathy ($r = .228$, $p < .01$) than the *permissive* ($r = -.183$, $p < .01$) or *authoritarian* ($r = -.125$) parenting styles across ethnic and gender groups.

Table 3

The Relationship of Parenting Styles to Academic Achievement
 Reported as Pearson Product-moment Correlations

	Total N=216	Male n=108	Female n=108	White n=162	Asian Am n=37	Af. Am n=19
<u>Parenting style</u>						
authoritative	.197**	.209*	.176	.166*	.332*	.358
permissive	-.276**	-.27**	-.281**	-.307**	-.330*	-.098
authoritarian	-.241**	-.121	-.32**	-.259**	-.324	.226

p < * .05

** .01

Table 4

The Relationship of Parenting Styles to Empathy Levels

Reported as Pearson Product-moment Correlations

	Total N=218	Male n=109	Female n=109	White n=162	Asian Am n=37	Af. Am n=19
<u>Parenting style</u>						
authoritative	.228**	.223*	.249*	.199*	.265	.429
permissive	-.183**	-.139	-.246*	-.189*	-.194	-.095
authoritarian	-.125	-.024	-.003	-.109	-.337*	.162

p < * .05

** .01

When gender groups were evaluated separately, *authoritative* parenting was the only style positively related to empathy level: males (AV $r = .223$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.139$; AN $r = -.024$) and females (AV $r = .249$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.246$, $p < .05$; AN $r = -.003$).

When ethnic groups were evaluated separately, *authoritative* parenting was the only style positively related to empathy levels except for *authoritarian* parenting in African American parents: White (AV $r = .199$, $p < .05$; PM $r = -.189$, $p < .05$; AN $r = -.109$), and Asian American (AV $r = .265$; PM $r = -.194$; AN $r = -.337$, $p < .05$), and African American (AV $r = .429$; PM $r = -.095$; AN $r = .162$) Although the correlation between *authoritarian* parenting and empathy for the African American group was not significant, the positive direction of the relationship was unlike any other group in the study.

Discussion

Parenting styles and academic achievement. Consistent with previously reported studies, these data demonstrated the *authoritative* parenting style to have a stronger positive correlation across ethnic and gender groups than the *permissive* or *authoritarian* parenting styles. Lamborn et al. (1991) report children from *authoritative* parenting styles scoring higher in academic competence than children experiencing other parenting styles. Variations in this pattern have been found in some ethnic groups, as reviewed earlier.

When ethnic groups were evaluated separately in this study, the African American/*authoritarian* group exhibited a positive correlation, although not significant, to academic achievement. Data from the Dornbusch et al. (1987) study, similarly, found *authoritative* parenting the only positive predictor of academic achievement with the exception of Asian girls for whom *authoritarian* parenting was also positively associated with grades.

Baumrind's (1972) analysis of the female African American subset of her study population also revealed a positive correlation between *authoritarian* parenting and positive outcomes. However, Baumrind's study found these positive outcomes to be in the arena of social, not academic, competence.

For all other ethnic and gender groups, *authoritative* parenting was the only style positively correlated to academic achievement. These data are consistent with previous studies (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1991) although the strength of the *authoritative* relationship to grades has been found to be less among Asian and African Americans than among Whites.

None of these studies comparing parenting effects across ethnic groups report information regarding immigrant generation represented, rural or urban status, or mixed parentage. Such variables in culturally diverse groups can make important differences in the nature of the population represented and their response to assessment measures (Padilla & Lindholm, 1992). In the absence of such information, little can be said about the differences between the data reported here and in previous reports, except that they underscore the need to obtain more detailed demographic information in future research in order that ethnic comparisons can be made more meaningfully.

The strength of the correlations between *authoritative* parenting and academic achievement may be diminished due to the fact that the measurement and scoring for each parenting style was independent of the measurement and scoring of the alternative styles. One parent might exhibit contributing levels of both *permissive* and *authoritarian* behaviors in addition to *authoritative* behavior. Given the negative relationships of both *permissive* and particularly *authoritarian* behaviors on academic performance as

reported by Dornbusch et al. (1987) and this study, the presence of those parent behaviors in combination with *authoritative* behavior may reduce the influence of the *authoritative* style influence, as suggested by Steinberg et al. (1992).

For males and across ethnic groups, the strongest negative correlation to academic achievement in this study was exhibited by *permissive* parenting. For girls, *authoritarian* parenting had the strongest negative correlations to grades. Except for girls, these data are consistent with Baumrind's (1989) data indicating that *permissive* parenting is the most counter-productive of the three parenting styles for predicting competence in children. The Dornbusch et al. (1987) study, however, found *authoritarian* parenting the most negatively related to academic achievement, particularly for girls.

Parenting styles and empathy levels. Confirming the first and third hypotheses of this study, the data revealed *authoritative* parenting to have the strongest positive correlation to levels of empathy compared to the *permissive* or *authoritarian* styles. This was true for the sample evaluated as a whole and for the ethnic and gender groups evaluated separately. However, just as for the relationship between parenting style and academic achievement, the African American/*authoritarian* group differed from the other groups by the positive direction of influence between *authoritarian* parenting and empathy levels. Empathy might reasonably be considered a social competency, in which case this variation would agree with the data from the female African American subset in Baumrind's study (1972) previously discussed, in which *authoritarian* parenting predicted social competency. Just as for the correlations between parenting style and academic achievement, the correlations between parenting style and empathy may be diminished due to

the simultaneous presence of *permissive* and *authoritarian* behaviors in the same parent. Just as for academic achievement, the *permissive* parenting style exhibited the strongest negative correlation with empathy levels.

A positive relationship between *authoritative* parenting and empathy levels was expected due to the nature of empathy and its development. The data reported here supports previous studies which have looked at the socialization of empathy from other perspectives (Barnett, 1987; Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). Inductive discipline techniques are characteristic of *authoritative* parenting (Baumrind, 1971, 1989; Barnett et al., 1980b), and have been found related to levels of empathy (Hoffman, 1984a) and altruistic responding (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). Inductive techniques encourage the child to recognize that others have feelings, to imagine what the feelings of others are, and how one might feel in a similar situation. That is, induction teaches perspective taking and role taking. It has also been suggested that one of the most salient opportunities for parents to model empathy is during the parents' interactions with the child. Empathic responses not only demonstrate the behavior, but also give the child the positive experience of receiving an empathic interaction. The effectiveness of such modeling is probably enhanced if, in addition, the parent verbally highlights the process for the child's understanding and future imitation (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). Such parent-child interactions are the substance of Baumrind's typologies and the explanatory communications referred to here are hallmarks of *authoritative* parenting (Baumrind, 1971).

Gender differences. Confirming the second hypothesis of this study and consistent with other studies in the literature (Adams et al., 1979; Barnett et al.,

1980a; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Hoffman, 1977), the girls in this study showed significantly higher levels of empathy than the boys. Although data from self-report questionnaires may be biased in favor of girls due to self-representation in agreement with stereotypic expectations, Bryant's questionnaire has been demonstrated to minimize this effect (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985).

It is interesting to note that the boys' empathy score is significantly lower than the girls', and that the boys' score on *authoritarian* parenting is significantly higher. It is important to keep Bell's work (1968) in mind and caution against presuming the direction of influence. It may be just as reasonable to imagine that the behaviors of preadolescent boys elicit a stronger measure of parental control as it is to imagine that *authoritarian* parenting is counter productive to empathy development. Nevertheless, the adverse influence of authoritarianism is supported by many sources. Data from previously reviewed studies have shown *authoritarian* parenting to be negatively correlated to self-confidence, social competence, and motivation (Baumrind, 1989; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Lamborn et al., 1991). The data in this study show *authoritarian* parenting to be negatively correlated to empathy levels and academic achievement.

The extensive analysis of authoritarianism by Adorno et al. (1950) examines its characteristics in great detail. The authoritarian syndrome is credited for being the cause and the consequence of rigid obedience and subordination oriented parental behavior and training. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of those individuals who scored high on authoritarian qualities was the absence of any tendency to understand why

others behaved differently or to introspect about one's own attitudes and behaviors. Both of these tendencies closely parallel the cognitive components of empathy, the ability to perceive and understand emotional cues of another and the ability to understand one's own emotional responses and their influences on behavior. With this work of Adorno et al. (1950) added to the work documenting the *authoritative* socialization antecedents of empathy already discussed (Barnett, 1987; Goldstein & Michaels, 1985) and the variety of negative outcomes documented for *authoritarian* parenting (Baumrind, 1989; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Lamborn et al., 1991), it is not surprising that the significantly higher levels of *authoritarian* parenting in boys would be coupled with significantly lower levels of empathy.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the relationship of parenting styles to levels of empathy in sixth grade children. The overall results support the study hypotheses that *authoritative* parenting, compared with *permissive* and *authoritarian* parenting, has the strongest positive correlation with empathy levels in sixth grade children; that girls have higher levels of empathy than boys, as measured in this study; and that *authoritative* parenting is positively associated with empathy levels across ethnic groups.

The parent behavior typologies developed by Baumrind (1971) have proven to be useful categories with fairly consistent relationships to a variety of child outcomes. The *authoritative* style captures the elements of parent behavior, such as warmth, responsiveness, and induction, shown to be associated with positive child outcomes in numerous studies. Elements of the *permissive* style, such as neglect and undercontrol, and elements of the *authoritarian* style, such as demand and overcontrol, have been shown to be associated with negative outcomes. Baumrind's typology was used in this study to categorize the parent behaviors of the children's experience which were assessed by a self-report questionnaire adapted from the study by Dornbusch et al. (1987). The results of this study contribute additional support to Baumrind's parenting style typology as a useful tool for operationalizing parenting behaviors predictive of child outcomes.

Parenting styles have been empirically related to a variety of child outcomes, with a recent emphasis on academic achievement. That relationship was examined in this study to provide a link with numerous studies in the literature. Levels of academic achievement were assessed by a self-report

questionnaire adapted from the Dornbusch et al. study (1987). In terms of their self-reported academic achievement level, African Americans were significantly lower than Whites and Asian Americans, and males were significantly lower than females. The relationship between parenting styles and academic achievement reported here is consistent with previously reported data: the *authoritative* style predicts higher levels of academic achievement than the *permissive* or *authoritarian* styles.

Empathy is an emotional response to the perceived emotions of another. The capacities for perception and responsiveness which characterize empathy have been demonstrated to underlie altruistic and prosocial behaviors (Batson et al., 1987; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978; Krebs, 1975). In the contexts of present day global interactions between diverse cultures and ideologies, they may also provide a basis for consensus in arriving at mutual goals, and a motivation for cooperation in executing their attainment (Hoffman, 1987). Furthermore, if we neglect these capacities we may be neglecting the fundamental needs and distinguishing characteristics of our human nature (Batson, 1991; Batson et al., 1987; Bryant, 1987). To date, there have been no studies this author has been able to locate which utilize Baumrind's useful and extensively studied parent behavior typologies as criterion predictors for empathy development. Empathy levels were assessed in this study by a self-report questionnaire developed by Bryant (1982). The relationship between parenting styles and levels of empathy confirmed the first and third hypotheses of the study that *authoritative* parenting, compared to *permissive* and *authoritarian* parenting, had the strongest positive correlation with empathy levels in sixth grade children, across ethnic groups.

There was one exception to otherwise consistent relationships between parenting styles and both child outcomes in this study. Except for African Americans, the only positive predictor for academic achievement and empathy level was the *authoritative* parenting style. African Americans, however, showed a positive relationship between the *authoritative* and *authoritarian* styles for both outcomes. Interpreting these results is difficult because of the lack of adequate information in the literature about ethnic groups other than White, and because of the small representation of African Americans in this study sample.

Two interesting gender differences emerged from the data in this study. Confirming the second hypothesis of the study, boys scored significantly lower than girls on empathy levels. Simultaneously, boys scored significantly higher than the girls on *authoritarian* parenting. Although correlations do not indicate the direction of influence, there is abundant evidence in the literature which suggests that *authoritarian* parenting behaviors would not be conducive to the development of empathy. If the behaviors of boys somehow elicit more controlling and demanding behavior from parents, this study suggests the need to discover and elucidate alternative methods of responding that will be effective in behavior management and also in the encouragement of empathic development.

Implications

This study adds to the body of data in the literature which supports Baumrind's parent behavior categories as an effective means of categorizing parent socialization influences on a variety of child outcomes. It is reassuring to find that the *authoritative* behaviors already demonstrated to be predictive

of academic achievement and some other child outcomes are also predictive of empathy levels.

Two variations in this study's data are particularly interesting. The first is the variation found in the African Americans for *authoritarian* parenting. For both academic achievement and empathy levels, this group exhibited an opposite, and positive, response to *authoritarian* parenting from the rest of the sample. At the very least, this variation suggests that differing cultural contexts impose differing socialization requirements for similar child outcomes. The inability to clearly interpret this ethnic variation underscores the complexity of ethnic contributions to behavioral dynamics, and the need to analyze ethnic groups more extensively. No behavioral dynamic can be understood fully if only studied within the confines of one particular system of interaction. It is tempting to speculate many reasons for the ethnic variation in this study, but without sufficient demographic information throughout many studies, and larger sample sizes, attempts to interpret this data only highlight the limited understanding of behavior that the mono-ethnic literature base offers.

The second variation regards the difference in empathy levels and parenting styles between boys and girls. Boys in this study have significantly lower levels of empathy. Similar differences in empathy levels have been suggested by previously reported data (Adams et al., 1979; Barnett et al., 1980a; Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Hoffman, 1977). Evidence from Gilligan's studies indicate that men were less likely to exhibit a care orientation in their moral reasoning than women (Gilligan, 1993). These gender differences in empathy levels raise the question of possible selective socialization of boys through parenting styles in a manner that is adverse to empathy development. Indeed,

boys in this study also have a significantly higher incidence of *authoritarian* parenting. Although previous work has indicated the effect of parent behaviors on empathy development to be less influential for boys than girls (Barnett et al., 1980b), *authoritarian* parenting is a poor correlate of empathy both theoretically and empirically. Adorno et al. (1950) document the characteristics of *authoritarian* parenting to be cause and consequence of rigid egocentrism, behavior antithetical to empathy. The weight of these factors combined makes attention to possible socialization differences influencing boys' and girls' empathy development particularly important. Bell's work (1968) notwithstanding, the evidence from this study strongly suggests that more skillful and empathic techniques need to be employed in response to all child behaviors in order that boys and girls might be equally disposed to develop their capacities for empathy.

Although sociological and psychological theories have upheld roles of men and women for which empathic capacities are more necessary to women, the multi-ethnic interactions of the global community require that both men and women possess the tools of perception and responsiveness to enhance cooperative endeavors across cultural and ideological differences. Success in the world arena demands not only academic excellence, which has long been prized and critical, but also the ability to transcend one's individual and limited perspective. A fully developed capacity for empathy will equip both men and women with the skill and motivation to utilize their intellectual strengths in pursuit of common goals and mutual benefits in the diverse communities of global interactions.

Future Work

The inability to fully explain the result variations in this study suggest directions for future research. A larger sample size with more evenly distributed ethnic representation would yield more complete information about differing ethnic groups. Additionally, demographic information needs to be comprehensive enough to preclude confounding the data so that useful information and meaningful comparisons might be generated. A more detailed assessment of parenting behaviors, including consistency and communication, across a variety of situations and contexts could add depth to present research information about parent socialization behaviors and their consequences. There may be particular behaviors or particular combinations of behaviors that are more associated with empathy development for different ethnic groups. Larger, more diverse samples, and more detailed parent behavior assessments could contribute to all of these interests.

The possibility that different parenting behavior criteria predict empathy in boys differently than in girls might also be revealed by the additional information recommended above. This study made no distinction between maternal and paternal parenting styles or levels of empathy, which have been found to be differentially influential in children's development of empathy (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978; Barnett, 1980b). Future studies exploring the socialization antecedents of empathy should examine potential differences between mother and father in the context of their relationship to the child. Interviews with boys and girls which probe the impact of differing parent behaviors, maternal and paternal, from the child's personal point of view could add insight to apparent gender differences.

Implementation of these suggestions in continued investigations of socialization influences on empathy development will offer important theoretical information with practical applications. The technological advances and competitive market place of recent decades have heightened an awareness of the importance of academic excellence. As the exercise of academic achievements extend beyond the boundaries of language, values, and culture, new capacities have gained status in importance. Men and women of all cultures need fully developed capacities of empathy in order to interact with perception and understanding across the ideological and cultural differences of the global community. Attention to the parental socializing behaviors conducive to empathy in children will increase our understanding of its development and contribute to the growing recognition of its value to our human existence.

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Appendix A

Demographic Characteristics Questionnaire

1. What is your Birthdate?

MONTH YEAR

- Jan
 Feb
 Mar
 Apr
 May
 June 1979
 July 1980
 Aug 1981
 Sept 1982
 Oct
 Nov
 Dec

2. What is your sex? Male Female

3. What grade are you in? 5th 6th 7th

4. Which of the following describes how well you do in school?

- Poor
 Fair
 Good
 Very Good
 Excellent

5. Which parents or guardians do you live with?

- Both my mother and father in the same household
 Only my mother
 My mother and stepfather
 Only my father
 My father and stepmother
 Some of the time in my mother's home and some in my father's
 Other relatives (aunt, uncle, grandparents, etc.)
 Guardian or foster parent who is not a relative
 No parents or guardians (I live alone or with friends)

6. How many OLDER brothers and sisters do you have?

- None 3
 1 4
 2 5 or more

7. How many YOUNGER brothers and sisters do you have?

- None 3
 1 4
 2 5 or more

8. Which, if any, of these people now live in your household?

- Grandparents
- Other adult relatives (not parent or guardian)
- Other adult males who are not relatives
- Other adult females who are not relatives
- Stepbrothers or stepsisters

9. Indicate the HIGHEST level of education completed by each person. Mark one answer for each parent.
(Skip the inappropriate parent designations)

M=Mother		F=Father		Sm=Stepmother	Sf=Stepfather
M	F	Sm	Sf		
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Some grade school
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Finished grade school
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Some high school
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Finished high school
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Some college or 2-year degree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		4-year college graduate
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Some school beyond college
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Professional or graduate degree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		Don't know

10. Select the one major ethnic group that best describes you.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Black, African, Afro-American | <input type="radio"/> Asian, Asian-American |
| <input type="radio"/> Native American, Eskimo | <input type="radio"/> Hispanic or Latino |
| <input type="radio"/> White (non-Hispanic, Anglo,
Caucasian, European) | <input type="radio"/> Middle Eastern |

Appendix B

Parenting Style Questionnaire

1. How much are your mother/stepmother and father/stepfather involved in your school education? (Skip the inappropriate parent designations)

	<u>N</u> =never	<u>S</u> =sometimes	<u>U</u> =usually		
		Mother	Father	StepMother	StepFather
		<u>N</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u>	<u>N</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u>	<u>N</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u>	<u>N</u> <u>S</u> <u>U</u>
a. Helps with homework when I ask		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
b. Makes sure I do my homework		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
d. Knows how I'm doing in school		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>
e. Goes to school programs for parents		<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>

2. How important is it to your parents or guardians that you work hard on your schoolwork?

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

3. When you DO WELL in school, which of the following reactions do you get from your parents or guardians? (Darken one choice for each line.)

- a. They praise me
 Never Sometimes Usually
- d. They give me more freedom to make my own decisions
 Never Sometimes Usually
- g. They tell me I should do even better
 Never Sometimes Usually
- h. They say my other grades should be as good
 Never Sometimes Usually
- k. They don't care
 Never Sometimes Usually

4. When you DO POORLY in school, which of the following reactions do you get from your parents or guardians? (Darken one choice for each line.)

- a. They get upset with me
 Never Sometimes Usually
- b. They reduce my allowance
 Never Sometimes Usually
- c. They take away my freedom to make my own decisions
 Never Sometimes Usually
- f. I am grounded
 Never Sometimes Usually
- j. They encourage me to try harder
 Never Sometimes Usually
- k. They offer to help me
 Never Sometimes Usually
- n. They don't care
 Never Sometimes Usually

5. These are some of the things that parents (stepparents and guardians) say to their children. Please think about your family conversations and indicate for each of the following items how frequently your parents say similar things. (Darken one choice for each line.)

- a. Tell you that their ideas are correct and that you should not question them
 Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often
- c. Answer your arguments by saying something like "You'll know better when you grow up"
 Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often
- e. Admit that you know more about some things than adults do
 Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often
- f. Talk at home about things like politics or religion, where one takes a different side from others
 Never Rarely Sometimes Often Very Often

6. Now, please indicate how much your parents (stepparents or guardians) emphasize the following things. (Darken one choice for each line.)

- b. That every member of your family should have some say in family decisions
 Very much Pretty much A bit Not much Not at all
- c. That you shouldn't argue with adults
 Very much Pretty much A bit Not much Not at all

Appendix C

Empathy Level Questionnaire

Respond to the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

- | | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
|-----|-----|----|----|---|-----|-----|------|
| 1. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 2. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 3. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 4. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 5. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 6. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 7. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 8. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 9. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 10. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |
| 11. | | | | | | | |
| | NO! | NO | no | ? | yes | YES | YES! |

12. It makes me sad to see a boy who can't find anyone to play with.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
13. Some songs make me so sad I feel like crying.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
14. I get upset when I see a boy being hurt.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
15. Grown-ups sometimes cry even when they have nothing to be sad about.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
16. It's silly to treat dogs and cats as though they have feelings like people.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
17. I get mad when I see a classmate pretending to need help from the teacher all the time.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
18. Kids who have no friends probably don't want any.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
19. Seeing a girl who is crying makes me feel like crying.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
20. I think it is funny that some people cry during a sad movie or while reading a sad book.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
21. I am able to eat all my cookies even when I see someone looking at me wanting one.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**
22. I don't feel upset when I see a classmate being punished by a teacher for not obeying school rules.
NO! **NO** **no** **?** **yes** **YES** **YES!**