



# Parenting and procrastination: gender differences in the relations between procrastination, parenting style and self-worth in early adolescence

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## Abstract

The goal of this study was to explore the main effects and interactions between gender, maternal and paternal parenting style, and global self-worth in the prediction of procrastination in adolescence. A sample of 105 adolescents (60 females) between the ages of 13 and 15 years completed measures of parenting style, self-concept and trait procrastination. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analyses predicting procrastination revealed significant interactions between parenting styles, adolescent gender and self-worth. For females only, the effects of maternal authoritative and authoritarian parenting on procrastination were mediated through the self-system, whereas paternal parenting had a direct relation with procrastination. These gender effects in the role of the self-system are discussed in relation to parenting and procrastination. © 2002 Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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## 1. Introduction

One of the major changes thought to occur during early adolescence is a shift in orientation from parents towards peers (e.g. Coleman, 1980; Havinghurst, 1987; Hill, 1993). However, even as adolescents become more peer-oriented and increasingly aware of their peers' evaluations

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(Kelly & Hansen, 1987), parents continue to play a significant role in their child's development (e.g. Brown, Mounts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993). Given the continued importance of parenting, researchers have explored the relations between parental variables and many diverse aspects of adolescents' development including achievement and academic motivation (Lamborn, Mounts, & Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), autonomy (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), and adolescent self-worth (see Grotevant, 1998, for a recent review). The focus of the present study was on parenting and self-worth, particularly as they might be related to procrastination.

Results from both clinical observations (e.g. Burka & Yuen, 1983) as well as empirical studies (e.g. Ferrari & Olivette, 1993, 1994) have provided evidence for the role of parental influence and self-worth in the development of procrastination, the irrational tendency to delay intended tasks (Lay, 1986). For example, high parental expectations and criticism have been linked to a form of socially-prescribed perfectionism that is positively related to procrastination (Frost, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1991; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Similarly, parenting that is characterized by stern inflexibility and overcontrol has been found to correlate with a measure of decisional procrastination for late adolescent females (Ferrari & Olivette, 1993). On the basis of this evidence, Flett, Hewitt, and Martin (1995) concluded that, "... procrastination may be a response to the expectation that parents will respond to self-characteristics in a harsh and controlling manner" (p. 128).

The relation between parenting and procrastination remains largely uninvestigated. In only two studies have researchers directly examined the relations between parental authority and the development of indecision (Ferrari & Olivette, 1993) or chronic avoidant procrastination (Ferrari & Olivette, 1994). Ferrari and Olivette (1993, 1994) had a sample of late adolescent females rate their parents' authority style and their own tendency toward decisional procrastination and avoidant procrastination. Results showed that parents perceived as having authoritarian parenting style characterized by stern inflexibility and overcontrol had the greatest influence on daughters who develop chronic indecision tendencies. Ferrari and Olivette (1994) also reported that scores on fathers' authoritarianism accounted for approximately 10% of the variance in both decisional and avoidant procrastination. However, the ability to generalize these findings is limited by the fact that only females were studied. Ferrari and Olivette (1994) note that this is a significant limitation in their study and that, "it remains unclear how male procrastinators perceive their parents, authority" (p. 97).

Most recently, Ferrari, Harriott, and Zimmerman (1999) examined the quality of relationships between both women and men procrastinators with their mothers and fathers, as well as with their participants' more general social-support network. Interestingly, Ferrari et al. reported that procrastination tendencies were significantly related to more conflicts in relationship with parents and best friend of the same sex, as well as less depth in the relationship with the participants' fathers and same sex best friends. Based on this and the previous research reviewed, we can see that parental factors are related to procrastination and that there is some indication that gender may play a role in how parental influences are manifested in procrastination.

### *1.1. Conceptualizing the link between parenting and procrastination*

Despite the correlational evidence, there is little known about the underlying nature of the relation between parenting and procrastination. Conceptually, both direct and indirect links seem

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