INTERNALIZED CONFORMITY AND SELF-ESTEEM:
PARENTS, AUTONOMY, AND CONFORMITY

by

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ABSTRACT

The parent-adolescent socialization literature has considered the variables autonomy and conformity separately and has noted their relations to adolescent outcomes in the parenting context. Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that conformity in a context that includes autonomy is internalized. The current project tested this relation by examining areas of correlation between autonomy and conformity in light of theory. A latent variable, self-direction, that included autonomy and conformity, was created and proposed as mediator between parenting and adolescent self-esteem. The structural model had an acceptable fit to the data and indicated that self-direction (i.e., internalized conformity) mediated the relation between parenting and self-esteem. Self-direction explained a larger portion of the variance in autonomy than in conformity. This suggests that the conformity variable contained elements of external conformity in addition to the
internalized conformity that was associated with autonomy. Findings suggest that it is not only autonomy, but also conformity that is internalized and contributes to the relation of parenting to adolescent self-esteem. Findings also support the SDT proposition that there is no gender difference between boys and girls in the configuration of influences of parenting, self-direction, and self-esteem. Recommendations are made for extending the exploration of how parenting influences the balance between adolescent conformity and autonomy for optimal adolescent outcomes.

INDEX WORDS: Internalized Conformity, Autonomy, Autonomy Granting, Internalization, Self-Esteem, Parenting, Adolescents
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DEDICATION

To Andre, Mom, Melissa, and three wonderful siblings:

Charles Beaty, Sandy Bonofiglio, and Deborah Pasli
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most grateful thanks to Kevin Bush and Lynda Walters, my advisors. Kevin, thank you for your generosity in taking me under wing and giving me opportunities to be involved in research from my earliest days on campus and for your expressions of confidence in me. Lynda, thank you for your unending patience, great humor, and willingness to talk through ideas, theories, and meanings. I treasure my relationship with you both and will always remember your contributions to my growth and education.

I acknowledge the contributions of Linda Trollinger, my Kentucky colleague, made to my completion of this project--I appreciate your generous sharing of data and your support and encouragement. Thanks to Irma Alvarado, Terri Kulkosky, and Tina Salva, my comps study team and support group, for enduring with me; and to Pat Janes for her wonderful humor, support, and friendship.

In yet another way, I am deeply grateful to Andre, my wonderful partner and best friend, who made this endeavor a priority, never doubted by ability to succeed, and unfailingly encouraged me all the way across the finish line.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Adolescents seek greater autonomy and opportunities to act in accordance with their own values, rather than according to the values and standards dictated by their parents and the larger society. Not ready to face the world alone, however, adolescents also continue to depend on their parents for physical and emotional care and for guidance. Parents and adolescents negotiate a balance between autonomy-granting by parents and adolescent conformity to parental expectations. The intricate balancing dance between parent and adolescent, specifically between parental autonomy-granting and adolescent conformity, is the subject of this paper. It will be considered in relation to adolescent self-esteem, a variable that traditionally has been considered an important outcome of the parent-adolescent relationship (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O’Connor, 1994; Bush, 2000). First, a clarification of key concepts will be addressed. I will first define autonomy, autonomy-granting parenting, internalization, and internalized conformity. Then I will
describe the rationale behind this research and the purpose of the study.

Autonomy and Autonomy Granting

Autonomy is the experiencing of one’s behavior as originating from one’s self. The conceptualization of autonomy used herein is behavioral, rather than value oriented or emotional. This distinction leads us to set aside ideas that adolescent autonomy involves breaking free, detaching, or gaining independence from parents because these processes have to do with individuation that is an aspect of emotional autonomy (Collins, Gleason, & Sesma, 1997). Parental influence on the autonomy of adolescents, autonomy granting, is an interpersonal aspect of autonomy that refers to the way a parent facilitates the adolescent’s natural seeking of behavioral autonomy.

Conformity

To understand conformity requires that we keep in mind clarification offered by research led by Peterson that distinguished compliance from internalized conformity (Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1986). The term conformity is generally used to describe adherence to parental expectations for behavior, even though there is not always a distinction made in the literature between compliance and internalized conformity.
Compliance is an external responsiveness to parental (or other social agent) expectations without internal commitment. External compliance refers to conforming behavior that is demonstrated in face-to-face situations in order to seek rewards or avoid punishment. Internalized conformity, on the other hand, refers to a person’s regulation of personal behavior in accordance with his or her voluntary acceptance of, and commitment to, the attitudes, values, beliefs and/or expectations of a parent or other social agent (Devereaux, Bronfenbrenner, & Rogers, 1969; Festinger, 1953; Peterson, et al., 1985).

Internalization

A person’s regulation of personal behavior is internalized when it is consistent with his or her personal values and goals or it is integrated into the sense of self or self-concept. Behavior is internalized when a person regulates personal behavior at his or her own initiation, according to internal contingencies. This conception of internalization, that comes from self-determination theory (SDT), is closely related to autonomy that is considered a co-requisite of internalization (see Deci & Ryan, 2000, for a discussion of internalization and self-determination theory).
Rationale for Study

Self-determination theory (SDT) provides a theoretical bridge between conformity, specifically, internalized conformity, and autonomy. It is from this bridge that the hypotheses for this study are conceptualized. The literature on parent socialization research guided by symbolic interaction theory is dominated by an idea based in attachment theory that suggests that conformity is a secure base of relationship that the adolescent ventures out from to exercise autonomy. In contrast, self-determination theory suggests that when parents encourage or optimize autonomy in adolescents, adolescents are more likely to internalize their conformity to parental expectations. By the first hypothesis I tested the fit of this supposition of SDT to the data by predicting that adolescent perception of parental autonomy-granting mediates the relation between parenting and conformity. Autonomy and conformity have been tested separately as outcomes of parenting behaviors and perceived parental authority, and together as intervening variables between parenting and adolescent self-esteem outcomes. Autonomy has consistently been found to contribute to self-esteem when tested in an intervening position between parenting and self-esteem. The strength of the role of autonomy may
mask contributions of conformity to self-esteem tested in the same model. Therefore, an alternate understanding to hypothesis one will be considered: Internalized conformity and autonomy-granting jointly contribute to self-esteem in the parenting context. To test this hypothesis I have suggested a third variable, tentatively called self-direction, to represent the combined influence of autonomy and conformity.

In self-determination theory, it is assumed that the association of parenting with adolescent attitudes and behaviors is consistent across gender of adolescent (Allen et al., 1994; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, in other parenting research, gender has proved to be an important consideration (Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Bush, 2000; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999). For this reason, in this research, the fit of the overall model will be checked for males and females separately. Hypotheses three and four address the fit of the model across gender of adolescent and the possible mediating role of self-direction.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the relation between autonomy and conformity. Previous research has examined patterns of relations of parenting, autonomy, and
conformity to self-esteem. The synergy of autonomy and conformity has been suggested in empirical and theoretical work, but it has not been directly tested and reported in the socialization literature. Therefore, this study examined the relation of adolescent perceptions of autonomy to internalized conformity, and the relation of autonomy and conformity to adolescent self-esteem in the parenting context.

The following questions were addressed in this study. What is the relation of autonomy and conformity in the context of parenting? What is the role of conformity in the relation of autonomy to adolescent self-esteem? What is the joint or cooperative role of autonomy and conformity in contributing to adolescent self-esteem in the parenting context?
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES

Those engaged in the study of parent-adolescent relationships have long held that effective parenting entails, in part, maintaining a balance between two complementary functions within family life: parental respect for the autonomy of offspring (e.g., autonomy granting) and conformity of the young to parental expectations (Baumrind, 1978; Peterson, 1986; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999). Early commentary by Thomas and associates (Thomas, Gecas, Weigert, & Rooney, 1974; Peterson et al., 1985) assumed a complementary relation of internalized conformity and the development of autonomy. Although parental autonomy granting has consistently been associated with adolescent self-esteem and social competency (Bush, 2000; Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004; Chirkov et al., 2003; Peterson, Bush, Supple, & Wilson, 2005), the role of internalized conformity in fostering self-esteem is less apparent. Self-determination theory provides additional insight into internalized conformity and its relation to autonomy and self-esteem. In the following section I will briefly discuss Self-determination theory.
and then will turn to a discussion of internalized conformity.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory (SDT) informs our understanding of internalized conformity, an important construct for conceptualizing the role of parenting in self-esteem development. SDT assumes that people from all cultures share basic psychological needs that are essential to well-being: the need to experience one’s behavior as originating from one’s self (i.e., autonomy), the need to be in relationship with others (i.e., relatedness), and the need to experience one’s self as competent (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT is focused on the role of self-regulation (i.e., autonomy) in the internalization of behavior regulation or control.

Behavior Regulation

Persons are motivated to internalize behavior that is deemed by their society to be useful for effective functioning, even though the behavior, itself, may not be interesting to the individual (Deci et al., 1994). Deci and associates (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989) maintain that regulation of behavior is internalized when it is identified as consistent with personal values and
goals or is integrated into one’s sense of self. Persons
who regulate their behavior in accordance with internal
contingencies at their own initiation, rather than in
compliance with external controls are most likely to be
autonomous (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Deci et al., 1994).
In contrast, when behavior is externally controlled (e.g.,
desire for approval, avoidance of punishment), people are
less likely to feel autonomous.

Role of Social Contexts in Internalization

Although persons are considered to be naturally
motivated to internalize regulation of their behavior in
ways that will facilitate their effective negotiation of
the social context, these contexts (e.g., parenting) also
have an influence, either optimizing or impeding the
individual’s internalization of the regulation of his or
her behavior (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Deci et al.,
1994). Social contexts that support personal regulation of
behavior facilitate an optimal level of internalization:
the integration of behavioral regulation into the
developing concept of self. Integrated behavior regulation
has been associated with well-being (i.e., self-esteem;
Chirkov et al., 2003), whereas poor integration of behavior
regulation is associated with negative outcomes (i.e., low
self-esteem, deviant behavior; Deci et al., 1994).
Internalized Conformity

Internalized conformity is behavior regulation or control enacted in accordance with an individual’s voluntary acceptance of the attitudes, beliefs, and/or expectations of a parent or other social agent (Devereaux, Bronfenbrenner, & Rogers, 1969; Festinger, 1953; Peterson, et al., 1985).

Distinguished from External Compliance

Social scientists have differentiated internalized conformity from external compliance (Allen, 1965; Festinger, 1953; Kelman, 1958; Kiesler, 1969; Peterson et al., 1985). Internalized conformity includes an element of choice and of willing endorsement (e.g., autonomy) of behavior that is not present in external compliance.

Role of Internalized Conformity in Development

Parents are generally interested in rearing children to act in ways that will enhance their opportunities for survival, competence, and success within society (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Small, 1990). Internalized conformity to parents increases the likelihood that an adolescent understands parental expectations, and that the adolescent will endorse expected behaviors and control his or her behavior even when parents are not present.
Internalized conformity has been identified as an important aspect of cooperative relationships within families (Peterson et al., 1985; Youniss & Smoller, 1985) and has been associated with an ability to engage in interdependent activities with others (Hogan, Johnson, & Emler, 1978; Sampson, 1977).

In the next section I will briefly define self-esteem. I then will discuss literature related to adolescent self-esteem: parenting and self-esteem, conformity and self-esteem, and autonomy and self-esteem. Then I will discuss the relation of autonomy and internalization to internalized conformity.

Parenting and Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the emotional and evaluative component of the self-concept and reflects the feelings and attitudes that one has toward one's self (Mead, 1934; Marsh & Shavelson, 1985; Rosenberg, 1979). Self-esteem is a central component of adolescent development (Coopersmith, 1967; Gecas & Burke, 1995) and is an important resource for and indication of adolescent social competence. Positive self-esteem is associated with a number of desirable outcomes for the individual and society, such as: academic achievement, good mental health, and avoidance of antisocial and drug/alcohol abusing behavior (Allen,
Self-esteem is considered protective against problems such as psychopathology, social problems, poor school performance, and school dropout (Harter, 1999; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989; Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1985).

Self-esteem has been widely explored as an outcome variable, with research emphasis placed on discerning the processes (e.g., parenting behaviors) associated with the development of positive self-esteem as an indicator of social competence (Coopersmith, 1967; Harter, 1999; Rosenberg, 1979). Research and theory have indicated that two broad dimensions of parenting behaviors have influence on adolescent sense of self: parental support and parental control (Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These broad constructs are often related to self-esteem through specific parenting behaviors (i.e., support, positive induction, and punitiveness).

**Parental Support**

Parental support refers to parenting designed to convey acceptance and approval of an adolescent through encouragement, physical and verbal affection, and nurturance (Barber, 1997; Baumrind, 1978; Maccoby & Martin,
Parental support has been consistently associated with higher levels of adolescent self-esteem (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Bartle, Anderson, & Sabetelli, 1989; Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2004). The association of parental support with positive self-esteem has been found across varying socioeconomic contexts, family structures, genders, and ethnic/international contexts (Amato & Fowler, 2000; Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2005). In addition to the direct and positive association of parental support with adolescent self-esteem, parental support is often associated with both adolescent perceived autonomy and internalized conformity. Autonomy, in turn, is often associated with self-esteem whereas results linking internalized conformity and self-esteem are less consistent (Bush, 2000; Chirkov et al., 2003; Peterson, et al., 2004).

**Parental Positive Induction**

Positive induction is a parental control attempt that involves the use of reasoning by parents with the purpose of pointing out how behavior has consequences for self and others (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson et al., 1985). In optimal parent-adolescent interactions parents facilitate differences of opinion with the adolescent and allow the adolescent to act autonomously (Allen et al., 1994). Positive inductive parenting conveys role expectations to
adolescents and, at the same time, communicates confidence in the young person’s ability to evaluate and regulate his or her own behavior. Positive inductive parenting has been associated with high levels of self-esteem in adolescents (Gecas & Seff, 1990; Openshaw & Thomas, 1986; Peterson et al., 1985).

**Punitive Parenting**

Punitive parenting is an aspect of parental attempts to modify the behavior of children and adolescents through excessive control (Baumrind, 1991; Peterson et al., 1985; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Punitive parenting practices are verbal, physical, or psychological attempts to exercise influence, without using reasoning (Peterson & Hann, 1999). These arbitrary control attempts undermine the adolescent’s sense of self (Barber, 1996; Barber, Chadwick, & Oerter, 1992) and inhibit the adolescent’s internalization of conformity (Chirkov, et al., 2003). In other words, parents who employ punitive parenting force adolescent compliance, rather than allowing the adolescent to exercise autonomy in complying. Punitive parenting inhibits the development of adolescent self-esteem by communicating rejection and lack of respect for adolescents (Barber, 1996; Barber et al., 1992; Openshaw & Thomas, 1986).
The literature indicates direct associations between parenting that includes support, positive induction, punitive parenting (a negative association), and adolescent positive self-esteem. However, encouragement of adolescent autonomy is also an important influence on the self-esteem of young people. This is a finding that has been confirmed across diverse cultural contexts (Chirkov et al., 2004; Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2005).

Parenting and Autonomy

Autonomy includes both intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects (Collins, Gleason, & Sesma, 1997). Autonomy granting is an interpersonal aspect of autonomy that refers to the way a parent might facilitate the natural seeking of autonomy by the adolescent or, in cases of low autonomy granting, how a parent might inhibit the young person in his or her seeking of autonomy (Allen et al., 1994; Grolnick, Deci, &, Ryan 1997; Deci et al., 1994). As children approach adolescence, the nature of the parent-child relationship shifts and decisions become more a matter for discussion and agreement or acceptance between the parent and adolescent than was the case in childhood (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Social contexts (e.g., parenting) that support personal regulation of behavior (e.g., autonomy-granting parenting) tend to be
associated with internalization of behavior at optimal levels (i.e., integrated regulation) and with autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989). In contrast, social contexts that inhibit personal regulation of behavior (e.g., punitive parenting) impede internalization and, therefore, autonomy. These contexts are then associated with negative affect (i.e., low self-esteem; Deci et al., 1994).

Autonomy and Self-Esteem

Work in diverse cultures indicates a link between autonomy (i.e., autonomy-granting parenting) and measures of well-being (i.e., self-esteem; Bush, 2000; Bush et al., 2004; Chirkov et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 2005). Yet, these relations may not always be straightforward. For example, a parent who generally encourages an adolescent’s autonomy might, at times, withhold autonomy granting by way of a challenge, in order to provide opportunities for the adolescent to negotiate with the parent (Allen et al., 1994). In other words, in working for autonomy through negotiation, the adolescent experiences greater perceived autonomy than he or she would if there had been no challenge. In optimal parent-adolescent interactions parents facilitate adolescent differences of opinion with the parent (e.g., autonomy-granting, reasoning) from a
secure base of a positive relationship (e.g., support; Allen et al., 1994; Peterson, 1995; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Based on their longitudinal study, Allen and associates (1994) suggested that parental autonomy granting is reciprocated by adolescent conformity to parental expectations and a partnership between parent and adolescent forms directed toward establishing adolescent autonomy without sacrificing the relationship (Peterson, 1986; Peterson et al., 1999). This is consistent across research findings: parents who support adolescent autonomy have high self-esteem adolescents who are more likely to conform to parental norms than adolescents with parents who do not support autonomy (Grolnick et al., 1997; Kandel & Lesser, 1969; Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

Conformity and Self-Esteem

The few parental socialization studies examining the relation of conformity and adolescent self-esteem have produced inconclusive findings. In a study of U.S. and Chinese adolescents, Bush (2000) found gender differences in patterns of relations between conformity and self-esteem in the U.S. adolescents. In the case of sons, conformity to mothers and fathers was associated with self-esteem; the strength of this relation was similar to that of the relation of autonomy to self-esteem. For U.S. daughters,
however, self-esteem was not associated with conformity in relation to either parent. Recent studies (Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 2005) testing a cultural function for conformity in facilitating self-esteem in adolescents living in a collectivist society was hypothesized, found no relation of conformity to self-esteem.

Autonomy, Internalization, and Internalized Conformity

Relation of Autonomy and Internalization

According to Self-determination theory, the constructs autonomy and internalization are closely related by definition and function. Ryan and associates (Assor et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Connell, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000) further suggested that autonomy is a prerequisite for internalization.

Autonomy, as an essential human need, involves a desire to be the initiator of one’s actions and to behave in self-endorsed ways. When a person’s regulation of his or her behavior is internalized, it is regulated by internal, rather than external, motivations. Internal motivations for controlling one’s behavior are, by SDT definition, motivations for behavior that are consistent with personal values and goals (i.e., identified regulation) and/or are congruent with the person’s sense of self (i.e., integrated regulation; Ryan & Connell, 1989;
Behaviors that meet one or both of these criteria are autonomously enacted from internal motivation and are subsequently internalized (Deci et al., 1994).

Relation of Autonomy and Internalized Conformity

Self-determination theory and research contributes to our understanding of internalized conformity by making explicit the role of autonomy in internalization (Assor et al., 2004; Chirkov et al., 2003; Grolnick et al., 1997; Koestner, Gingras, Abutaa, Losier, DiDio, & Gagne, 1999). When an adolescent chooses to regulate his or her behavior in line with parental expectations, and the choice is based on internal motivations, as defined in the previous section, conformity is considered to be internalized. This regulation of behavior by the adolescent is also autonomous in the sense that it is self-endorsed, willing, and self-initiated. Moreover, adolescent autonomy increases as regulation of behavior is brought into coherence with the inner self through internalization. This has implications for the self-concept of the developing adolescent and is reflected in the adolescent’s self-evaluations and higher self-esteem (Grolnick et al., 1997).

Theoretical and empirical work suggests that autonomy granting and internalized conformity represent
complementary roles played in development. However, family socialization researchers have not investigated the relation of adolescent perceptions of parental autonomy granting and adolescent internalized conformity to parental expectations in studies of adolescent development of self-esteem. This project will take an exploratory step toward understanding this aspect of development.

Gender

Findings regarding gender differences in the relation of parenting with autonomy and conformity of adolescents are inconsistent. Significant differences have been found in relations of adolescents’ gender to internalized conformity (Peterson et al., 1999; Bush et al., 2004; Peterson, et al., 1985). Internalized conformity to parental expectations has been found to be higher for U.S. adolescent girls than for adolescent boys. Boys have been found to be more externally compliant to parents than are girls (Peterson et al., 1985). Peterson and associates (1999) found gender differences in the prediction of behavioral autonomy from the tendency to consult with parents about educational plans, occupational goals, relationships with the opposite sex, and personal problems. Consulting with a parent on these issues was a significant predictor of sons’ perceived behavioral autonomy in
relationship to their fathers, but did not predict autonomy in the relationship of daughters to either parent. However, gender did not mediate the association of autonomy to well-being within any of the international samples of the study of Chirkov et al., (2003). Recognizing the disparity in the literature and following the SDT assumption that autonomy is one of three essential psychological needs of people, it is expected that autonomy is as functionally important for girls as for boys.

Hypotheses

Previous empirical and theoretical work suggests complementary roles for autonomy and conformity (Peterson et al., 1985; Thomas et al., 1974). Work is needed that focuses specifically on the relation between parental autonomy granting and internalized conformity (Bush, 2000; Peterson et al., 2005). Psychological research utilizing self-determination theory (SDT) suggests an association of parental autonomy granting and adolescent perceived internalized conformity (Collins et al., 1997; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci et al., 1994). Parental behaviors that foster adolescent perception that parents allow or respect the adolescent’s autonomy are expected to contribute to the adolescent’s willing conformity to parental expectations and to the adolescent’s perception that he or she is self-
directed. Self-direction, in turn, is expected to be associated with positive self-esteem (Grolnick et al., 1997; Ryan, 1993). This expectation is consistent with socialization research in the United States and other countries that has shown that parenting that contributes to positive outcomes in adolescents does so, in part, by fostering a sense of autonomy in the adolescent (Bartle et al., 1989; Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson et al., 2005).

Self-determination theory (SDT) is used to consider the role and relation of adolescent perceptions of parental autonomy granting and perceived adolescent internalized conformity to one another and to adolescent self-esteem in the context of the parent-adolescent relationship in a rural United States culture.

The proposed study will provide a preliminary exploration of the relations among parenting practices, adolescent conformity, adolescent autonomy, and adolescent self-esteem. Hypotheses to be tested include:

Hypothesis One: Perceived autonomy mediates the relation of parenting and adolescent conformity. See Figure 2.1 below for the proposed model.

Hypothesis Two: Perceived self-direction (or internalized conformity), indicated approximately equally
by conformity and autonomy, will be moderately to highly related (.40 or above) to self-esteem.

1. Self-direction is positively correlated with self-esteem when conformity and autonomy granting are approximately equal.

2. If either conformity or autonomy granting is not an important indicator of self-direction, the relation of self-direction to self-esteem is positive but lower.

Hypothesis Three: The relation between parenting and adolescent self-esteem will be mediated by adolescent self-direction. Figure 2.2 below is the proposed model for this hypothesis.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant gender difference in the models for males and females for the mediated relation between parenting and self-esteem (Hypothesis three).
Figure 2.1. Proposed model for mediation of parenting and conformity by autonomy.
Figure 2.2. Proposed model: Self-Direction as mediator of parenting and self-esteem
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

Sample

Data gathered in Central Appalachia in the context of a larger, cross-national study was used to examine the research questions. Thirteen states comprise Appalachia. Of these, six have poverty rates in excess of 1.5 times the national average (13.6% in poverty; Pollard, 2003). The data for the current study were collected in two public high schools located in rural counties in two economically distressed states within Central Appalachia.

The sample for this study was selected using a purposive strategy based on the research questions and the relevance of aspects of the culture for the variables under examination. For example, the prevalence in Appalachia of families that live in close proximity to others from the same family of orientation (i.e., parents and siblings; Coleman et al., 1989; Rural Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996), is likely to amplify or reinforce community values and parental expectations where adolescents are concerned (Coleman, Lawrence, Ganong, & Madsen, 1989; Jones, 1991; Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium, 1996). The relative isolation of
rural communities may also strengthen conformity by limiting the inflow of conflicting values and ideas from the broader culture (Thomas et al., 1974). Yet, for rural families to manage their day to day tasks, despite the isolation of living some distance from the resources of a town or city, adolescents may be required to take on more responsibility and parents may more readily encourage autonomy in adolescents. Therefore, this rural context is considered be a good setting for exploring how variance in parental autonomy granting and adolescent perceived internalized conformity influences adolescent sense of self-direction and self-esteem.

A total of 705 high school students completed questionnaires. These were 9th to 12th graders, ages 14-19. The median age was 16 ($M=16.12$) at the time of data collection. There were approximately equal numbers of adolescent boys and girls: 356 (50.5%) boys, 349 (49.5%) girls. 698 of the participants (96%) were white. The level of education completed by parents was slightly higher for mothers than fathers. Mothers, on the average, had completed high school and some additional training other than college. Fathers, on the average, had completed high school or the General Educational Development (i.e., GED)
by exam. For a complete description of the sample, see Table 3.1, Sample Descriptive Data.

One-way Anovas were calculated for each of the variables in the study for age of adolescent. Statistical significance was found for the relation of variance in autonomy and age of adolescent, $F(5)=3.72$, $p<.01$. The Tukey HSD post hoc test indicated that the significant difference in autonomy was due to lower scores for 14-year-olds in comparison with 15-year-olds (mean difference = -1.95966, $p=.001$) and in comparison with 18-year-olds (mean difference = -1.90948, $p=.004$). The age differences found for autonomy were not found for other variables, so I did not test the entire model by age.

Procedure

Identical procedures were followed in the two high schools. Self-report questionnaires were administered to students during regular class time in required English courses. The teachers were present. The complete survey consisted of questions on a broad range of behavioral and psychosocial issues and required between 35 and 45 minutes for completion. Participation in the study was voluntary and without compensation to participants.

Permission was obtained from school officials to conduct the survey in the classrooms. An implicit parental
consent strategy was utilized and parents were contacted through letters sent home with students. The letters described the study, invited participation, explained the consent process, and informed parents how to opt out of the study if desired. Parents were to inform the school office if they objected to their adolescent’s participation and the school received no parental objections. The participants signed an assent form before completing the questionnaire. All students in the designated classes on the day the surveys were administered completed the questionnaire. Assent forms and completed questionnaires were separated upon completion to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

The human subjects review board (i.e., IRB) at the sponsoring University approved the survey instrument and the procedures prior to data collection in 2002. The human subjects review board of the University of Georgia approved the current use of the data.

Measurement

The questionnaire included items that assessed adolescents’ perceptions of aspects of their relationship with parents. The survey asked about a variety of socio-demographic, family relationship, parent-adolescent, and psychosocial issues that included those of interest for the
proposed study: socio-demographic data (i.e., age, gender, education level attained by parents), parenting behaviors (i.e., support, positive induction, punitiveness), adolescent autonomy, adolescent conformity, and adolescent self-esteem. Adolescents were asked to report on their relationship to both their mothers and their fathers.

Parenting

Parenting was operationalized as a single latent variable derived from adolescent responses to three subscales of the Parental Behavior Measure (PBM): parental support, positive induction, and punitiveness (punitiveness is negatively associated). Previous work has associated these aspects of parenting with autonomy and self-esteem in adolescents (Allen et al., 1994; Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Peterson et al., 1999). The PBM is a 34-item self-report instrument used in previous studies to measure adolescents perceptions of several dimensions of behavior that mothers and fathers use with adolescents (Henry & Peterson, 1995; Henry, Wilson, & Peterson, 1989; Peterson et al., 1999). Many items of the PBM were taken from the 80-item Rollins and Thomas Parent Behavior Inventory that was, in turn, a distillation of the best items from the 192-item Schaefer’s Parent Behavior Inventory (Schaefer, 1965). The participants responded to the items on a four-
point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Each item was presented twice, once to be answered in relation to mother and then again to be answered in relation to father. Appendix A contains a complete list of the items for each of the parental behavior subscales.

The focus of this exploratory study involves the overall influence of parents, rather than a comparison of the parenting of mothers and fathers. Therefore, responses for mothers and fathers were averaged into one parental score for each item. The Cronbach’s alpha for the parenting scale comprising averaged mother and father scores on parental support, positive induction, and punitiveness was .76.

Parental Support

The parental support subscale assessed adolescents’ perceptions that parents provided emotional and affective support through the communication of warmth, affection, and valuing of the adolescent. Parental support establishes a sense of closeness and connection between parents and their adolescents. Parental support has been found to encourage close bonds with parents and to bolster adolescent confidence to function more autonomously (Bowlby, 1988; Peterson & Hann, 1999). Parental support was measured
using four items of the Parent Behavior Measure (Peterson et al., 1985). A sample of items in the support subscale is “This parent tells me how much he (or she) loves me.” Appendix A contains a complete list of items for this subscale.

Positive Induction

The positive induction subscale assessed the extent of adolescent perception that that parents provided guidance by using logical reasoning and explanation. Items are statements of parents’ attempts to influence the actions of the young by connecting the actions with his or her positive feelings about self. For example, a sample item from this scale is “Over the past several years this parent has explained to me how good I should feel when I have shared something with other family members.” Parental positive induction will be assessed using five items from the Parent Behavior Measure (Peterson et al., 1985). Appendix A contains a complete list of items from the positive induction subscale used in this study. The items measuring positive induction were developed based on the original conceptualization of the work of previous researchers (Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Small, 1990).

Punitive Parenting
Adolescent perception of parental punitiveness was measured by an eight-item scale of the PBM (Peterson et al., 1985). This subscale assessed the extent of parental use of controlling behaviors characterized as harsh, strict, and arbitrary. A sample item from the punitiveness subscale is “This parent does not give me any peace until I do what he or she says.” For a complete list of items from the punitive parenting subscale, see Appendix A. Punitiveness may be a reasonably effective way for parents to gain an adolescent’s obedience in the short term, but research has shown that its long-term consequences may be the rejection of parental perspectives, feelings of resentment, and emotional distance from the parent.

**Autonomy-Granting**

Adolescents perception that parents allowed them to make their own decisions and engage in activities without excessive control indicated the level of autonomy adolescents perceive themselves to have in reference to their parents (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Peterson et al., 1999). This conceptualization of autonomy, with its focus on behavior and decision, has been found to be more consciously desired by adolescents than other dimensions of autonomy (i.e., emotional and value autonomy; Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Feldman & Quatman, 1988; Peterson et al.,
This perspective is consistent with SDT and avoids conceptualizations of autonomy as detachment from parents or independence (Sessa & Steinberg, 1991; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989); conceptualizations that have been challenged in the literature (Chirkov et al., 2003; Crotevant & Cooper, 1986; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005).

Adolescent perception of parental autonomy granting was assessed using a ten-item scale (Peterson et al., 1999) that was based on previous studies examining the growth of self-direction and self-governance in the young (Douvan & Adelson, 1966; Peterson, 1986). Participants responded to a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores on the scale are indicative of higher levels of perceived autonomy granted by mother/father. A sample item from the autonomy scale is “This parent has confidence in my ability to make my own decisions.” See Appendix B for a complete list of Autonomy questions. Cronbach’s alphas for previous studies utilizing the scale ranged from .81 to .87 in Mexican, U.S., and Chinese samples (Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson et al., 2005). Cronbach’s alpha for the current Appalachian sample was .87.

Conformity
The conformity of an adolescent to parents refers to the adolescent’s perception of the degree of his or her willing adherence to parental expectations, values, and beliefs with regard to leisure time activities, friends, dating, education, careers, etc. (Peterson et al., 1985). The self-report measure of internalized conformity has been adapted from the early measure used by Thomas and associates in a cross-national investigation (Thomas, Gecas, Weigert, & Rooney, 1974). The scale was later used in a context that included parenting behaviors and perceived authority and distinguished between internalized conformity (assessed by self-report) and compliance (assessed by observation; Peterson et al., 1985).

Adolescent report of conformity to parents was assessed in the current study by a 9-item version (Peterson, et al., 1999) of the scale used in earlier studies (Peterson et al., 1985; Thomas et al., 1974). A sample item from the conformity scale is “If this parent did not like me to talk in certain ways, then I would stop talking that way.” Appendix B contains a complete list of conformity questions. Previous studies using the conformity scale reported Cronbach alphas of .70 to .74 in U.S. and international samples (Henry et al., 1989; Peterson et al., 1985; Peterson et al., 2005). The
participants responded to the items in terms of a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The items are summed for a total score in reference to each parent, with higher scores indicating higher levels of conformity. Cronbach’s alpha for combined parental items for the current sample is .81.

Self-Direction

A single indicator, self-direction, was used to test the second hypothesis and is a latent variable indicated by autonomy and conformity. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using Mplus software (Muthen & Muthen, 2004-2006). The items from the autonomy and conformity scales selected for self-direction are listed in Appendix C.

Guidelines described by Steiger (1990) suggest that the fit of a Structural Equation Model to sample data is considered adequate if the standardized Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values are .10 or less and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are .90 or greater. The model creating self-direction is considered to be good based on a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of .93 and a Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of .90. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation was .07, also within the range of acceptable fit. These statistics are for the measurement model within the structural model.
Self-Esteem

Adolescent global self-esteem was assessed by eight items of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1979). Responses were assessed on a four-point Likert-type scale that varies from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). For this scale, higher scores represent higher self-esteem. The RSES contains items such as “I take a positive attitude toward myself.” For a complete list of RSES items, see Appendix D. The scores for each item were summed for a total self-esteem score. The RSES has been consistently used in a variety of cultural studies (Bush et al., 2004; Bush et al., 2002; Mayhew, & Lempers, 1998) with reliabilities ranging from .77 to .89. Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample is .82.

Data Analysis

Correlations of variables in this study were examined to ensure that the measured variables were related in the expected directions. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of male and female adolescents on self-esteem. Given the emphasis of SDT on autonomy as essential for psychological health for both men and women, an additional procedure was conducted that tested the overall model with data divided by gender of adolescent. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) utilizing
MPlus software (Muthen & Muthen, 1998-2004) was used to test the hypotheses of the study.
Table 3.1

Sample Descriptive Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>26.8</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>26.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>356</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Level</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>28.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lived With</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both biological parents</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio father/stepmother</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio mother/stepfather</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio father only</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio mother only</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>F/153</td>
<td>M/102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school/GED</td>
<td>F/200</td>
<td>M/197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school, other</td>
<td>F/228</td>
<td>M/265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>F/67</td>
<td>M/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some graduate work</td>
<td>F/15</td>
<td>M/29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  F=Fathers, M=Mothers for parental education
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine how self-determination theory (SDT) might inform our understanding of the role of autonomy in internalized conformity in the parenting context. Four hypotheses were proposed in this study.

Preliminary review of the data for outliers and normalcy of items, skewness, and kurtosis was conducted and no evidence of these issues was found (Trollinger, 2002). Correlations among the latent variables of the study were examined and are presented in Table 4.1. The latent variables (i.e., parenting, autonomy, and conformity) were moderately weak in their intercorrelations that ranged from .12 to .24.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived autonomy mediates the relation of parenting and adolescent conformity. Structural Equation Modeling (MPlus, Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2004) was used to test the first hypothesis. The fit indices for the model were outside the range for acceptable model fit to the sample data (CFI=.87, TLI=.84, RMSEA=.09). Therefore, hypothesis one was not supported.
Hypothesis 2: Perceived self-direction (or internalized conformity), indicated approximately equally by conformity and autonomy, will be moderately to highly positively related to self-esteem. If either conformity or autonomy granting is not an important indicator of self-direction ($\beta$ less than .40), the relation of self-direction to self-esteem will be positive but lower. Structural Equation Modeling (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2004) was used to examine the loadings of autonomy and conformity on self-direction in the context of the overall model. See Figure 2.2, the proposed model. Correlated error terms were removed from the model in order to strengthen and clarify it. The consistency between the hypothesized, or proposed, model and the sample data was assessed by examining the fit indices of the model. See Figure 4.1, the structural equation model. The overall fit of the model to the data is in the acceptable range, according to Steiger (1990). The Comparative Fit Index was .94, the Tucker-Lewis Index was .93, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation was .05. The loadings of conformity on self-direction was .46, autonomy was .86. The path coefficient from self-direction to self-esteem is .44 (p=.000). Hypothesis 2 was supported.
Hypothesis 3: The relation between parenting and adolescent self-esteem will be mediated by adolescent self-direction. The direct effect of parenting on self-esteem was examined and then compared with the indirect effect of parenting on self-esteem through the intervening variable self-direction. The model for the direct effect of parenting to self-esteem was a good fit to the data (CFI=.95, TFI=.93; RMSEA=.08). The path coefficient for the direct relation of parenting to self-esteem was .40 (p<.000). When the mediator, self-direction, was added to the model the direct path coefficient was reduced to .04 and was not significant; however, the full model was significant (CFI=.94, TFI=.93, RMSEA=.05). See Figure 4.1. Results indicated that self-direction mediated the relation of parenting to self-esteem. Hypothesis three was supported.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant gender difference in the model for the relation between parenting and adolescent self-esteem as mediated by self-direction. A group comparison by gender of adolescent was conducted using MPlus software. This examination was to assess the overall fit of the model for boys and for girls. See figure 4.2. The model was an acceptable fit to data for both groups (CFI=.94; TLI=.93, RMSEA=.05). For boys, the path
coefficient for the direct effect of parenting to self-esteem was .48 (p=.000; CFI=.95, TFI=.94, RMSEA=.07) but this path coefficient was reduced to .14 when the mediator, self-direction, was added. The overall model was significant (CFI=.94, TFI=.93, RMSEA=.05). See Figure 4.2. Likewise for girls, the path coefficient, .34, for the direct effect of parenting to self-esteem was significant (CFI=.94; TFI=.93, RMSEA=.05). When the mediator, self-direction, was added to the model the direct effect was reduced to -.01 and mediation was indicated, that is, the full model was significant (CFI=.94, TFI=.93, RMSEA=.05). Therefore, there was no indication of gender difference in the fit of the overall model nor in the role of self-direction as a mediator. Hypothesis four was supported.
Table 4.1.

*Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations of Study Latent Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Variable</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S-E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>.11**</td>
<td>.24***</td>
<td>.20***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=705

M  43.73  19.11  7.69  22.94
SD 6.99  3.35  2.15  4.34

** p<.01 (2-tailed).
***p<.001 (2-tailed).
Table 4.2.

*Path Coefficients for Full Sample Model and Gender Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>r²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Sample Model</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Est</td>
<td>.04 ns (.40*)</td>
<td>(.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.87*</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Dir/Self-Est</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.86*</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys (n=356)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Est</td>
<td>.14 ns (.48*)</td>
<td>(.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.90*</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Dir/Self-Est</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.82*</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls (n=349)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Est</td>
<td>-.01 ns (.34*)</td>
<td>(.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.84*</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Dir/Self-Est</td>
<td>.43*</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.48*</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy/Self-Dir</td>
<td>.91*</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statistics in parentheses = direct effect path coefficient, r²

ns = non-significant

*p < .01
\( \chi^2 = 448.26, \text{ df} = 158, \ p = .000 \)

CFI = .943, TFI = .932
RMSEA = .053
Indirect effect = .39 (t=1.98)

Figure 4.1. Structural equation model: Autonomy and conformity in relation to perceived self-direction, parenting, and self-esteem.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The important issue addressed in this study is the dual role of autonomy and conformity in the production of internalized conformity. To accomplish this, and in the spirit of "reasonable ecclectism" (Pepper, 1961, p. 330), I applied the SDT understanding of autonomy and internalization to the concepts of autonomy-granting parenting and internalized conformity that have been developed within symbolic interaction theory.

In SDT a universal and essential psychological need for a sense of personal autonomy is posited (Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Family socialization researchers, working primarily from symbolic interaction theory (SIT), have noted that a balance between autonomy and conformity is necessary in healthy family relationships (Bush, 2000; Peterson, Madden-Derdich, & Leonard, 2000; Peterson et al., 1985). However, the relation of autonomy and conformity suggested by family researchers has not been empirically tested and these two characteristics certainly have not been suggested as necessary components of internalized conformity. In this study, adolescents' perceptions of their parents'
willingness to grant them autonomy was defined as one of two indicators of self-direction, or internalized conformity. The other indicator was measured as the adolescent’s perceived willingness to conform to behaviors they thought their parents would approve. The use of a latent variable indicated by autonomy and conformity allowed observation of the relative role of autonomy and conformity in an empirical definition of internalized conformity.

Self-Direction and Self-Esteem

Results of the study indicated that parenting influenced self-esteem through its influence on self-direction. Research has consistently found an intervening role of autonomy in the relation of parenting to adolescent self-esteem (Bush, 2000; Chirkov et al., 2003; Peterson, et al., 2004), but has seldom, if ever, noted an intervening contribution of conformity in this relation to self-esteem. In the context of the current study, self-direction mediated the relation between parenting and self-esteem.

Internalized Conformity

Internalized conformity as measured for this study indicates the voluntary nature of the acceptance of the expectations of a parent and the commitment to regulate one’s behavior to meet those expectations. But this, in
itself, is not necessarily the same as internalized conformity as conceptualized by SDT researchers who maintain that the presence of autonomy is prerequisite to internalization.

External conformity is likely present when the adolescent’s commitment to regulating his or her behavior to match parental expectation is not accompanied by high levels of autonomy. For example, external conformity would be indicated when an adolescent conforms out of cooperation with regard to an issue that is not a high stakes issue for the adolescent at the time. He or she may not have had occasion to confront a particular expectation for behavior (i.e., from peers or another source outside the home) that may be at odds with the expectations of the parent. As adolescents are exposed to new ideas that may be in conflict with parental expectations, they seek to negotiate these ideas with parents in an exercise of autonomy. Indeed, Collins and associates (1997) and Grolnick (2003) described the process of negotiation with parents as practice and preparation for living as an independent adult. Allen and associates (1994) and Peterson, Bush, and Supple (1999) found a significant positive relation between negotiation in the parent-adolescent relationship and autonomy. So we might surmise that adolescents who have
not had occasion to negotiate with the parent regarding an issue, would not have internalized their conformity to parental expectations.

Another form of external conformity occurs when a parent does not allow the adolescent’s expression of his or her opinion and, thus, inhibits adolescent autonomy. Parents, by regularly inhibiting adolescent autonomy, may forestall the opportunity of the adolescent to come to internalize conformity to parental expectations. Internalized conformity is important for effective cooperation and meaningful social relationships (e.g., Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999; Peterson et al., 1985). Conformity, when expressed in a manner that reflects feelings of responsibility to others, is posited as complementary to autonomy. Peterson et al. (1999) examined relationship connectedness (i.e., parental support, parental status as significant other, and conformity) as a predictor of predict autonomy and confirmed that adolescents become more autonomous through negotiation of the parent-adolescent relationship within a context of connectedness.

Allen and associates (1994) also attributed greater developmental gains (i.e., ego development and self-esteem) to adolescents in relationships with parents that were
characterized by high conflict and moral disparity when the relationship was also considered to be supportive in general. Overall, there is agreement that the general atmosphere of support and connection in the parent-adolescent relationship facilitates both conformity and autonomy and, thus, would also be expected to facilitate internalized conformity. The findings in this study clearly indicate that autonomy is not predicted by conformity; rather, it combines with conformity to produce self-direction, or internalized conformity.

Parenting

Parenting was represented by three dimensions for this study: support, positive induction, and punitiveness. Although only three of the possible subscales to indicate parenting were used, these subscales have been considered by others to be very important aspects of parenting (cf., Allen et al., 1994; Deci et al., 1994; Baumrind, 1978, 1991). Deci and associates, 1994, found that environments that facilitated internalization were those that provided at least two of the following factors in requesting action on an undesirable task: a meaningful rationale, acknowledgement of feelings (i.e., acknowledgement that the task was not desirable, was boring), and an environment low in controllingness. Baumrind (1978, 1991) and Allen and
colleagues (1994) agreed that the use of reasoning and support by parents contributes to the development of internalized conformity. The environment that Deci and Baumrind posited to be conducive to internalization and internalized conformity is also reflected in the parenting construct of the current study. Parenting high in support and positive induction was expected to be parenting that acknowledged the feelings of the adolescent and facilitated adolescent voicing of his or her opinion in negotiation with parents. Indeed, parental support has been associated with both establishing close bonds with parents and with bolstering adolescent autonomy (Peterson et al., 1999). Parenting high in support and positive induction is also likely to be low in its reliance on punitiveness to give guidance to adolescents and gain their cooperation.

In summary, environments that share characteristics with the composite of parenting used in this study (high support, high positive induction, and low punitiveness) have been associated with internalization and internalized conformity in previous research (Allen et al., 1994; Deci et al., 1994; Baumrind, 1991).
Parenting and Self-Direction

In this study, the strength of the relation between parenting and self-direction is greater than is commonly seen in family research. This may reflect the significant role of parental support in both conformity and autonomy (Peterson et al., 1999). It is also likely that the use of latent variables improved the association between parenting and self-direction.

Gender

Given the SDT assumption that autonomy is an essential psychological need for both men and women (Chirkov, et al., 2003, Deci & Ryan, 2000; Grolnick, 2003), no gender difference in the fit of the models was expected. As hypothesized, the current study indicated that the model (Figure 4.1) fit equally well for boys and girls.

There continues to be discrepancy regarding gender influences in parenting, the intervening influences of autonomy and conformity, and adolescent self-esteem cf., Allen et al., 1994; Chirkov et al., 2003; Peterson et al., 1999).

Research indicating that parenting high in control and low in autonomy support (Baumrind, 1967; 1991) influences boys and girls differently has been challenged by SDT
researchers (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). Chirkov and associates (2003), working within the SDT framework, found no mediating influence of gender in the relation of autonomy to well-being across international samples. It has been suggested that the discrepancy in findings reflects different conceptualizations of autonomy. However, there are many nuances of difference in the ways autonomy has been measured. If autonomy is essential to healthy conformity, then we should be able to see its role even when not measured strictly according to SDT theory. The discrepancy in the research of those who say that influences are different for boys and girls (e.g., Peterson et al., 1999; Allen et al., 1994) and those who assert that there is no gender-based difference (e.g., Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Grolnick, 2003) does not appear to be a measurement issue. The possible difference in the association of parenting to self-esteem for boys and girls is important for our understanding of family relationships. The results of this study support SDT theory. When the relation of parenting to self-esteem is mediated by self-direction, the same model works for boys and girls. The slight difference in the path coefficients between the models is overshadowed by the great similarity in the pattern of path coefficients. This study provides support
for the SDT proposition that there is no gender difference between boys and girls in the configuration of influences and effects of parenting, self-direction, and self-esteem.

Limitations and Recommendations

Several cautions are offered along with recommendations for future work. There are several conceptual and measurement issues that will need to be addressed in follow-up research.

This study was conducted with extant data. Operationalization of autonomy and conformity were limited to the measures used in the original data and there was no opportunity to make adjustments in the measures. However, use of these data allowed me to consider the relation of autonomy and conformity in light of their relation to aspects of parenting and adolescent outcomes that have been suggested in past research. Of course, a replication of this study with measures specifically designed for it would help us understand these issues better.

The conformity measure used in this study is particularly problematic. The conformity items were specific to internalization. The items used were as follow: “If this parent did not want me to go to a particular movie, then I believe that I would not go”; “If this parent did not like me to talk in certain ways, then I
would stop talking that way”; and “Generally speaking, I believe that I do most things in the way this parent wants me to”. Stated differently, the items might have been a better measure of conformity that was not necessarily voluntary; for example: “I go to the movies my parents approve of,” “I do not talk in ways that my parents disapprove,” “I do things the way I am told to.” Another possibility in future work with this internalized conformity scale is to provide a way for respondents to indicate their motivation or level of commitment to the items in the scale. For example, items might include statements adolescents could endorse to reflect reasons for their conformity (i.e., to avoid feeling guilty, to avoid getting into trouble, because acting in this way is important to me, because the behavior is consistent with who I am, or because I enjoy behaving in this way). These additions, as they roughly follow SDT classifications of behavior regulation and internalization (i.e., identified, integrated internalization), may provide indications of why adolescents conform and might more specifically indicate if conformity is internalized.

Similar to conformity, the measurement of autonomy in this study was specific to parental context. However, adolescents conform to many different standards, including
parents. If items were written to reflect autonomy rather than autonomy in relation to parents, we would have a different idea about how autonomy and conformity work together to produce internalized conformity. For example, the item “This parent gives me enough freedom” might be phrased, “I have enough freedom.” The item, “This parent has confidence in my ability to make my own decisions” might be phrased, “I have confidence in my ability to make my own decisions, or just, “I am able to make my own decisions.”

Additional measurement conditions for conformity and autonomy should be pursued. Taking parenting out of the items might make it possible to clarify the concepts and relations of autonomy and conformity in the context of differing parenting practices and behaviors.

In these results, no significant differences due to adolescent gender were found in the fit of the model to the data. Parental gender differences have been found in the relations of conformity and autonomy within some parent-adolescent studies (Allen et al., 1994; Bush, 2000; Bush et al., 2003). Because of the discrepancies that continue to be found in relation to gender of adolescent and parents, it is recommended that separate models for mother/daughter,
mother/son, father/son, and father/daughter dyads be tested.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the shared influence of autonomy and conformity in a variable that might be called Internalized Conformity or Self-Direction. Results indicated that self-direction is indicated by both autonomy and conformity, and that self-direction mediated the relation of parenting to self-esteem. This result adds to the literature by finding that it is not only autonomy, but also conformity that is internalized and contributes to this relation.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

PARENTAL BEHAVIOR QUESTIONS
APPENDIX A

Parental Behavior Questions

Parental Support Questions

1. This parent has made me feel that he or she would be there if I needed him or her.
2. This parent seems to approve of me and the things that I do.
3. This parent tells me how much he or she loves me.
4. This parent says nice things about me.

Parental Positive Induction Questions:

1. This parent explained to me how good I should feel when I did something she or he liked.
2. Over the past several years this parent has explained to me how good I should feel when I have shared something with other family members.
3. This parent explains to me how good I should feel when I do what is right.
4. This parent explains to me when I share things with other family members, that I am liked by other family members.
5. This parent tells me how good others feel when I do what is right.

Punitive Parenting Questions:

1. This parent hits me when he or she thinks I am doing something wrong.
2. This parent does not give me peace until I do what he or she says.
3. This parent punishes me by not letting me do things that I really enjoy.
4. This parent yells at me a lot without good reason.
5. This parent punishes me by not letting me do thing with other teenagers.
6. This parent is always finding fault with me.
7. This parent punishes me by sending me out of the room.
8. This parent punishes me by hitting me.
APPENDIX B

AUTONOMY AND CONFORMITY QUESTIONS
APPENDIX B
Autonomy and Conformity Scales

Autonomy Questions:
1. This parent gives me enough freedom
2. This parent allows me to choose my own friends without interfering.
3. This parent allows me to decide what is right and wrong without interfering.
4. This parent allows me to decide what clothes I should wear without interfering.
5. This parent allows me to choose my own dating partner without interfering.
6. This parent has confidence in my ability to make my own decisions.
7. This parent encourages me to help in making decisions about family matters.
8. This parent allows me to make my own decisions about career goals without interfering.
9. This parent allows me to make my own decisions about educational goals without interfering.
10. This parent lets me be my own person in enough situations.

Conformity Questions:
1. If this parent did not want me to go to a particular movie, then I believe that I would not go.
2. If this parent did not like me to talk in certain ways, then I would stop talking that way.
3. If this parent wanted me to go to a different school, then I would go to the school he or she wanted me to attend.
4. If this parent wanted me to go around with a particular group of friends, then I would do as this parent wanted me to.
5. If this parent wanted me to attain a certain level of education, then I would try to attain this level of education.
6. If this parent wants me to marry a particular person in the future, then I would marry that person.
7. If this parent wanted me to live at home, then I would do so as long as the parent wished me to do so.
8. If this parent wanted me to choose a particular career, then I would try to prepare for this career.
9. Generally speaking, I believe that I do most things in the way this parent wants me to.
APPENDIX C

SELF-DIRECTION
APPENDIX C
Autonomy and Conformity Items Selected for the Self-Direction Construct

Autonomy Questions:
1. This parent gives me enough freedom
2. This parent allows me to choose my own friends without interfering.
3. This parent encourages me to help in making decisions about family matters.
4. This parent allows me to make my own decisions about career goals without interfering.
5. This parent allows me to make my own decisions about educational goals without interfering.
6. This parent lets me be my own person in enough situations.

Conformity Questions:
1. If this parent did not want me to go to a particular movie, then I believe that I would not go.
2. If this parent did not like me to talk in certain ways, then I would stop talking that way.
3. Generally speaking, I believe that I do most things in the way this parent wants me to.
APPENDIX D

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE
APPENDIX D
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

1. I certainly feel useless at times.  (reverse coded)
2. At times I think I am no good at all.  (reverse coded)
3. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I wish I could have more respect for myself.  (reverse coded)
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.