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The Effect of Perceived Parental Autonomy Granting on Vocational Identity and
Communication in Emerging Adults

by

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Abstract

The present study examines the relationship between autonomy granting parenting and vocational identity and communication effectiveness between emerging adults and their parents. Emerging adulthood is a time of uncertainty, specifically in terms of career and vocational identity. It is hypothesized that emerging adults who were raised by autonomy granting parents have achieved a more stable vocational identity and were able to communicate more effectively with their parents than emerging adults who were not. In the present study, 44 Hunter College students (18 to 25 years of age) took the Perceptions of Parents Scale-College Student Scale, the My Vocational Situation assessment, and 2 Likert items to assess communication. This study yielded mixed results. Results from analysis of variance supported the hypothesis that parental autonomy granting was related with effective parental communication, but did not support that parental autonomy granting was related with vocational identity. Results from correlations tests supported the hypotheses that autonomy granting parenting was correlated with vocational identity and effective communication in fathers, but was only correlated with effective communication in mothers.

Keywords: autonomy granting parenting, emerging adulthood, vocational identity, communication

The Effect of Perceived Parental Autonomy Granting on Vocational Identity and Communication in Emerging Adults

Research has consistently shown that autonomy granting parents raise children who grow into adulthood with more confidence, intrinsic motivation, and feelings of competence (Benoit et al., 2015; Oliveira, Mendonça, Coimbra & Fontaine, 2014). Additionally, individuals who have been raised in autonomy granting environments have more effective communication styles with their parents (Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, & Taylor Murphy, 2012). Autonomy granting parenting, a component of authoritative parenting, encourages age appropriate decision making (outfit for the day, extracurricular activities, etc.), individual expression, and fosters the child's sense of independence (Kunz & Grych, 2013; Silk et al., 2003). Mothers and fathers who are more severe and strict when parenting have been shown to raise children who are less inclined to express ideas, goals, wishes, and interests to their parents out of fear of disappointment and/or conflict (Barber, 2006).

Children who were raised to never question authority often have a difficult time expressing themselves to their parents in many domains (Baumrind, 1966). One of these domains is identity, specifically vocational identity. These individuals may grow into emerging adults who struggle with identity formation, which causes them to struggle to find their niche in the workplace or take on a career identity with genuine feelings of belongingness to that career (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999). These same individuals may also keep these vocational uncertainties hidden from their parents out of fear of negative reactions by the parents. As such, the present research investigates the effects of autonomy granting parenting on vocational identity and communication with parents in emerging adults.

Parenting styles can influence the parent-child relationship over the years, despite the child's growth from childhood into adulthood and independence (Benoit et al., 2015). While research exists that examines the role of autonomy granting in children and adolescents, there is a scarcity of literature regarding how parental autonomy granting affects children moving into emerging adulthood. This can be problematic as offspring that are affected by parental autonomy granting will grow into the older age groups. Adult children may still feel a lack of freedom to express their thoughts, beliefs and desires to their parents out of a preexisting fear of disapproval (Froiland, 2015). Children of parents who are not autonomy granting may be conditioned well into adulthood into more submissive roles in terms of their relationships with their parents. One way in which this lack of freedom can manifest itself for the adult child is through vocational identity (Guerra & Braungart-Rieker, 1999).

Previous research has shown that children raised in authoritative environments are given more freedom to make choices by their parents (Baumrind, 1966). These choices can be as minor as coordinating outfits for the week to more major decisions such as religious affiliation. A child raised in an environment with little to no autonomy granting may not feel that a career is their choice to make. They may have followed their parents' wishes and entered into a career that they do not identify with. The individual raised under a nonautonomy granting environment is accustomed to a lack of choices in their life, perhaps when it regards decisions as momentous as vocation.

The pattern of discouragement of communication due to nonautonomy granting environments can be observed later in life, specifically in terms of vocational choices made by emerging adult offspring. Emerging adult children may have strong feelings of dissatisfaction in their vocation and even stronger feelings of belonging to another career but may refrain from

expressing such ideas to their authoritarian parents. When an individual is raised in a stringent environment, they understand what is permissible and what is impermissible to discuss with their parents, even when adulthood has been reached. An individual who is experiencing dissatisfaction with their current or planned career may remain quiet on the topic with their parents because the choice was made by the parents, not the individual. In households that are without autonomy granting, effective communication can be restrained. Allowing a child to make their own decisions and voice their own opinions typically is not standard in households that are not autonomy granting (Sanavi, Baghbanian, Shovey, & Ansari-Moghaddam, 2013).

Research has shown that parents who are more authoritative have relationships with their children that are warmer and more conducive to communication, regardless of the child's age, than parents who are more authoritarian (Froiland, 2015). Authoritative parents typically display more effective communication and less restraint when expressing ideas, beliefs, and opinions (Baumrind, 1966). In the present study, I examine the relationship between autonomy granting, levels of vocational identity, and levels of effective communication with parents in an emerging adult sample. I investigate the effects of an autonomy granting upbringing on a child, even when the child has grown into adulthood.

Autonomy Granting

Autonomy granting refers to one person allowing another person freedom of individuation by encouraging expression and by allowing participation in decision-making (Kunz & Grych, 2013). Autonomy granting is not specific to the family dynamic, as it can be seen in the workplace, classroom, or athletic field (Benoit et al., 2013). An individual who is in a position of power grants autonomy while an individual of a lower power status is given permission to express autonomy by the individual in power. The act of autonomy granting can

typically be observed in parent-child dynamics (Baumrind, 1966; Benoit et al., 2015). Generally, parents fall into one of two categories: little to no autonomy granting and autonomy granting.

Autonomy granting parents are usually more authoritative to their children and not as strict. This is not to say that all autonomy granting parents are completely indulgent of their children, or that they do not set rules or boundaries. While there are certainly instances of parents who allow their children too much freedom and enforce little to no rules or guidelines or consequences for negative actions, these instances are not the majority for parents who use autonomy granting parenting styles. An example of autonomy granting parenting would involve allowing the child to make decisions regarding after school activities. Parents who choose a specific after school activity for their child and force them to attend regardless of the child's interest in that particular activity can be said to be non-autonomy granting. These parents are usually more authoritarian in their approach to parenting their children.

In the present study, parental autonomy granting is defined as the encouragement of decision-making of children by parents. In parental autonomy granting environments, there is an allowance of discussion with parents and children regarding decisions. Operationally speaking, autonomy granting can be seen through the parents' actions in how they permit their children to explore, experiment, and decide. A parent who is autonomy granting allows the child to make decisions regarding self-expression, beliefs, lifestyle, and activities. On the other hand, parents may desire for their child to become more autonomous, but may prevent autonomy through their actions, such as picking outfits for the child or applying for jobs in their name. Although this type of parent would like for their child to be more autonomous, the environment they are creating is not conducive to autonomy.

When studying autonomy granting, Diana Baumrind's (1966) categorization of parenting styles is especially relevant. Baumrind studied parenting in depth and found two factors whose interactions with each other distinguished one parenting style from the other: parental responsiveness and parental demandingness. Parental responsiveness refers to the degree to which the parent attends to their child's needs. In this sense, needs do not refer only to the physical needs of survival. It also refers to the child's emotional and individual needs as well as their needs of assertion and expression. Parental demandingness refers to the degree of control a parent exerts over their child. By investigating the presence of these two factors and how they interact with each other, Baumrind devised three categories to better explain parenting: authoritarian parenting, permissive parenting, and authoritative parenting.

Authoritarian parents are defined as severe. They are low in responsiveness and high in demandingness. These parents control their children absolutely and do not allow for negotiation. There is a set standard of conduct that must be followed without any sort of questioning or defiance. Authoritarian parents are punitive when their child's beliefs, actions and ideals differ from their own and challenge their control. Chores are given as a means to teach respect and to encourage future obedient habits. Parents give little to no autonomy to their child to enforce their absolute control. An authoritarian parent will tell the child that they must complete a certain task in a specific fashion and do not allow for the child to make any decisions regarding this task. This type of parent is showing no autonomy support. This is a clear example of high demandingness and low responsiveness.

On the opposite end of this spectrum are permissive parents. Permissive parents are defined as being low in demandingness and high in responsiveness. They are indulgent of their children to an extreme and often do not enforce rules or guidelines of any kind to their children.

This type of parent is viewed by the child as a resource for needs that need to be fulfilled and not a model for imitation. The permissive parent does not appear to the child as having control in terms of the child's discipline or day-to-day life. This parent will try to reason with the child, but rarely, if ever, actually exerts any power over the child and is unlikely to compel their child into engaging in any sort of desired behavior. Baumrind speculates that parents who are permissive of their children were raised with a deprivation of control to an extreme and try to make up for their childhood through their children. For example, if a parent was raised in a very authoritarian household and was not allowed to make their own decisions until they reached adulthood, then this type of parent may raise their own children in an overly-indulgent way. A permissive parent allows their child to make all the decisions regarding their daily life in a way that is inappropriate. The parent is responsive to their child's happiness and allows them to make decisions based solely on happiness. However, the permissive parent places no demands on their child and does not punish the child. In the case of the permissive parent, there is only autonomy granting.

Authoritative parents are seen as a good middle point between permissive parents and authoritarian parents. Baumrind defines authoritative parents as being high in demandingness while also being high in responsiveness to their children. The authoritative parent encourages their child to make choices and allows for negotiation, but also tries to steer their child towards "what's right" without becoming too controlling or restrictive of their child's actions, interests, and beliefs. Reasoning for actions by authoritative parents is shared with their child to help them better understand why certain aspects of their upbringing are in effect. This is not seen in the authoritarian parenting style.

Authoritative parents are autonomy granting, however, they grant autonomy differently than permissive parents. An authoritative parent will approve of a decision made by the child before the child is allowed to act upon their decision. For example, a child may be given the choice of three types of foods to eat for a meal. The child must have a meal but the selection is decided by the child and not by the parent. Authoritative parents are high in demandingness because they enforce rules but they are also high in responsiveness because they are receptive to the child and their feelings and interests. Baumrind (1966) finds these types of parents to be the ideal type of parent who raises children more effectively than authoritarian and permissive parents.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood is the period of development that consists of the ages 18 to 25 years old (Arnett, 2000). In the past, this age group was called terms such as late adolescence, prolonged adolescence, and early adulthood. Today, the relatively new term “emerging adulthood” is used, primarily by more industrialized nations. Emerging adulthood is a transitory period from adolescence to true adulthood. According to Arnett (2000), emerging adulthood is not to be likened to late adolescence. Instead, it should be understood as its own developmentally unique stage of life. During this time, individuals experience more independence, make career-driven decisions, such as the completion of education or the beginning of and/or experimentation with careers, and they begin to take on the responsibilities appropriate for self-sufficient adults (Schwartz, Cote, & Arnett, 2005).

During emerging adulthood, individuals establish the framework of their future careers, income, and achievements (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). However, this period of development can be strewn with uncertainties regarding the aforementioned. Emerging

adulthood is a time of frequent changes, exploration, and the pursuit of possibilities regarding a variety of subjects (Para, Oliva, & Reina, 2015). There is not much solid commitment during this time in development. However, there are many opportunities that can be explored without suffering any of the major consequences that are associated with traditional adulthood, such as having to worry about raising children or having to take into account a stable, long-term career. For example, a college student may change her major of three semesters from social work to early childhood education without much consequence, or a 22-year-old may go on many dates with different women in a short period of time without having to worry about how these actions may affect his children.

There are three factors that specifically distinguish emerging adulthood from traditional adulthood: demographic distinctiveness, perceived emerging adulthood by the individual, and the continued exploration of identities (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults are distinct from other age groups in the sense that they seem to lack much stability in terms of lifestyle, housing location, career, and education (Schwartz, Cote, & Arnett, 2005). In industrialized countries, the average age of marriage and childbearing has increased when compared to previous decades (Dolliver, 2010). Today in the United States, the average male marries for the first time at 28.2 years while the average female marries for the first time at 26.1 years. In previous decades men and women married at earlier ages. In 1960 men and women, on average, married at ages 22.8 and 20.3 years, respectively (Dolliver, 2010). As the decades progressed, this trend has continued into the present day. The age of becoming first-time parents has also steadily increased over the decades, largely due to the postponement of marriage. In 1975, 60% of women aged 20 to 29 had their first child while in 2010, 56% of women aged 20 to 29 had their first child (Martinez, Copen & Abma, 2011).

Emerging adults typically cite pursuing possibilities and opportunities without the constraint of familial responsibilities as reasons for postponing marriage and starting a family. Without the ties of spouses and children, emerging adults primarily consider only their own selves when finding interest in a new job, relationship, or lifestyle and do not necessarily have to ponder how their choices will affect those who depend on them (Arnett, 2000). This lack of role constraint also makes emerging adulthood a time of great demographic unpredictability. Due to role constraints, other age groups are more predictable than emerging adults (Schwartz, Cote & Arnett, 2005). For example, adolescents are most likely students that live with their parents and adults over the age of 30 are most likely married with children. However, due to exploration and experimentation, age does not serve as a proper identifier of emerging adulthood roles, as they are unpredictable (Arnett, 2000). For example, in terms of living situations, emerging adults range from living at home with their parents to living on college and university campuses under the supervision of adults, living independently, or living with roommates or a romantic partner. During this time, they may be unemployed, employed part-time or may even work full-time. In comparison to other age groups, there is so much demographic diversity during emerging adulthood that this very diversity makes it distinct.

Emerging adults have a subjective understanding of the developmental period that they are currently in. Emerging adults understand that they have grown out of the adolescent period but are not yet part of the adult period (Arnett, 2000). Many emerging adults also have some confusion regarding how exactly they label themselves in terms of current developmental period. Some emerging adults feel that while they have outgrown adolescence and understand that they are no longer children, they still do not identify as a proper adult. These feelings of age group

ambiguity can be partially explained by the instability, unpredictability, and uncertainty that set emerging adulthood apart from other age groups (Schwartz, Cote & Arnett, 2005).

However, surprisingly, these characteristics of emerging adulthood are not the main reasons for these feelings. They are instead best explained by emerging adult individuals' lack of accepting responsibility for themselves and lack of being able to make important decisions without aid from an adult or authority figure (Jablonski & Marino, 20013). According to many emerging adults, a major factor in self-sufficiency is financial independence, which may not be achieved by this developmental period due to career and educational instability. Additionally, emerging adults' decision-making may be influenced by the previous generations in the forms of parental suggestions and aid or restrictions set by dormitory authority figures on college campuses (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults have an understanding that adulthood entails self-sufficiency and the qualities that create a self-sufficient adult are being honed during emerging adulthood.

Finally, emerging adulthood is characterized by identity exploration. This developmental period sees the exploration of many types of identities, such as vocational, political, religious, and sexual, amongst others (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz et al. 2005). In previous years, adolescence has been researched as the most important developmental period in which identity exploration takes place. However, there is research that argues that this can only be accepted in a society that has not been industrialized (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007). In societies that have been industrialized, identity formation and achievement is not typical in adolescence. Adolescence may be the developmental period in which we see the beginning of identity exploration, however emerging adulthood is the period in which identity exploration matters the most (Murphy et al., 2010).

When emerging adults explore identities, they do so with the intention of eventually settling upon a permanent identity, regardless of the domain, and keeping it throughout the lifespan. Exploring identities has a more serious tone during this period, which is different from the recreational exploration seen in adolescence (Schwartz et al., 2005). Exploration is geared towards finding the right fit, whether that fit is in terms of work, love, or worldview. Emerging adults have a mindset that is conducive to discovering identities that they can maintain long-term (Arnett, 2000). If they discover that one identity does not fit well with them, the emerging adult is on the prowl to explore the next identity and assess its fit.

Vocational Identity in Emerging Adulthood

Vocational identity is one of the most important developmental tasks (Porfeli et al., 2011) as it helps the individual find a career and is associated with maturity in decision-making (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). It can be understood as the degree to which an individual feels a sense of personal identity within his or her career or career aspirations. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development, the identity versus role confusion stage occurs when adolescents become confused regarding their identity and experience a crisis. The adolescent who successfully completes this stage emerges with confidence in their found identity (Erikson, 1959). However, as previously stated, this timeframe in development may no longer be relevant today in western society due to the existence of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is viewed by many as the developmental period in which vocational identity is experimented with and, subsequently, decided upon (Arnett, 2000; Arnett & Eisenberg, 2007). Many emerging adults undergo experimentation and experience feelings of uncertainty with regards to vocational identity because their adolescence was not focused on the solidification of identity, as it was in previous decades.

In the present study, vocational identity is defined as the aspect of one's identity that involves career. This can come after experimentation and exploration of other vocational identities or it can be inherited. Those with an achieved vocational identity can feel a sense of belongingness with fellow members of the same occupation and can feel that their occupation has an impact on how they view themselves. In the present study, a low score (there is no cutoff score) on the My Vocational Identity assessment indicates less stability in one's vocational identity while higher scores indicate more stability in one's vocational identity.

Parental Communication

Communication is defined as an exchange of information from a sender to a receiver. Information can be sent and understood verbally, textually, through sound, facially, through body language, and through tone (Robin, 1979). As previously stated, communication is just one aspect of autonomy granting parenting (Froiland, 2015; Sanavi et al, 2013). During the adolescent years, parents face more of a struggle to communicate with their children than they had in previous years (Sememiuk, Brown & Riesch, 2016). Communication difficulties arise when discussing major topics, such as sexual activity, academic achievement, and alcohol abuse, or everyday topics, such as daily chores, schedules or opinions. Such difficulties are uncondusive to effectiveness in communication as thoughts, feelings, and beliefs are not properly conveyed to either participant in the conversation.

In the present study, communication refers to how effectively emerging adult individuals express their beliefs, opinions, and disagreements with their parents. The individual who freely expresses themselves to their parents, regardless of the approval or disapproval of the parents, is said to be able to effectively communicate with their parents. Effective parental communication is indicated by higher scores on the 2 Likert-scale items that assess parental communication

(there is no cutoff score). However, the individual who is unable to do so is said not to be able to properly communicate with parents.

Hypotheses

Specifically, I predicted that (1) Emerging adults who perceive their parents as more autonomy granting will have higher scores on vocational identity measures than those with less autonomy granting parents. (2) Emerging adults who perceived their parents as more autonomy granting will also report higher effectiveness in their communication with their parents than emerging adults with less autonomy granting parents.

Methods

Participants

The 44 (26 female, 18 male) participants of the present study were Hunter College students recruited using Hunter College's Sona System website. Sona is an online system that helps universities to pool participants for research participation. Student participants were recruited according to Hunter College's Sona System protocol and were awarded course credit after successful completion of the study's materials. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 with a mean of 19.75 ($SD=1.76$). In terms of education level, 86.4 % of participants listed high school as their highest level of education while 9.1% had listed a 2-year college and 4.5% had listed a 4-year college.

Materials

The My Vocational Situation (MVS) assessment was developed by Holland, Gottfredson, and Power in 1980 (see Appendix A). The purpose of the My Vocational Situation is to assess participants' level of vocational identity stability, to screen for need of vocational assistance, and for general research (Holland, Gottfredson & Power, 1980). For this particular study, the My

Vocational Situation assessment is used to determine participants' current level of vocational identity stability and confidence. The My Vocational Identity assessment contains 20 statements that require a "true or false" response in addition to three portions that allow for participants to expand upon their answers in their own words. All statements regard current feelings of vocational security, career-specific knowledge, planning, appeal, and strengths and weaknesses. For this study, statements 19 and 20 have been removed due to irrelevance as well as the three portions that ask participants to expand upon their responses as open-ended responses that cannot be coded. "True" responses were coded as "0" as they showed the participant as having feelings of vocational uncertainty while "False" statements were coded as "1" as they showed the participant as having more positive feelings of vocational identity. Each participant's total identity score was calculated by adding their coded responses. Comprehensive norms for this assessment have not been published.

The Perceptions of Parents Scale- College Student Scale (POPS-CSS) was developed by Robbins (1994; see Appendix B). The purpose of the scale is to assess how college students perceive the levels of parental involvement, autonomy support, and warmth (Robbins, 1994). This scale contains 42 statements that participants rate in terms of truthfulness on a 7-point Likert scale (1= not true at all – 7=always true). The first 21 statements regard the participant's mother while the remaining 21 statements regard to the participant's father. Participants rated the same statements about each parent. If a parent was absent from a participant's life, the participant could rate statements while considering another adult of the same sex who had acted as either a mother or father figure. If the participant did not have an alternative mother or father figure, the participant could omit ratings for that parent. In this study, two participants omitted scores for a father figure. Factor analysis indicated a three-factor structure for each parent,

which the POPS-CSS items were then separated into. The items were then averaged together to create subgroups. For analysis of variance, these formed subgroups were trichotomized in terms of mean score (low, medium, high). The new subgroup categories are mother involvement (9 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$), mother autonomy (6 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$), mother warmth (6 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$), father involvement (9 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$), father autonomy (6 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$), and father warmth (6 items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Two items were created by the researcher (see Appendix C). The two items asked participants to separately rate the effectiveness of their communication with their mother and their father. Ratings were on a 7-point Likert scale (1=not effective at all – 7=always effective). The purpose of these two statements is to determine how the participants perceive their level of communication with their parents. As with the POP-CSS, in the event of parental absence, participants were able to rate statements with either a mother or father figure of the same sex of the missing parent. In the event that the participant did not have either a mother or father figure in their lives, the corresponding statement could be left without a rating. The two scores were then combined to create a total parental communication score.

Procedure

Approval for this study was granted by Hunter College's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Before any participation took place, the participants were all given informed consent forms to read and sign in a Hunter College lab. The informed consent forms detailed information regarding this study's purpose, procedures, and possible risks and how to address feelings of discomfort due to participation. The informed consent forms also assured participants of their rights and of the confidentiality of their responses. Participants of this study were given the research materials (pen and paper) in a Hunter College lab under the supervision of the

primary investigator. Participants were given two surveys (the Perceptions of Parents Scale and the My Vocational Situation survey) to complete and two questions to answer regarding communication effectiveness with their parents. After the research materials were completed and handed in, participants were then given a debriefing form, which included contact information of the principal investigator and the research sponsor (see Appendix D & Appendix E). After successful completion of the materials, students were then awarded one course credit for their Psychology 100 course.

Results

It was hypothesized that emerging adults who reported higher levels of perceived autonomy granted would have higher scores of vocational identity and higher scores of effective parental communication on the single Likert items. In this study, 12 one-way between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests and two correlations tests were conducted. In each ANOVA, the independent variable (for example, mother warmth) was trichotomized into high, medium, and low groups. For each of the predictor variables, a value of 1 was assigned to the lower third of scores, a value of 2 was assigned to the middle third of scores, and a value of 3 was assigned to the higher third of scores. The first 6 ANOVAs (see Table 1) were conducted to test the relationship between the three levels of each parental predictor variable and the scores on vocational identity, (the first dependent variable). There was a mean total vocational identity score of 7.77 ($SD= 4.68$) with scores ranging from 1 to 16. A second set of 6 ANOVAs (see Table 2) was conducted to identify the relationship between the three subgroups and the combined parental communication scores (the second dependent variable). There was a mean total parental communication score of 9.18 ($SD= 3.04$) with scores ranging from 2 to 14.

Relationship between Parental Autonomy Granting Scores and Vocational Identity

Analysis of Variance.

The first ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother involvement and vocational identity. The mean vocational identity scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 8.725 ($SD= 4.81$), 6.57 ($SD= 3.99$), and 3.50 ($SD= 2.12$). This first ANOVA shows that the effect of mother involvement on vocational identity was not significant, $F(2,41)= 1.27$, $p= .29$. These findings do not support the hypothesis. The second ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother autonomy support and vocational identity. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.37 ($SD= 5.15$), 8.12 ($SD= 4.84$), and 8.78 ($SD= 3.93$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of mother autonomy on vocational identity was not significant, $F(2,41)= 1.01$, $p= .37$. These findings do not support the hypothesis. The third ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother warmth and vocational identity. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 7.50 ($SD= 4.55$), 4.71 ($SD= 3.50$), and 9.35 ($SD= 4.78$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of mother warmth on vocational identity was only marginally significant, $F(2,41)= 2.69$, $p= .08$. These findings do not support the hypothesis.

The fourth ANOVA assessed the relationship between father involvement and vocational identity. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.73 ($SD= 4.98$), 6.86 ($SD= 4.60$), and 9.67 ($SD= 4.12$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of father involvement on vocational identity was not significant, $F(2,39)= 1.94$, $p= .15$. These findings do not support the hypothesis. The fifth ANOVA assessed the relationship between father autonomy support and vocational identity. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.67 ($SD= 4.36$), 8.36 ($SD= 4.99$), and 10.50 ($SD= 4.95$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of father autonomy on vocational identity was not significant, $F(2,39)= .99$, $p= .38$. These findings do not support the

hypothesis. The sixth ANOVA assessed the relationship between father warmth and vocational identity. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.36 ($SD= 5.24$), 6.70 ($SD= 3.97$), and 9.39 ($SD= 4.41$), respectively. This ANOVA was not significant, $F(2,39)= 2.03$, $p= .14$. These findings do not support the hypothesis.

Correlations.

Pearson bivariate correlations were then run to test the hypothesized relationships using the full range of data to test linear relationships between variables of interest (See Table 3). Positive correlations were predicted between parental relationships and vocational identity. All correlations between vocational identity and mother relationships were positive, but none reached statistical significance. All were marginally significant (between .05 and .11) and in the predicted direction.

Relationship between Parental Autonomy Granting and Parental Communication

Analysis of Variance.

The seventh ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother involvement and communication. The mean communication scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 9.51 ($SD= 3.13$), 8.14 ($SD= 2.41$), and 7.00 ($SD= 2.83$). This ANOVA shows that the effect of mother involvement on parental communication was not significant, $F(2,41)= 1.14$, $p= .33$. These findings do not support the hypothesis. The eighth ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother autonomy and parental communication. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.86 ($SD= 2.14$), 9.47 ($SD= 2.83$), and 11.21 ($SD= 2.55$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of mother autonomy on parental communication was significant, $F(2,41)= 10.45$, $p < .001$. These findings support the hypothesis. Tukey's post hoc was used for this analysis. The ninth ANOVA assessed the relationship between mother warmth and parental communication. The mean scores

of groups 1,2, and 3 are 7.65 ($SD= 2.79$), 8.00 ($SD= 2.77$), and 11.47 ($SD= 1.91$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of mother warmth on parental communication was significant, $F(2,41)= 11.82, p < .001$. These findings support the hypothesis. Tukey's post hoc was used for this analysis.

The tenth ANOVA assessed the relationship between father involvement and parental communication. The mean communication scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 6.73 ($SD= 2.63$), 9.29 ($SD= 1.73$), and 11.53 ($SD= 2.53$). This ANOVA shows that the effect of father involvement on parental communication was significant, $F(2,39)= 15.73, p < .001$. These findings support the hypothesis. Tukey's post hoc was used for this analysis. The eleventh ANOVA assessed the relationship between father autonomy support and parental communication. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 8.50 ($SD= 2.99$), 9.68 ($SD= 2.61$), and 13.50 ($SD= .71$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of father autonomy on parental communication was significant, $F(2,39)= 3.29, p= .05$. These findings support the hypothesis. Tukey's post hoc was used for this analysis. The twelfth ANOVA assessed the relationship between father warmth and parental communication. The mean scores of groups 1,2, and 3 are 7.36 ($SD= 2.13$), 9.70 ($SD= 2.91$), and 10.72 ($SD= 2.52$), respectively. This ANOVA shows that the effect of father warmth on parental communication was significant, $F(2,39)= 6.94, p= .003$. These findings support the hypothesis. Tukey's post hoc was used for this analysis.

Correlations.

Pearson bivariate correlations were also run to test the hypothesized relationships between parental relationships and parental communication effectiveness using the full range of data to test linear relationships between variables of interest (See Table 3). Positive correlations were predicted between parental relationships and parental communication effectiveness. All

correlations between parental communication effectiveness and parental relationships were positive and reached statistical significance (between .000 and .001). All correlations were in the predicted direction.

Discussion

Parental autonomy granting has been shown to improve the lives of children well into adulthood, specifically in terms of feelings of competence, motivation, and confidence. Parental autonomy granting has also been shown to establish more effective communication between parents and offspring. In the present study, it was hypothesized that emerging adults who were raised in autonomy granting environments would have higher levels of vocational identity and that they would also have more effective parental communication. In other words, it was predicted that emerging adults raised by autonomy granting parents perceive more stable career aspirations and would be better able to discuss their vocational plans with their parents. In this study, the results of the first 6 ANOVAs (parental autonomy granting subgroups and vocational identity) showed only one instance of marginal significance, with the rest being insignificant. This means that the analyses did not support the first hypothesis. The results of the second 6 ANOVAs (parental autonomy granting subgroups and parental communication) showed two instances of statistical significance, providing partial support for the hypothesis. The first 6 correlations (parental autonomy granting and vocational identity) showed two instances of marginal significance and two instances of statistical significance, meaning that the hypothesis was partially supported. The second 6 correlations (parental autonomy granting and parental communication) had six instances of statistical significance, meaning that it supported the hypothesis completely.

One limitation of the present study is the fact that it does not establish causality; it only determines that there is a correlation between the tested variables. In order to properly find that autonomy granting parents yield offspring with higher levels of vocational identity and more effective communication styles, I would have needed to tell two groups of parents how to raise their children (I would have to tell one group to be autonomy granting while the other group would have to be nonautonomy). This, of course, is not realistic as I would not be allowing the parent to raise their children naturally for the entirety of their lives up until the age of 18. Another limitation of the study was the small sample size (44 participants in total). With a higher number of participants, this study would have yielded more statistically significant results.

Additionally, the dependent variables were only measured by one assessment each. Because of this, the dependent variables only had one set of responses and this did not allow for participants' feelings towards their vocational identity and communication effectiveness to be properly conveyed to the researcher. In the MVS, responses could only be reported as either true or false, as seen in the POP-CSS and the single-item Likert-scales that assessed communication effectiveness. This does not allow for a wider scope of responses. The order of the distribution of the study materials may have primed the participants into giving certain responses. Most participants were given the study materials in the following order: POP-CSS, MVS, and then the 2 Likert-scales that assessed parental communication. This order may have tipped the participant on the study's true objective, which can cause the participant to change their responses or can cause them to respond in order to submit a more "ideal" image of their parents.

Another limitation of the present study was the composition of the sample, as all participants of this study were enrolled in Hunter College at the time of participation which is a biased sample. According to U.S. News (2014), Hunter College had an acceptance rate of

34.8%. Compared to the national average college acceptance rate of 65.5% (CBS News, 2011), Hunter College is highly selective of their student body. It can be inferred that students accepted into this school are more intelligent than their peers and that they are more career driven than peers who were not accepted into Hunter College. Hunter College students may not properly represent the emerging adult population, as many emerging adults are not enrolled in four-year universities or as academically gifted.

Unlike other studies that investigated parental autonomy granting, the present study used a sample of emerging adults. Many other studies investigate the role of autonomy granting parenting where babies, children, and adolescents are concerned. For example, Suldo and Heubner (2004) observed the effect of parental autonomy granting on adolescents' life satisfaction. Life satisfaction includes overall well-being, academic success, and parental relationships. In their study, Suldo and Heubner found that adolescents who were raised by authoritative (and, therefore, autonomy granting) parents had higher levels of life satisfaction than those who were raised by more authoritarian parents. The present study investigated the role of autonomy granting later in life for offspring. Instead of looking at life satisfaction as a whole, the present study investigated vocational identity and communication effectiveness with parents.

Additionally, the present study examined the relationship between autonomy granting and vocational identity and communication. Often, the relationship between autonomy granting and academics is investigated, which does not fully explain career aspirations or feelings of certainty. Many people struggle with communicating with their parents even once they have reached adulthood. Communication can be difficult for emerging adults who were not raised in an autonomy granting environment regardless of the subject matter. Specifically, emerging

adults can find discussing the subject of vocational identity especially distressing due to the possibility of disappointing controlling parents. Segrin, Givertz, Swaitkowski, and Montgomery (2015) investigated the effects of “overparenting” in emerging adults. Like the present study, Segrin et al. collected self-reported data from emerging adults regarding how they were raised by their parents and how their home environments currently affect them. In Segrin et al.’s study, the emerging adults’ ability to cope with stress resulting from parents and from other people was observed. It was found that emerging adults with nonautonomy granting parents were less able to cope with stress caused by parents and by people outside of the family. Similarly to the present study, Segrin et al. found that nonautonomy granting environments can cause difficulties with individuals who are in emerging adulthood due to a lack of freedom. In the present study, difficulties in career choice and certainty for emerging adults were investigated with and without the presence of parental autonomy granting environment while Segrin et al. investigated how parental autonomy can affect emerging adults’ ability to cope with stress. Both studies investigated this unique developmental group in terms of parental autonomy granting.

In the present study, the many positive attributes of autonomy granting parenting were discussed and its effect on vocational identity and communication with parents were investigated. Although the results of the ANOVAs of this study did not completely support the hypothesis that autonomy granting parenting is related to emerging adults’ vocational identity, the correlations of this study did support the hypothesis. Additionally, both the ANOVAS and the correlations support the hypothesis that autonomy granting parenting is related to more effective communication between parents and offspring. These results can further support Baumrind’s theory that authoritative parenting is the optimal parenting style. Future research should investigate the role of autonomy granting parenting on other domains, such as mental

health, feelings of connectedness to the family unit, or even long-term success as an adult. This can be done through longitudinal research that revisits the same families over the course of a few years and uses assessments that allow for participants to choose answers that are not dichotomous (which will allow for a more in depth understanding of parental autonomy support). In future studies, participants should comprise both parents and children (250 sets of parents and 250 children) should be surveyed in order to avoid data that only represents the parents' point-of-view or only represents the children's point-of-view in order to gain a better understanding of what it means to be an autonomy granting parent.

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Table 1

Analysis of Variance: Parental Autonomy and Vocational Identity

	Mean Low	Mean Medium	Mean High	F	P
Mother	8.72	6.57	3.50	1.27	.29
Involvement					
Mother	6.37	8.12	8.79	1.01	.37
Autonomy					
Mother	7.50	4.71	9.35	2.69 ⁺	.08
Warmth					
Father	6.73	6.86	9.67	1.94	.15
Involvement					
Father	6.67	8.36	10.50	.99	.38
Autonomy					
Father	6.36	6.70	9.39	2.03	.14
Warmth					

⁺ Analysis is marginally significant

Table 2

Analysis of Variance: Parental Autonomy and Parental Communication

	Mean Low	Mean Medium	Mean High	F	P
Mother	9.51	8.14	7.00	1.14	.33
Involvement					
Mother	6.86	9.47	11.21	10.45*	.000
Autonomy					
Mother	7.65	8.00	11.47	11.82*	.000
Warmth					
Father	6.73	1.73	11.53	15.73*	.000
Involvement					
Father	8.50	9.68	13.50	3.29*	.05
Autonomy					
Father	7.36	9.70	10.72	6.94*	.003
Warmth					

*. Analysis is significant

Table 3

Correlations: Parental Autonomy with Vocational Identity and Parental Communication

		Mother			Father		
		Involvement	Autonomy	Warmth	Involvement	Autonomy	Warmth
Vocational Identity	r	.248	.286 ⁺	.261 ⁺	.233	.332 [*]	.334 [*]
	p	.104	.060	.087	.129	.031	.031
Parental Communication	r	.591 [*]	.499 [*]	.532 [*]	.672 [*]	.475 [*]	.579 [*]
	p	.000	.001	.000	.000	.001	.000

⁺. Correlation is marginally significant^{*}. Correlation is significant

Appendix A

My Vocational Situation

Sex: M ___ F ___ Age _____

Education completed _____ Other _____

List all the occupations you are considering right now. Try to answer each of the following statements as mostly TRUE or mostly FALSE. Circle the answer that best represents your present opinion. In thinking about your present job or in planning for an occupation or career:

1. I need reassurance from my parent(s) that I have made the right choice of occupation. T F
2. I am concerned that my present interests may change over the years. T F
3. I am uncertain about the occupations I could perform well. T F
4. I don't know what my major strengths and weaknesses are. T F
5. The jobs I can do may not pay enough to live the kind of life I want. T F
6. If I had to make an occupational choice right now, I'm afraid I would make a bad choice. T F
7. I need to find out what kind of career I should follow. T F
8. Making up my mind about a career has been a long and difficult problem for me. T F
9. I am confused about the whole problem of deciding on a career. T F
10. I am not sure that my present occupational choice or job is right for me. T F
11. I don't know enough about what workers do in various occupations. T F
12. No single occupation appeals strongly to me. T F
13. I am uncertain about which occupation I would enjoy. T F
14. I would like to increase the number of occupations I could consider. T F
15. My estimates of my abilities and talents vary a lot from year to year. T F
16. I am not sure of myself in many areas of life. T F

17. I have known what occupation I want to follow for less than one year. T F

18. I can't understand how some people can be so set about what they want to do. T F

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<http://www.education.umd.edu/EDCP/tools/MVS/MVS.html>

Appendix B

Perceptions of Parents Scales (POPS) (Scale Description; The Child Scale; The College-Student Scale)

Thoughts about My Parents

Please answer the following questions about your mother and your father. If you do not have any contact with one of your parents (for example, your father), but there is another adult of the same gender living with your house (for example, a stepfather) then please answer the questions about that other adult. If you have no contact with one of your parents, and there is not another adult of that same gender with whom you live, then leave the questions about that parent blank. Please use the following scale:

1 (not true at all) 2 3 4 (somewhat true) 5 6 7 (always true)

First, questions about your mother.

- __ 1. My mother seems to know how I feel about things.
- __ 2. My mother tries to tell me how to run my life.
- __ 3. My mother finds time to talk with me.
- __ 4. My mother accepts me and likes me as I am.
- __ 5. My mother, whenever possible, allows me to choose what to do.
- __ 6. My mother doesn't seem to think of me often.
- __ 7. My mother clearly conveys her love for me.
- __ 8. My mother listens to my opinion or perspective when I've got a problem.
- __ 9. My mother spends a lot of time with me.
- __ 10. My mother makes me feel very special.
- __ 11. My mother allows me to decide things for myself.

- __12. My mother often seems too busy to attend to me.
- __13. My mother is often disapproving and unaccepting of me.
- __14. My mother insists upon my doing things her way.
- __15. My mother is not very involved with my concerns.
- __16. My mother is typically happy to see me.
- __17. My mother is usually willing to consider things from my point of view.
- __18. My mother puts time and energy into helping me.
- __19. My mother helps me to choose my own direction.
- __20. My mother seems to be disappointed in me a lot.
- __21. My mother isn't very sensitive to many of my needs.

Now questions about your father.

- __22. My father seems to know how I feel about things.
- __23. My father tries to tell me how to run my life.
- __24. My father finds time to talk with me.
- __25. My father accepts me and likes me as I am.
- __26. My father, whenever possible, allows me to choose what to do.
- __27. My father doesn't seem to think of me often.
- __28. My father clearly conveys his love for me.
- __29. My father listens to my opinion or perspective when I've got a problem.
- __30. My father spends a lot of time with me.
- __31. My father makes me feel very special.
- __32. My father allows me to decide things for myself.
- __33. My father often seems too busy to attend to me.

- __34. My father is often disapproving and unaccepting of me.
- __35. My father insists upon my doing things his way.
- __36. My father is not very involved with my concerns.
- __37. My father is typically happy to see me.
- __38. My father is usually willing to consider things from my point of view.
- __39. My father puts time and energy into helping me.
- __40. My father helps me to choose my own direction.
- __41. My father seems to be disappointed in me a lot.
- __42. My father isn't very sensitive to many of my needs.

Appendix C

Please circle one rating for each question

How would you rate the effectiveness of your communication with your mother?

1(not effective at all) 2 3 4(somewhat effective) 5 6 7(always effective)

How would you rate the effectiveness of your communication with your father?

1(not effective at all) 2 3 4(somewhat effective) 5 6 7(always effective)

Appendix D

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Hunter College
Department of Psychology

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: The Effect of Perceived Parental Autonomy Granting on Communication and Vocational Identity in Emerging Adults

Principal Investigator: Emily Salmany, B.A.
Student

Research Sponsor: Joseph Lao, Ph.D

You are being asked to participate in a research study because you are within the 18 to 25 age group and have two heterosexual parents.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to investigate career identity in college students.

Procedures:

If you volunteer to participate in this research study, we will ask you to do the following:

- Take the Perceptions of Parents Scales (POPS), the My Vocational Situation survey, and answer 2 questions. Taking these surveys and answering these questions will be in a hardcopy format and take place in a lab at Hunter College. After being screened for eligibility, participation in this study will take no more than 30 minutes.
- Items will include statements such as “I am uncertain about the occupations I could perform well”, which will have you answer with a true or false response, or “My father finds time to talk with me”, which will have you rate how true that statement is to you personally.

Time Commitment:

After being screened for eligibility, your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of 35 minutes.

Potential Risks or Discomforts:

- There are zero to minimal risks in taking part in this study (some students may feel uneasy when thinking about certain parenting styles).

- Should you feel uncomfortable at any time during this study you can choose to not answer any of the questions. You may also end your participation at any time.

Potential Benefits:

- You will not directly benefit from your participation in this research study.
- The results of this study can benefit society by showing how an individual's career identity can be affected by parenting styles. This could potentially influence how parents choose to raise their children.

Alternatives to Participation:

NOTE: This section is ONLY required for: i) research that involves treatment (behavioral, physical, or otherwise); OR ii) research for which participants are recruited from student subject pools.

- There are alternatives to participating in this research study. You could choose to participate in another research study if you are uninterested in this one. Additionally, as stated on the Psychology 100 Research Requirement section of Hunter's website, "You have the option of reading a psychological research article and taking a short quiz on the article in place of participating in an experiment. (Several appropriate articles are on electronic reserve on the web). The reading of one article and taking one quiz is worth one hour of research credit". (e.g., to write a paper or participate in another research study to receive course credit). This section should include only those alternatives previously approved by the CUNY UI-IRB as part of the IRB application for the subject pool(s). Please contact the individual(s) responsible for administration of the subject pool(s) if you have any questions about approved alternatives. As a subject, you always has the option not to participate in this study.

You will not receive any payment for participating in this research study.

New Information:

You will be notified about any new information regarding this study that may affect your willingness to participate in a timely manner.

Confidentiality:

We will make our best efforts to maintain confidentiality of any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. We will disclose this information only with your permission or as required by law.

We will protect your confidentiality. We will make our best efforts to keep your answers confidential. No one except for the research team will have access to your answers. If you qualify for the study, all data will be submitted to the researchers confidentially (only

identification numbers will be used to differentiate submitted surveys). Data analysis will only occur behind two locked doors and in a lab. The data will be held for approximately 1 to 2 years. After that time it will be discarded. Papers will be shredded and documents will be deleted. Only the researchers will have access to participant data. If you do not qualify for the study, your responses will be destroyed.

The research team, authorized CUNY staff, Dr. Joseph Lao, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-CUNY individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Participants' Rights:

- Your participation in this research study is entirely **voluntary**. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- Your participation or non-participation in this study will in no way affect your grades, your academic standing with CUNY, or any other status in the College.
- You can decide to withdraw your consent and stop participating in the research at any time, without any penalty.

Questions, Comments or Concerns:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the following researchers:

Emily Salmany, Student: 914-979-5852

Dr. Joseph Lao, Senior Lecturer: (212) 396-6173

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please call the CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918. Alternately, you can write to:

CUNY Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

Attn: Research Compliance Administrator

205 East 42nd Street

New York, NY 10017

Signature of Participant:

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent

Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent

Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix E

Debriefing Form: The Effect of Perceived Parental Autonomy Granting on Communication and Vocational Identity

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to investigate how different parenting styles affect adult children's career confidence and planning in addition to the quality of communication between the parents and their child.

We invited people who were over the age of 18 and currently planning for a career in the near future. The experimenter does not know your answers to any questions and your name will not be associated with any of your answers. In this study, you were asked to take surveys that assessed your current vocational identity and your perceptions of how your parents raised you. Additionally, you answered two questions relating to how you rated the quality of the communication between you and your parents. The results from this study will hopefully help future parents in their parenting techniques with their children.

If you feel especially concerned about feelings that may have arisen while contemplating your parents or your current career planning, please feel free to contact the Hunter College Counseling Center at 212.772.4931, located in Hunter East, Room 1123.

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please contact Emily Salmany at Emily.salmany11@myhunter.cuny.edu.