A STUDY EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL PARENTING
AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE AMONG MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN
ADOLESCENTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Counseling,
School Counseling

by

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DEDICATION

It is with gratitude and admiration that I dedicate this master’s thesis to my parents, George and Carmen Grair, whose love and support made this process possible. Their commitment to fostering my educational agenda is evidenced in everything they do. I am grateful to them both for their unwavering encouragement during my moments of discouragement and discombobulation. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for being the best parents on the planet!

This thesis is also dedicated to my family and friends who believe in me even when I doubt myself. I am forever indebted to each of you for the instrumental role you play in my success. I will endeavor to be as good to all of you as you have been to me.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to the inspiring instructors whose tutelage I have been privileged to experience and whose passion for education is infectious. You turned my academic trek into an insightful, impacting, and transformational journey. It is through you that I acquired the awareness of my individual power to positively affect the world and those around me.

Finally, I dedicate this work to the youth in the Fairouzeh American community whose experiences growing up in a Middle Eastern subculture make them prone to parenting practices associated with lower socioemotional development. It is with the sincerest of intentions that I contribute to research that will help increase awareness of parenting practices designed to facilitate the healthy development of adolescents in the community, to propagate adolescent self-sufficiency, and ultimately to inspire adolescents to give back to the world in a meaningful way.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERAL PARENTING AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE AMONG MIDDLE EASTERN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS

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Children from Middle Eastern American cultures raised in the United States may have difficulty integrating their two distinct cultures, thus resulting in conflict and anxiety and leaving the family prone to internal intergenerational conflicts. This thesis examines adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ general parenting practices in relation to adolescents’ social competence in Middle Eastern American families. Specifically, this study examines the relationships among parental monitoring, parental support, parental punitiveness, and parental psychological control in relation to the self-esteem and academic motivation of Middle Eastern American adolescents living in Los Angeles.

Research investigators administered self report surveys at five high schools. A sample of 240 Middle Eastern American male and female students ranging in ages from 13 to 20 years participated in the survey. As was hypothesized, adolescents’ perceptions of support and monitoring by parents were positively and significantly correlated with adolescents’ self-esteem, while perceptions of punitiveness and psychological control were negatively and significantly correlated with adolescents’ self-esteem. Similarly, and
as hypothesized, adolescents’ perceptions of support and monitoring by parents were positively and significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation. However, contrary to what was hypothesized in the study, adolescents’ perceptions of punitiveness and psychological control by parents were not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The behaviors of parents are seen as the window into understanding child development and, subsequently, are of great interest to academia and laypeople alike. Scholars have gone to great lengths to understand the parent-child relationship. Researchers’ abilities to theoretically and empirically organize the variety of behaviors with which parents engage their children and establish a consistent framework has contributed to the identification of parenting behaviors and their effects on the overall well-being of their children (Collins, 2005).

In recent years there has been a surge of research literature discussing the relationships of various parenting practices on children and adolescents’ perceptions using a more advanced differentiation of parenting dimensions (Peterson, 2005). Using instruments that measure parenting behaviors within long standing parenting constructs (e.g., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) has helped researchers hypothesize about specific links between each dimension and their particular outcomes in adolescents’ psychosocial development (Collins, 2005). Barber (1996) was one of the researchers to disaggregate widely accepted parenting typologies (e.g., authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive) into parenting behaviors that are meaningful for researchers to try to predict the distinctive developmental significance of each of the parenting typologies. As a result of using a differentiated approach for elaborating on existing research, theorists have identified the following key parenting behaviors: (1) parental support, (2) parental behavioral control (i.e., monitoring), and (3) parental psychological control (Barber, 1996). These constructs are the underpinnings of the majority of the existing literature on
parent-child relationships (Collins, 2005). The current study uses these measurable constructs in an effort to add to existing literature on the topic of parenting as it pertains to Middle Eastern American adolescents, a growing population that is underrepresented in research.

**Statement of the Problem**

This thesis research is designed with the goal of better understanding perceived parenting practices and their relationship to self-esteem and academic motivation in adolescents of Middle Eastern American descent. While there are limited existing studies that focus on the population of interest in this study, this thesis addresses the gap in the literature by aiming to gain insight into the social competence of adolescents in a growing Middle Eastern American population in Los Angeles. The distinctions among youth of differing cultural backgrounds is important to acknowledge because while the scholarly literature has extensively examined parenting behaviors with White, European American populations to establish Western measures of parenting, fewer research findings are published describing parental practices of ethnic minority children and adolescents (Garg, Levin, Urjak, & Kauppi, 2005).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the knowledge base that aids in understanding the aspects of parenting (i.e., parental support, parental monitoring, parental psychological control and parental punitiveness) that relate to the overall social competence (e.g., self-esteem and academic motivation) of adolescent children from Middle Eastern American families. This research study will examine how parenting behaviors in Middle Eastern American families contribute to their adolescents’ abilities to
effectively navigate the psychosocial issues prevalent in adolescent development and to facilitate those behaviors in ways that will promote the adolescent’s overall social competence. This study looks at self-esteem and academic motivation as two measurable predictors of social competence. It has been observed by researchers that individuals who report more positive self-esteem (i.e., viewing themselves as having a positive sense of self-worth) may feel more optimistic and competent, therefore possessing a higher sense of control over their lives (Rosenberg, 1979). Individuals with more positive self-esteem are better able to accomplish their goals and attribute it to their own abilities (Frank, Plunkett & Otten, 2010). Identifying parenting factors (e.g., support, monitoring, psychological control and punitiveness) that contribute to enhancing Middle Eastern American adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation and increase their overall social competence are central to this research thesis.

This thesis is guided by the following research questions:

1. Do Middle Eastern American adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ support and monitoring relate to their social competence (i.e., self-esteem and academic motivation)?

2. Do Middle Eastern American adolescents’ perceptions of their parents’ psychological control and punitiveness relate to their social competence (i.e., self-esteem and academic motivation)?

While this study is limited to 240 male and female Middle Eastern American adolescents from five high schools within the Los Angeles Unified School District, the data and subsequent findings will hopefully provide parents, educators, researchers, and practitioners’ with information that can be used to address the needs of diverse youth.
Definitions

1. *Adolescence* is considered the period of human development beginning with puberty and ending at adulthood (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd ed.).

2. *Adolescent academic motivation* refers to adolescents’ desires for academic success based upon the perceived value of school and educational outcomes (Plunkett & Bamaca-Gomez, 2003).

3. *Immigrant family* refers to a group of people who share familial ties that were born in one country and emigrated to permanently take residence in another (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4th ed.).

4. *Middle Eastern American* is someone who originates from the Middle East countries of Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel (including Palestinian Occupied Territories), Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan or Yemen (Wikipedia, 2012).

5. *First generation Middle Eastern Americans* include those persons born in a Middle Eastern country who later immigrated to the United States (Buriel, 1993).

6. *Second generation Middle Eastern American* represents the U.S.-born children of at least one immigrant parent of Middle Eastern decent (Buriel, 1993).

7. *Third generation Middle Eastern American* refers to persons of Middle Eastern descent whose parents were born in the U.S. and whose grandparents were born in the Middle East (Buriel, 1993).
Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses

The data analyses for this thesis were guided by the following null hypotheses:

1. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *support* are not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation or self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

2. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *monitoring* are not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation or self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

3. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *psychological control* are not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation or self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

4. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *punitiveness* are not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation or self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature (see Chapter 2), the following research hypotheses were developed:

1. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *support* will be significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

2. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal *monitoring* will be significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle
Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

3. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal psychological control will be significantly and negatively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

4. Adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal punitiveness will be significantly and negatively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles.

**Assumptions**

This research study was created based upon certain assumptions. These assumptions include:

- Participants in this study will voluntarily take part in the research with no overt influence from teachers, parents, or researchers.
- Participants are enrolled in U.S. high schools and can therefore read English and comprehend each item on the questionnaire.
- Participants answered each item on the questionnaire truthfully and entirely.
- The measurements in the study are culturally appropriate for youth from Middle Eastern American families.
- Data entry was input with no errors.
- Data analyses were run with no errors.

**Limitations**

This thesis will add to the understanding of perceived parenting behaviors and the effect on overall social competence among Middle Eastern American adolescents, however, certain limitations to the study do exist.
• This cross-sectional design used self-report questionnaires to collect data regarding adolescents’ perceptions at one point in time only making developmental changes in adolescents’ perceptions over time difficult to assess.

• The correlational design of this study limits confirmation of causation between the parenting variables and adolescents’ social competence.

• Measuring both the independent variables and the dependent variables using responses only from the adolescent results in shared method variance thereby increasing the strength of the association between the independent and dependent variables.

• This study does not take into account the variation that exists between ethnically diverse peoples that make up the Middle Eastern American population. For example, Iranian-American youth may be different than youth from other Middle Eastern countries, such as Turkey.

• This study is limited in its generalizability due to Middle Eastern American adolescents being sampled from only five schools in Los Angeles.

• The analyses in the study did not differentiate for gender differences among participants in the study, nor did it disaggregate information based on socioeconomic status or level of acculturation, all significant factors related to this particular population.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Middle Eastern American Families in the United States

The Middle East is a region of the world comprised of over 20 nations, situated between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe (World Atlas, 2012). While there is controversy regarding the precise boundaries of the Middle East, it is generally understood that the Middle East refers to the area in Asia and Africa composed of the political states of Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel (including Palestinian Occupied Territories of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the Golan Heights of Syria), Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen (World Atlas, 2012). It is generally understood that the Middle East region is home to peoples of varying ethnic groups: Arabs, Iranians (considered Persians), Turks, Jews, Kurds, Berbers, Armenians, Nubians, Azeris, and Greeks to name a few (pbs.org, 2012).

Research conducted by The Center for Immigration Studies (Camarota, 2002) affirms that Middle Eastern immigrants have migrated to the United States for at least the last 100 years. Since the late 1800s beginning with Maronite Christians from Lebanon and Armenians and other Christian minorities from the Ottoman Empire, Middle Eastern people began settling in the United States in large numbers (Camarota, 2002). Of all the Middle Eastern Americans believed to be present in the United States in 2009, 1.68 million are of Arab ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012). However it is believed, according to Sharifzadeh (2004), that the actual
number of Middle Easterners in the United States far exceeds census figures and is closer to 3 million. This assertion was made almost a decade ago, and at that time she believed the underrepresented numbers were due, in part, that people of Middle Eastern American descent are classified as “White,” thus indicating that Census figures do not accurately reflect those numbers. At present, people of Middle Eastern American descent are still categorized as “White” and therefore Sharifzadeh’s comments are relevant today.

Most first-generation Middle Eastern American immigrants are concentrated in a few cosmopolitan regions of the United States (Sharifzadeh, 2004). According to statistical data compiled by Sharifzadeh, immigrants who have migrated from a Middle Eastern country to the United States are mostly concentrated in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Texas. Significant to consider for the purpose of this study is that California has been the most preferred state for migration since 1976, and Los Angeles, specifically, is referred to as the “microcosm of the Middle East” (Sharifzadeh, 2004). It is speculated by Sharifzadeh that the preference for Los Angeles may be related to the location of earlier emigration patterns of family members as well as job opportunities and climate. The collectivistic nature of Middle Eastern culture is such that people rely heavily on each other for support (Haboush, 2005). Family members who migrate to the U.S. first are looked upon for guidance, often in the form of job opportunities and living accommodations, until families are able to make it on their own (Sharifzadeh, 2004).

Middle Eastern American Families and Parenting

Values, beliefs, and customs within Middle Eastern culture, regardless of ethnic identification and/or country of origin, tend to be relatively consistent across regions
In accordance with the collectivistic orientation of Middle Eastern culture, people from the Middle East tend to identify themselves according to their membership in a group versus focusing on individual needs (Haboush, 2005). People from this culture also tend to place greater importance on the impact personal actions have on the group as a whole instead of on personal needs and accomplishments (Haboush, 2005). Education is highly valued by people from the Middle East. With 49 percent of immigrants from that region of the world holding at least a bachelors degree, as compared to 28 percent of natives, they are one of the most educated immigrant groups in America (Camarota, 2002). Middle Eastern families tend to be highly patriarchal with final authority over familial decisions granted to fathers who are considered heads of the household (Abudabbeh, 2005). When the father is no longer living, authority then rests with the oldest male in the family (Abudabbeh, 2005). In Middle Eastern culture, it is common to observe a double standard as it relates to attitudes regarding sexual activities of each gender (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Women socialized in Middle Eastern culture are expected to maintain “purity” whereas premarital sexual behaviors for men are tolerated (Jalali, 2005). Preserving family honor is also an integral aspect of Middle Eastern culture resulting in parenting practices which rely heavily on shaming (denoting a public exposure of failure) to maintain behavioral control (Haboush, 2005).

There are various factors that affect the type of family interactions and child-rearing practices Middle Eastern American families implement. Despite the variation in language, religion, and social political systems that exist across groups within this culture, there are strong values pertaining to the importance of family that can be observed across
all groups (Sharifzadeh, 2004). Within the nuclear family unit there exists a multitude of factors that often predict how family values and child-rearing practices are employed (Sharifzadeh, 2004). Such elements include, but are not limited to, parents’ level of education, type of work, and availability of time and space; the family’s degree of religious faith; and the family’s degree of exposure to a Western way of life.

The role of the family in its extended form is of the utmost importance in the Middle East (Sharifzadeh, 2004). It is not uncommon for three generations of a family to live together in the same house (Sharifzadeh, 2004). Physical proximity plays a significant role in where families choose to live. The preference is for family members to live as close as possible (Sharifzadeh, 2004). Regardless of physical remoteness, loyalty to the extended family is always present and expected. According to Jalali (1996), the Arab family is more likely to use an authoritarian style of interaction with their children; thus, it is common to observe parents lecturing their children rather than inviting them to engage in discussion and dialogue.

Dwairy and Menshar (2006) conducted a study to examine the prevalence of authoritarian versus authoritative parenting styles in both urban and rural parts of Egypt, and the effects each parenting style has on adolescents’ overall mental health and interconnectedness to their family. Three questionnaires were administered to 351 male and female Egyptian 11th grade students (ages 16-17 years) in their classrooms by their school teachers. A multiple-regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the three parenting styles (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive), three types of connectedness (i.e., emotional, financial, and functional), and four measures of mental health (i.e., identity, anxiety, depression, and conduct disorders).
Degree of connectedness was established using a scale to measure the independency of adolescents from their parents. The analysis found a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and all three types of connectedness. It was then established that more connectedness indicated less independence of adolescents from their parents. The study also showed a significant negative relationship between authoritative parenting style and identity or conduct disorders. Further analysis in their study revealed significant negative correlations between functional connectedness and identity and depression disorders in females, and also between financial connectedness and conduct disorders in males both living in Egyptian towns. The limited research on the designated population for this study has been the impetus for further investigation into Dwairy and Menshar’s (2006) assertion that the harmfulness of authoritarian parenting within an authoritarian culture is not as pertinent as within a more liberal culture.

**Research on Middle Eastern American Families, Parenting, and Youth Outcomes**

To date, there is limited research on Middle Eastern American families living in the United States. With the largest number of Middle Eastern American immigrants residing in the U.S., particularly in Los Angeles (City-Data Forum, 2011), it is important to study which parenting factors relate to social competence and well-being of youth among Middle Eastern American families in the U.S.

Despite the limited research, some inferences based on existing studies can be drawn. Souweidnane and Huesmann (1999) examined normative beliefs about aggression in first and second generation Middle Eastern American immigrants. The study surveyed 250 elementary and high school students ranging in age from nine to 20 years. Of the 103 fourth graders, 63 were boys and 40 were girls; of the 147 high school
students, 90 were boys and 57 were girls. Participants were either immigrants from the Middle East \((n = 57)\), second generation Middle-Easterners \((n = 56)\), or non-Middle-Easterners born in the U.S. \((n = 137)\). Data analyses for this study were based on participants’ responses to the Normative Beliefs about Aggression Scale (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). The 20-item scale assessed the extent to which the child thought it was appropriate to behave aggressively. Eight subscales were used and they measured: (1) verbal aggression, (2) physical aggression, (3) aggression by men, (4) aggression by women, (5) aggression at men, (6) aggression at women, (7) aggression by men at women, and (8) aggression by women at men. The results of the study revealed approval of aggression was higher for boys than for girls on the total scale and five of the subscales. However, girls scored as high as or higher than boys only on approval of aggression by girls, approval of aggression by girls at boys, and approval of aggression at boys leading researchers to believe that girls’ approval of aggression was present in some circumstances over others. The results indicated that elementary school students were less approving of aggression than high school students on every subscale across ethnic groups. However, for the total sample, age was found to have a significant effect on all of the subscales except the approval of aggression by boys at girls, thus surmising that students under age 12 approved less of aggression in general except when by boys at girls. The subservient role of women in Middle Eastern culture may serve to influence the acceptability of aggression related to gender. The results of ethnic differences regarding beliefs of aggression revealed that first and second generation Middle Eastern American students \((n = 113)\) were less approving of aggression than non Middle Eastern students \((n = 137)\) in the high school sample only. In the fourth-grade sample, Middle Eastern
American and non Middle Eastern American students did not hold different normative beliefs about aggression.

The data were further examined to determine differences in normative beliefs with respect to age of initial immigration to the United States using the first generation subsample only. Researchers used age 12 as the dividing age on the basis of a previous theory purporting that beliefs about aggression are solidified by age 12. A MANOVA was conducted and revealed a significant multivariate effect for immigration, with no significant interaction between immigration status and gender. Using the high school sample, data were partitioned into those who were of non-Middle-Eastern background ($n = 78$), Middle-Eastern and immigrated before age 12 ($n = 37$), and Middle-Eastern and immigrated at age 12 or later ($n = 32$). The Tukey’s test, which was used to compare the differences between the two Middle-Eastern groups, revealed significant differences on three out of eight of the subscales (e.g., aggression at boys, aggression by girls, and aggression by girls at boys) as well as the total scale. Consistent with the researcher’s hypothesis, Middle-Eastern students who immigrated to the U.S. at age 12 or later were less approving of most kinds of aggression than those who immigrated to the U.S. at age 11 or earlier. Contrarily, and despite no significant difference, the approval of aggression by boys at girls was the only subscale out of the eight subscales in which non Middle Eastern students scored lower than Middle Eastern students.

Souweidnane and Huesmann concluded from the research findings that the role of culture has just as significant an impact on the development of normative beliefs about aggression and the developmental timing of the shaping of such beliefs as family and peers. By early adolescence normative beliefs are found to be highly determined and less
changeable indicating that the influence of a new community on the child’s beliefs is limited after a certain time (Souweidnane & Huesmann, 1999). Conversely, the study also provides more evidence that a community’s culture has a powerful influence on the development of normative beliefs, and in this case belief about aggression in children and adolescents. Although this thesis looks at parenting behaviors with respect to self-esteem and academic motivation, which is seemingly unrelated to normative beliefs about aggression, it is the attention to the influence of culture in shaping beliefs about behaviors that is significant and relevant to the present study. Souweidnane and Huesmann stress the definition of culture to mean a highly variable system of meanings, learned and shared by a common group of people; thus implying a sense of flexibility which offers hope in bringing about changes within communities that are conducive to promoting overall social competence while eradicating aggressive/violent behaviors against women.

**Overview of Social Competence**

Adolescent social competence within “mainstream” Euro-American societies are comprised of key subdimensions that include three major components: (1) internal or cognitive resources, (2) a balance between sociability (i.e., conformity) and autonomy, and (3) social skills necessary for effective relationships with parents, other adults, and peers (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). It has been argued by researchers that adolescent autonomy and conformity are considered complementary, not contradictory, elements that foster desirable outcomes during adolescent development (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). Both autonomy and conformity occur simultaneously and in balanced levels within populations of adolescents who are described as socially competent. Autonomy is a process through which adolescents’
discover their individuality and learn to detach themselves from others (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986) while conformity, as part of the same process, promotes closeness among individuals with emphasis placed on coming together and uniting with others (Peterson & Hann, 1999). Despite this seeming contradiction, moderate levels of these developments work in conjunction to encourage adolescents’ growth and ability to adapt in a social world. Therefore, it is important for parents to implement child-rearing practices that help facilitate a balance between conformity and autonomy within their offspring (Henry, Wilson & Peterson, 1989). This study will focus on two internal or cognitive resources as measures of social competence: academic motivation and self-esteem.

**Academic Motivation**

One indicator of social competence is academic motivation. Academic motivation is referred to as an adolescents’ desire to pursue academic subjects exhibited by their overall value of school in general, the efforts they put forth to ensure their academic responsibilities are met, and their commitment to learning as a whole (Hufton, Elliot, & Illushin, 2002). Academic motivation is an indicator of adolescent academic success, and is often conceptualized as adolescents’ desires for academic success based upon the perceived value of school and educational outcomes (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Hufton and colleagues (2002) describe academic motivation as containing both cognitive (e.g., liking or valuing grades or school, seeking to meet obligations) and engagement (e.g., effort exerted in school or completing homework) components. Academically motivated youth are aware that the harder they try, the more successful they will be. They put forth effort to master content specific material, and
measure their success against their own performance for the purpose of improving rather
than outdoing other children (Brown, 2009). Adolescents who are academically
motivated are better able to approach their educational goals with instilled confidence and
feel equipped to withstand any setbacks they may face (Henry, Plunkett, & Sands, 2011).
Academic motivation is said to positively contribute to adolescents’ academic success
and self-esteem, thus impacting other areas of their life and improving their overall
satisfaction (Gilman & Anderman, 2006, as cited by Henry, Plunkett, & Sands, 2011).

**Self-esteem**

Self-esteem refers to the overall judgment one has about one’s self and ranges on
a continuum from feelings of positivity to feelings of negativity (Rosenberg, 1979).
According to Arndt (2005), the feeling of worth one attributes to themselves is central to
why they are, who they are, and why they do what they do. Arndt cites several reasons as
to why the development of self-esteem is an important contributor to overall health and
well-being. On a fundamental level, self-esteem validates one’s sense of self-worth and
provides security. Self-esteem is important, particularly from an evolutionary
perspective, in dealing with one’s awareness of immortality. According to Arndt, it is
believed that self-esteem was developed to give order and purpose to life in the face of
inevitable death. The purpose and development of self-esteem, as suggested by
researchers, is an indicator that life is valued and that people live in a world that is
meaningful (Arndt, 2005). A healthy development of self-esteem provides a backdrop
from which to derive order and maintain purpose in life. Other researchers purport that
the development of self-esteem is important because it helps people to know they are
liked by others (Arndt, 2005), and thus, making it a substantial component for ensuring
social competence in adolescents.

Many of the studies examining correlational relationships between parenting dimensions and adolescent self-esteem have done so with European American adolescents. Bean, Bush, McKenry, and Wilson (2003) claim that much of the existing research shows that supportive parental behaviors positively relate to self-esteem, while psychologically controlling parenting behaviors negatively relate to self-esteem. However, Bean and his colleagues conducted research examining the impact of parenting on the development of self-esteem among African American adolescents and found that parental support served as a positive predictor of adolescent self-esteem whereas behavioral control was generally unrelated to self-esteem among African American adolescents. For precisely this reason, it is important to continue examining these parenting behaviors and their relationships to self-esteem in ethnically diverse populations.

**Parenting Styles and Behaviors**

In the past three decades research has broadly examined the relationship of parenting styles on child developmental outcomes (Peterson, 2005). The majority of research with young children supports the idea that those raised in authoritative households - with parents who are responsive to their needs while also maintaining high levels of demandingness - are the most competent (Laible & Carlo, 2004). More recent research with adolescents has continued to support similar findings as research conducted with younger children (Laible & Carlo, 2004).

Social scientists from numerous disciplines study the interpersonal relationship between parents and their children and adolescents. The on-going robust effort of
continued research in this area of study has two primary purposes: (1) understanding, describing, and categorizing behaviors that parents engage in as they raise their children; and (2) determining if and to what degree these parental behaviors are associated with types and patterns of child and adolescent cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development (Barber, 2002). The purpose of continued research is for investigators to discover the specific nature of parent-child socialization with the intention of identifying how parenting functions to benefit children and protect them from problem behaviors (Bean et al., 2003). Authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting, three commonly known parenting typologies universally referenced in existing parenting literature based on parenting behaviors, have been delineated into two organizational themes: parental support and parental control (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

Authoritarian parenting is considered strict parenting and is characterized as highly controlling with unreasonable expectations of conformity and compliance to parental rules and directions allowing little open dialogue between parent and child (Baumrind, 1989). It is a parenting style that is restrictive and punitive with parents demanding that the child follow their directions (Wikipedia, 2012). Authoritarian parents have high expectations of their children and generally do not explain why certain rules or boundaries exist (Wikipedia, 2012). They are generally less responsive to their children’s needs, and are more likely to use corporal punishment on a child rather than discuss the problem (Wikipedia, 2012).

Barber and Harmon (2002) conducted a literature review on authoritarian parenting. They found that researchers link authoritarian parenting with lower self-reliance, lower self-identity, lower individuation, lower autonomy, higher external locus
of control, and less openness to experience (Barber & Harmon, 2002). The review of research conducted by Barber and Harmon showed authoritarian parenting to be correlated with higher internalizing problems, higher internalized distress, higher anxiety, higher neurotic/temperamental behavior, lower social consciousness, and lower psychosocial adjustment among adolescents. Associations between authoritarian parenting and externalized problem behaviors among adolescents include higher externalizing problems and hostility, more problem behavior, misconduct, and higher maladjustment (Barber & Harmon, 2002).

The same literature review by Barber and Harmon (2002) found authoritarian parenting to be negatively correlated with academic achievement of adolescents. Research results for authoritarian parenting showed lower scores on college entrance exams and grade point average, lower achievement, lower grades, lower school performance and engagement, lower academic competence, less time on homework, lower school orientation, lower bonding with teachers, and lower knowledge, curiosity, and attitudes about science. However they found no relationship between authoritarian parenting and test anxiety. Additionally, authoritarian parenting was found to be related to lower moral development and lower work orientation among adolescents.

According to Baumrind (1989), authoritative parents are said to raise children and adolescents who are the most competent. Parents who possess an authoritative parenting style encourage “give and take” in their parent-child interactions and share openly with their children the reasoning behind their rules (Baumrind, 1989). Authoritative parents value expressive attributes and are reasonable in expecting their adolescent offspring to possess autonomous self-will (Baumrind, 1989). However, authoritative parents also
value discipline and conformity, and are not hesitant to enforce rules consistent with ensuring their adolescents do as they are told. It is not uncommon for authoritative parents to exert firm control during parent-child disagreements while also carefully making certain not to hinder their children with restrictions (Baumrind, 1989).

Authoritative parenting utilizes a firm and consistent approach to ensuring adolescent children understand the norms set forth by parents. Authoritative parents set high standards and overtly confront their children in an effort to gain conformity to parental expectations. What sets the authoritative parenting style apart from either authoritarian or permissive parenting styles is the distinct element of responsiveness to their adolescents’ needs (Baumrind, 1989). While authoritative parents are demanding, they are also loving, supportive, and encourage their adolescent children to challenge themselves while providing consistent guidance (Baumrind, 1989).

Laible and Carlo (2004) conducted a research study with 109 public middle and high school students in a midsized Midwestern town. Participants were primarily Caucasian from predominantly two-parent households. The study examined the relationship between parental support and rigid control on adolescent adjustment using measures of sympathy, social competence and self-worth. Mothers were rated significantly higher than fathers on levels of acceptance, active involvement, and rigid control. However the relationship to the outcome variables of social competence, self-worth, and sympathy varied according to perceptions of paternal versus maternal behaviors. Paternal support was correlated only with sympathy; therefore adolescents who reported higher levels of support from fathers reported higher levels of sympathy. In contrast, perceived maternal support was significantly and positively related to
adolescents’ self-worth and sympathy. Adolescents’ perceptions of rigid control from fathers were unrelated to any of the adjustment variables in this study. However, adolescents’ perceptions of rigid control from mothers were significantly and negatively related to social competence and self-worth. Adolescents who reported higher levels of perceived maternal rigid control also reported lower levels of social competence. In contrast, paternal support and control did not significantly contribute to social competence. Higher levels of maternal support and low levels of maternal rigid control were related to higher scores on self-worth. Paternal support and paternal control did not contribute significantly to the amount of variance accounted for in self-worth.

Subsequently, only maternal rigid control made a statistically significant independent contribution to lower levels of self-worth in adolescents. The findings in this study indicate that perceptions of perceived maternal and paternal support and rigid control are contributors to adolescent adjustment, thus signifying that specific parenting behaviors (versus global parenting dimensions) are more predictive of adolescent outcomes (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Results of this study indicate that behaviors consistent with authoritative parenting (i.e., parents who are high in responsiveness and low in rigidness) are more likely to produce well-adjusted adolescents with higher levels of social competence and self-worth.

Baumrind (1989) describes permissive parents as more responsive in their parenting than they are demanding. They are parents who generally accept their children’s behaviors regardless of how they behave. Low expectations for self-control and maturity are characteristic of permissive parenting, thus one will rarely witness permissive parents disciplining their children (Baumrind, 1989). Parents who are
permissive do not view themselves as active participants in their children’s lives; often unaware of their role as someone who is responsible for influencing their children’s behavior. Rather, parents who are permissive tend to allow their children to regulate their own activities as much as possible. Permissive parents avoid exercising control of their children, and do not insist that their children obey externally defined standards. Avoiding the use of confrontation to accomplish their goal is a typical characteristic among parents who are defined as permissive (Baumrind, 1989).

Baumrind (1991) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study identifying the influence parenting style had on adolescent competence and substance use by observing and interviewing 139 youth and their custodial parents during three distinct periods of their lives (e.g., T1 = at 4 years of age, T2 = at 10 years of age, and T3 = at 15 years of age). The parenting patterns identified in this study were subdivided into *democratic* and *nondirective* types of permissive parenting. Adolescents of nondirective/democratic parents (within the permissive prototype) were significantly less achievement oriented despite their high intelligence, and were also somewhat less optimally competent, less self-regulated, and less socially responsible. They were heavier users of illicit drugs than all other adolescents in the study (except those from unengaged homes) and experienced their parents as the least restrictive (Baumrind, 1991).

**Parental Support and Social Competence**

Parental support is a nurturant way of being that communicates kindness, concern, and support to their adolescent children through the means of physical affection and positive appraisals (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Leigh, 1990). Adolescents who grow up with supportive parents that regularly display nurturing behaviors typically feel valued
and accepted (Henry et al., 1989). Supportive parent-child interactions have been tied to numerous positive socioemotional outcomes in adolescence (Peterson, 2005). Parental warmth and support are thought to play a significant role in developing social competence in adolescents (Peterson & Leigh, 1990). Supportive parents who respond positively to their adolescent children’s needs create a positive atmosphere thereby rearing adolescent children who are respectful of their parents’ values and who have an increased capacity for enhanced peer interactions (Laible & Carlo, 2004).

In a study conducted by Henry et al. (1989) parental power bases (i.e., expert, legitimate, reward, and coercive) and power processes (i.e., companionship, physical affection, punitiveness, and induction) were examined to identify the predictive relationship each has on adolescent conformity to parental expectations. A stratified random sample of 368 adolescents (mean age = 16.1) from 184 families living in a large metropolitan area of the western United States was selected to participate in this study. Adolescents included in this sample were from middle-class families with intact marriages having one adolescent attending junior high school and another adolescent attending high school. Two researchers administered self-report questionnaires at the adolescents’ homes. Of the participating families, 43 were composed of two male adolescents, 44 were composed of two female adolescents, 49 were composed of an older male adolescent and a younger female adolescent, and 48 were composed of an older female adolescent and a younger male adolescent. The results of the research indicated a positive correlation between mothers’ and fathers’ companionship and adolescent conformity. However, the same relationship only held true for the mother-adolescent model when physical affection was correlated with adolescent conformity. Researchers
find that adolescents are positively reinforced by their parents’ supportive behaviors, and will change their attitudes and alter their behaviors to suit parental expectations in an effort to gain and essentially increase support from their parents.

Bean et al. (2003) examined the relationship between parental support and adolescent functioning (i.e., self-esteem and academic achievement) among 75 African American and 80 European American adolescents from a larger U.S. sample of 556 adolescents selected from six public high schools in the Midwestern United States. Analyses were conducted for each of the ethnicity/parent combinations (e.g., European American mothers, European American fathers, African American mothers, and African American fathers). The results found that psychological control was significantly and negatively related to self-esteem in three of the four models only. A significant positive relationship between African American mothers’ support and self-esteem was found. This same study used a regression analysis to determine the relationship between parenting dimensions (support, control, and psychological control) and academic achievement. The results showed no significant relationship between perceived fathers’ behaviors and academic achievement, thus indicating that neither African American fathers’ behaviors nor European American fathers’ behaviors were significantly related to their adolescent children’s academic performance. However, in contrast, all three parenting dimensions were significant for mothers in both ethnic groups. Maternal support was positively and significantly related to academic achievement for African American youth while maternal behavioral control and maternal psychological control were both positively and negatively significantly related, respectively, to academic achievement for European American youth.
In a study of 807 Latino adolescents, Plunkett, Williams, Schock, and Sands (2007) looked at parenting behaviors in relation to adolescents’ self-esteem in different family forms. They found that parental supportive behaviors by both mothers and fathers were significantly and positively related to Latino adolescents’ self-esteem. These results were consistent across various family forms (i.e., intact families, stepfather families, single mother families).

A study conducted by Frank, Plunkett, and Otten (2010) looked at the relationship between Iranian American adolescents’ perceptions of parenting on general self-efficacy and self-esteem. Data were used from a sample of 158 Iranian American adolescents from youth groups, an Armenian public school, and a private school. Mothers’ and fathers’ support were significantly and positively related to general self-efficacy and positive self-esteem, but negatively related to self-deprecation.

**Parental Monitoring and Social Competence**

Parents facilitate the adjustment of their adolescent children through the use of monitoring, generally defined as the parents’ knowledge of their child’s whereabouts, activities, and friends (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). Parental monitoring refers to knowledge parents have about their children’s activities outside the home with knowledge obtained, in part, from the parents’ own efforts to find out what their children are doing (through solicitation and control) and partly from the child’s spontaneous and willing divulgence of information (through self-disclosure) (Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Using an ecological framework to examine the relationship between parental monitoring and a variety of indicators of adolescent adjustment, Jacobson and Crockett (2000) examined the association of parental monitoring on adolescents’ behavioral
adjustment, school functioning, and emotional adjustment. The sample included 197 boys and 227 girls in Grades 7 through 12 (89 seventh graders, 90 eighth graders, 69 ninth graders, 68 tenth graders, 57 eleventh graders, 51 twelfth graders). Since socioeconomic status and family structure were related to level of parental monitoring, these demographic variables were controlled for throughout all analyses in the study. The hierarchical multiple-regression analysis indicated that parental monitoring was significantly related to all indexes of adolescent adjustment. Results indicated that increased levels of monitoring were related to higher GPA and lower levels of delinquency, lower levels of sexual activity, and lower depressed mood in both boys and girls across all grade levels. Although lower delinquency for boys and girls was associated with better monitoring at all grade levels, the strongest relations between monitoring and delinquency appeared at different grade levels for the two genders.

Wissink, Dekovic, and Meijer (2006) examined parenting behaviors in relation to adolescent functioning in four distinct ethnic groups in the Netherlands: Dutch ($n = 319, 59\%$), Turkish ($n = 106, 20\%$), Moroccan ($n = 83, 15\%$), and Surinamese ($n = 33, 6\%$). The ethnic groups in the sample were representative of the four major ethnic populations. Across all four ethnic groups, the more adolescents disclosed to their parents, the lower their delinquent behaviors and aggression.

In a study of 1245 adolescents from immigrant families in Los Angeles, Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, and Choi (2009) found that monitoring by mothers and fathers was significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and grades. Monitoring was still significantly related to academic motivation even when entered into a structural equation model with other parenting variables. They suggested that when
parents monitor their youth, it keeps them more focused on academic endeavors and keeps them away from behaviors that are not conducive to academics (e.g., delinquency, substance use).

Plunkett et al. (2007) found that monitoring by mothers and fathers was significantly related to Latino adolescents’ self-esteem. Similarly, Frank et al. (2010) examined parental monitoring in relation to self-concept in a sample of 158 Iranian American youth. They found that mothers’ and fathers’ monitoring were significantly and positively related to general self-efficacy and positive self-esteem, but negatively related to self-deprecation.

**Parental Psychological Control and Social Competence**

Psychological control is defined as attempts by parents to intrusively impinge on adolescents’ feelings and thoughts (Arim, Marshall, & Shapka, 2009). Psychologically controlling parents have the power to constrain, invalidate, and manipulate children and adolescents’ psychological and emotional experience and expression (Barber, 1996). According to Steinberg (2005), psychological control is a pattern used by parents to assert authority over their offspring through manipulative techniques such as love withdrawal and guilt induction. Psychological control is a parenting practice that is indifferent to the psychological needs of one’s offspring, thus leaving adolescents prone to significantly reduced meaningful connections with their parents if they do not comply with parental regulations (Plunkett, Williams, Schock, & Sands, 2007).

A recent study by Arim, Marshall, and Shapka (2009) used social domain theory to examine parental control on adolescent internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. Social domain theory, specifically of the psychological domain, was applied
to better understand how psychological control differentiates from behavioral control – using personal and prudential components. The personal component of psychological domain refers to issues that include behaviors by adolescents’ that are significant for the adolescent only and do not impinge on the safety of others or violate social norms. An example of a behavior that falls within the personal component of the psychological domain is an adolescents’ choice of clothing, thus indicating that an adolescents’ wardrobe, according to researchers, would not be considered a topic for contention.

Prudential issues are those that pertain to safety and well-being in general. An example of the prudential component within the domain-specific areas of psychological control would include an adolescents’ use of a seatbelt while driving in the car leaving parents in a position of authority to enforce. All data were analyzed in the following manner: first identifying adolescents’ perceptions of parental behaviors deemed by adolescents as impinging on their personal space (personal component such as choice of clothes) versus those which adolescents believe should legitimately be controlled by parents (prudential component such as enforcing seatbelt wearing in the car), and the relationship each has on adolescents’ problem behaviors. Arim and colleagues (2009) used a sample of 267 (98 boys, 169 girls) elementary and secondary school children from two urban schools in British Columbia, Canada. Participants ranged in age from 9 to 16 years (mean age = 13.10). This research used social domain theory to help account for adolescents’ beliefs regarding who should have authority over specific domains of their socialization (e.g., moral, conventional, personal, prudential, and friendship). Results indicate parental behaviors which impinge on specific areas (or domains) of an adolescents’ perceived social world are reportedly more negatively associated with adolescent externalizing
problem behavior (versus internalizing problem behavior).

Plunkett et al. (2007) found that psychological control by mothers and fathers was significantly and negatively related to Latino adolescents’ self-esteem in intact families, stepfather families, and single mother families.

A study by Frank et al. (2010) looked at the relationship between Iranian American adolescents’ perceptions of parenting on Iranian American adolescents’ general self-efficacy and self-esteem. They found that adolescents’ perceptions of mothers’ and fathers’ psychological control were significantly and negatively related to general self-efficacy and positive self-esteem, but positively related to self-deprecation.

**Parental Punitiveness and Social Competence**

Parental punitiveness is a form of control used by parents that relies heavily on the use of punishment to obtain conformity to parental expectations (Peterson, 2005). Punitiveness is a form of direct control used by parents to alter the attitudes and behaviors of their adolescent offspring (Henry et al., 1989). Punitive behaviors by parents such as physical force, punishment, or threats of punishment are designed to extinguish adolescent problem behaviors through the use of constraint (Peterson & Hann, 1999).

Wissink and colleagues (2006) examined restrictive control in relation to adolescent functioning in four distinct ethnic groups in the Netherlands: Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese. The results showed that Dutch adolescents perceived their parents as less strict than Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese adolescents. With regard to quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, Turkish adolescents’ perceptions of the quality of the relationship with parents were more negative than the other groups of adolescents in the study. In terms of developmental outcomes, they also found that girls
reported lower levels of self-esteem than boys. Among all ethnic groups in the study a common pattern emerged: the lower level of negativity in the parent-adolescent relationship, the less aggressive and delinquent behaviors they exhibited. In the Turkish group, parental restrictive control was significantly and positively related to delinquent behavior.

The results in the study also found parental restrictiveness to be significantly related to self-esteem in all four ethnic groups. Specifically, the analysis revealed that the more adolescents feel their parents strictly control them, the lower their self-esteem and the more negative the parent-adolescent relationship is, the lower their self-esteem.

In a study of Latino youth in different family forms, Plunkett et al. (2007) found that punitiveness by mothers and fathers was significantly and negatively related to Latino adolescents’ self-esteem in intact families, but not in stepfather families or single mother families.

**Summary**

The purpose of the review of literature is to examine existing research on parental behaviors, specifically parental support, parental monitoring, parental psychological control, and parental punitiveness to determine the relationships they have to adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation. The scarcity of parenting research on Middle Eastern American adolescents is evident as most of the research conducted with this particular population was done with Middle Easterners living in countries outside of the U.S.

Research conducted in the U.S. found significant differences between maternal and paternal support and monitoring on adolescents’ self-esteem and academic
motivation. The findings indicate more maternal influence on the adolescent particularly in academic motivation. Conversely, other population samples imply that European-American and African-American paternal behaviors had no significant relationship with academic motivation. This research also revealed no significant differences between maternal and paternal psychological control and punitiveness on adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation. However, studies using domain-specific measures indicate parental psychological control as significantly influencing externalizing problem behaviors (versus internalizing problem behaviors).

Subsequently, the findings from the preceding studies should help researchers better understand which parenting behaviors are conducive to fostering adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation. However, there is limited research within the elected population for this study, thereby indicating a great importance to continue to better clarify, identify, and understand the cultural factors influencing parental behaviors. Continued exploration in this area by scholars, parents, school personnel, and policy makers is important to ensure that interventions are appropriately designed to address the specific needs of Middle Eastern American adolescents.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Secondary data-analysis for this thesis was conducted using data from an ongoing research project titled “Adolescent Resiliency in Multi-Cultural Communities” (ARMCC). The lead researchers of this project are Dr. Tovah Sands and Dr. Scott W. Plunkett. Dr. Sands is a Professor in the Educational Psychology Department at California State University Northridge, and Dr. Plunkett is a Professor in the Psychology Department at California State University Northridge. For further information regarding the ARMCC project, log on to the project’s webpage at http://hhd.csun.edu/plunk/aaa.

Project researchers solicited participation for the study from five schools in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. Administrators from each high school were contacted and asked to help facilitate collaboration between interested teachers and trained graduate/undergraduate research assistants. With permission from the administrative staff at each school, research assistants contacted individual teachers to further solicit participation by explaining the purpose of the research as well as the process of obtaining data. Teachers who committed to participate in the study were given parental consent forms to distribute to their students for the purpose of informing and obtaining signatures from their parents. Signatures were required of both the adolescent and their parent/guardian in order to participate. Students who returned their signed consent form to the classroom teacher were given permission to participate in the study.

To ensure accurate representation of student populations at each school, those who partook in the study were enrolled in a required high school course (e.g., Life Skills
and/or Health).

After one or two weeks of distributing consent forms to classroom teachers, researchers returned to the school to facilitate administration of self-report questionnaires. Once in the classroom, researchers collected signed consent forms, gave out questionnaires to appropriate students, went over the instructions, and then walked around the classroom to answer any questions.

When all self-report surveys were completely marked and collected, researchers took them to the research office at the university to code them, and prepared them for data input. After being accurately coded, the information was inputted into Excel and transferred into SPSS. Upon entry, data were verified for accuracy by trained research assistants working in pairs.

**Sample**

Self-report data from 240 male and female adolescents’ were used in the analyses for this study. The gender distribution in the sample was such that girls made up 49% of the participants and boys made up slightly less at 44% of participants. Gender was undisclosed in 7% of the self-report surveys.

The age range of the participants in this study was 13 to 20 years with a majority of students being 14 (37.1%) and 15 (30.0%) years old. The mean age for participants was 15.03 years. About .4% of the participants submitted questionnaires without specifying their age. The majority of students were in grade 9 (56.7%). The remaining 43.3% of participants were either in grade 10 (24.6%), grade 11 (11.7%), grade 12 (5.0%), or older (1.7%). Participants failed to report their grade in .4% of the sample.

The majority (90.4%) of participants indicated living in intact homes with both
biological parents. A total of 5.8% reported living in single-parent homes. Adolescents living in blended families, with one biological parent and a step parent, made up 3.0% of the sample. And finally, .08% of the participants in the study indicated living in alternative family forms.

The ethnic background of all adolescent participants whose self-report surveys were utilized for this particular study was Middle Eastern American from varying countries of origin. The 240 adolescents who completed the self-report questionnaire were born in the following countries: 57.5% were born in the United States, and 42.5% were born in other countries. Of the adolescents born in other countries, the largest percentage, 25.0%, were born in Iran, with the second largest percentage, 6.3%, born in Armenia. The remaining 11.2% consisted of adolescents born in the countries of Canada, India, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Sweden, Great Britain/England, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. The percentage of the participants’ parents born in the United States was far less with only 3.3% of mothers and 3.3% of fathers born in the U.S. The largest population of parents – 59.2% of mothers and 60.4% of fathers – was born in Iran. The second largest percentage of parents was born in Lebanon: 12.1% of mothers and 12.5% of fathers.

Measurement

Demographic variables in the study were measured using items on a standard fact sheet while self-report instruments previously established for the larger ARMCC study were used to assess all the other variables.

Global Self-Esteem

The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to assess adolescents’ global
self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979). A number of research studies have established the reliability and validity of the scale. This scale uses the following Likert response options: 

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. Sample items include: (a) “At times I think I am no good at all” (reverse coded) and (b) “I feel that I have a number of good qualities”. The average of the responses to these items was used to determine an overall self-esteem score. An internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .82 was found using the current data.

**Academic Motivation**

Reports of academic motivation by the adolescents were measured using a 5-item scale (Plunkett & Bamaca-Gomez, 2003). Each item required participants to respond using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Items on the scale read as follows: (a) “I try hard in school,” (b) “Grades are very important to me,” (c) “I usually finish my homework on time,” (d) “Education is so important that it’s worth it to put up with things about school that I don’t like,” and (e) “In general, I like school.” The average responses to each item were used to establish the mean scores. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .82 was found using the current data.

**Parental Behaviors**

To assess adolescent perceptions of parental support, monitoring, punitiveness, and psychological control, the subscales from the Parental Behavior Measure (Peterson, 1982) were used. Participants were asked to respond to each item twice, once for mother figures and once for father figures, who lived in their households. Response choices were: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The
subscale scores were achieved by calculating the average of the answers for the items in each subscale. Consequently, higher scores indicate adolescents’ perception of his/her mother or father figure as engaging in more of that specific parenting behavior.

**Parental support.** The adolescents’ perceptions of their parent/parent figure providing emotional support and warmth were assessed using the 4-item parental support subscale. The items in the subscale follow:

- This parent has made me feel that she would be there if I needed her.
- This parent seems to approve of me and the things I do.
- This parent tells me how much she loves me.
- This parent says nice things about me.

In the current study, a Cronbach’s alpha (i.e., internal consistency reliability) of .80 was found for maternal support and .84 for paternal support.

**Parental monitoring.** The adolescents’ perceptions of the extent to which their parent/parent figures supervise their activities were assessed using a 7-item parental monitoring subscale. The current data resulted in an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of .84 for mothers’ data and .87 for fathers’ data. The six items in the subscale follow:

- This parent knows where I am after school.
- This parent knows who I am going to be with when I go out.
- This parent knows where I am when I go out.
- This parent knows the parents of my friends.
- This parent knows who my friends are.
- This parent knows how I spend my money.
- This parent monitors whether I do my homework

**Parental punitiveness.** The adolescents’ perceptions of the extent to which their parent/parent figures used force to obtain compliance were assessed using an 8-item parental punitiveness subscale. Using the current data, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) was .90 for mothers’ data and .90 for fathers’ data. The eight items in the punitiveness subscale follow:

- This parent punishes me when she thinks I am doing something wrong.
- This parent punishes me by not letting me do things that I really enjoy.
- This parent does not give me any peace until I do what she says.
- This parent yells at me a lot without good reason.
- This parent punishes me by not letting me do things with other teenagers.
- This parent punishes me by sending me out of the room.
- This parent punishes me by spanking or hitting me.
- This parent is always finding fault with me.

**Parental psychological control.** The adolescents’ perceptions of the extent to which their parent/parent figures use guilt and/or emotional withdrawal to obtain compliance were assessed using a 6-item psychological control scale. The scale was comprised of the 3-item parental guilt-induction subscale and the 3-item parental love withdrawal subscale. Using the current data, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) was .80 for mothers’ data and .82 for fathers’ data. The six items in the psychological subscale follow:

- This parent tells me that I will be sorry that I wasn’t better behaved.
- This parent tells me about all the things that s/he has done for me.
• This parent tells me that someday I will be punished for my behavior.

• This parent tells me that if I loved him/her, I would do what s/he wants me to do.

• This parent will not talk to me when I displease him/her.

• This parent avoids looking at me when I have disappointed him/her.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Analyses for this study were formulated using SPSS for Windows. The following chapter is a presentation of all the analyses.

**Paired Samples T-tests**

Prior to conducting the correlational and regression analyses, paired sample t-tests were conducted to examine whether there were significant differences between Middle Eastern American adolescents’ perceptions of maternal versus paternal behaviors. The t-tests indicated that the participants perceived that mothers engaged in more support \((t = 3.93, p < .001)\), monitoring \((t = 10.63, p < .001)\), punitiveness \((t = 4.64, p < .001)\), and psychological control \((t = 3.19, p < .001)\) than fathers in the Middle Eastern American families. Since significant differences were found on each of the parenting behaviors, separate analyses were conducted for reports of mothers and fathers.

**Bivariate Correlational Analyses**

Bivariate correlations (i.e., Pearson correlations) were run to identify the strength and direction between perceived maternal/paternal behaviors and Middle Eastern American adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation (see Table 1). Perceived support and monitoring by the mothers and fathers were positively and significantly related to adolescents’ self-esteem \((p < .01)\). Perceived punitiveness and psychological control by the mothers and fathers were negatively and significantly related to adolescents’ self esteem \((p < .01)\). Perceived support and monitoring by the mothers and fathers were positively and significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation \((p < .01)\). Perceived punitiveness and psychological control by mothers and fathers were not
significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation ($p = \text{n.s.}$).

Table 1.

*Bivariate correlations between the perceived maternal and paternal behaviors and self-esteem and academic motivation ($n=240$)*

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<td>2.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p $< .05$. **$p < .01$. Data for mothers is below the diagonal, while fathers is above the diagonal.

**Multiple Regression Analyses**

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the combined and unique contributions of the parenting variables in relation to self-esteem and academic motivation. In the first multiple regression analysis, the mothers’ behaviors were examined in relation to adolescents’ self-esteem (see Table 2). The perceived maternal behaviors accounted for 27% of the change in Middle Eastern American adolescents’ self-esteem ($F = 21.74, p < .01$). Maternal support ($B = .19, p < .01$) and maternal monitoring ($B = .13, p < .01$) were significantly and positively related to adolescents’ self esteem, while maternal psychological control ($B = -.30, p < .01$) was significantly and
negatively related to self-esteem. Once entered into the multiple regression equation, maternal punitiveness was no longer significantly related to adolescents’ self-esteem ($B = -.15, p = \text{n.s.}$).

Table 2.

*Multiple regression examining the relationship between perceived maternal behaviors and self-esteem (n =240)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$\text{SE}$</th>
<th>$B$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitiveness</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2$          .27

$F$ value     21.74**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

In the second multiple regression analysis, the fathers’ behaviors were examined in relation to adolescents’ self-esteem (see Table 3). The perceived paternal behaviors accounted for 21% of the change in Middle Eastern American adolescents’ self-esteem ($F = 15.32, p < .01$) Paternal support ($B = .23, p < .01$) was significantly and positively related to adolescents’ self esteem, while psychological control ($B = -.22, p < .01$) was significantly and negatively related to self-esteem. Once entered into the multiple regression equation, neither paternal punitiveness ($B = -.14, p = \text{n.s.}$) nor monitoring ($B = .08, p < .01$) was significantly related to self-esteem.
Table 3.

*Multiple regression examining the relationship between perceived paternal behaviors and self-esteem (n = 240)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitiveness</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ value</td>
<td>15.32**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05. **p < .01.*

In the next multiple regression analysis, the mothers’ behaviors were examined in relation to adolescents’ academic motivation (see Table 4). The perceived maternal behaviors accounted for 22% of the change in Middle Eastern American adolescents’ academic motivation ($F = 19.20, p < .01$). Both maternal support ($B = .26, p < .01$) and monitoring ($B = .34, p < .01$) were significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation. Similarly to the correlation, neither punitiveness ($B = -.03, p = n.s.$) nor psychological control ($B = -.02, p = n.s.$) was significantly related to academic motivation.
Table 4.

Multiple regression examining the relationship between perceived maternal behaviors and academic motivation (n = 240)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitiveness</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.20**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01.

In the last multiple regression analysis, the fathers’ behaviors were examined in relation to adolescents’ academic motivation (see Table 5). The perceived paternal behaviors accounted for 20% of the change in Middle Eastern American adolescents’ academic motivation ($F = 13.97, p < .01$). Both paternal support ($B = .25, p < .01$) and monitoring ($B = .26, p < .01$) were significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation. Similarly to the correlations, neither punitiveness ($B = .08, p = $ n.s.) nor psychological control ($B = -.01, p = $ n.s.) by fathers was significantly related to academic motivation.
Table 5.

*Multiple regression examining the relationship between perceived paternal behaviors and academic motivation (n = 240)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punitiveness</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Control</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$ value</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.97**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this cross-sectional study is to examine the relationship between general parenting practices (e.g., parental support, parental monitoring, parental psychological control, and parental punitiveness) and overall social competence in Middle Eastern American adolescents. Self-report data were gathered and analyzed using t-tests, bivariate correlations, and multiple regressions. The results of the paired t-tests indicated significant differences between Middle Eastern American adolescents’ perceptions of maternal versus paternal behaviors. Therefore, separate analyses were conducted for reports of mothers and fathers. As hypothesized, perceived support and monitoring by both mothers and fathers were positively and significantly related to adolescents’ self-esteem. Perceived punitiveness and psychological control by both mothers and fathers were negatively and significantly related to adolescents’ self-esteem. Likewise, parental support and monitoring by mothers and fathers were positively and significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation. However, contrary to what was hypothesized in the study, punitiveness and psychological control by mothers and fathers were not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation. Perceived maternal and paternal behaviors accounted for significant change in male/female Middle Eastern American adolescents’ self-esteem and academic motivation.

Perceived mothers’ behaviors accounted for more change than paternal behaviors. It is suspected that mothers’ behaviors accounted for more change because women hold primary caretaking roles in Middle Eastern American families, thus exposing adolescents to mothers’ behaviors more often and more consistently than to fathers’ behaviors.
Summary of the Findings

First Hypothesis

As hypothesized, the results of this study found that adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal support were significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles. Prior research has provided strong evidence suggesting that maternal and paternal supportive behaviors are positively and significantly correlated with both academic motivation and self-esteem of adolescents. The results indicated that having warm and nurturing parents reassures adolescents that they are valued, and the support they receive helps keep them motivated throughout life (Peterson, 2005). Since most Middle Eastern families value education, it can be said that warm and nurturing parents will be more likely to raise children who respect their parents’ values regarding the importance of education, thus making adolescents more likely to be academically motivated. The results regarding self-esteem are consistent with most previous parenting studies, which show that parents who are warm and supportive play an important role in fostering healthy socioemotional development throughout adolescence, even as the support of peers becomes gradually more important (Laible & Carlo, 2004). Research dating back to the 1900s recognizes the important role parents play in shaping adolescents’ perceptions of their self worth and capabilities. It is believed that when parents behave in ways that boost their children’s self-esteem, their children will try harder to succeed and maintain success (Frank et al., 2010). Most parenting research has placed equal importance on maternal and paternal support in facilitating adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem, thus substantiating the results of this study.
Second Hypothesis

As hypothesized, the results of this study found that adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal monitoring will be significantly and positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles. When adolescents perceive that their parents monitor their behaviors, then the adolescents may be less likely to engage in behaviors that are not conducive to academics (e.g., delinquency, substance use).

The results of this study are consistent with previously conducted research examining the relationship between adolescents’ perceptions of parental monitoring and academic motivation. Therefore, it is not unusual to expect the same outcome from Middle Eastern American parenting practices. Given that parents in Middle Eastern cultures are expected to put their individual interests aside in order to fully attend to the needs of their offspring, it is rare to find parental monitoring lacking amongst Middle Eastern American families (Sharifzadeh, 2004). This may be why parental monitoring yielded such significant results on academic motivation in Middle Eastern American adolescents. Mothers in Middle Eastern American families are the primary caretakers (Sharifzadeh, 2004). Fathers generally play the role of enforcer, often called on to ensure that adolescent children do as their mother tells them. Fathers hold mothers accountable for knowing where their adolescent children are at all times, thereby leaving fathers indirectly responsible for overall monitoring of adolescent children. Given that Middle Eastern parents value education, then it is likely that monitoring will keep adolescents academically engaged.

Also, the results in this thesis study revealed adolescents’ perceptions of maternal
monitoring yielded a significant positive relationship to adolescents’ self-esteem. It is believed that monitoring by parents is perceived as being cared for, thereby promoting positive feelings of self-esteem (Frank et al., 2010). Thus, effective monitoring by mothers enhances the development of social competence in Middle Eastern American adolescents. The correlations in this thesis found a significant relationship between fathers’ monitoring and self-esteem, but the regression analysis found a lack of significance between the relationship of paternal monitoring and adolescents’ self-esteem when entered with the other parenting behaviors. Thus, other paternal behaviors (e.g., support) may be more important to the development of self-esteem in Middle Eastern American adolescents. Also, fathers in Middle Eastern American households typically consider childrearing practices the responsibility of a mother. This accepted mindset often leaves fathers less engaged in conversations with their adolescent children about their daily activities.

Third Hypothesis

Mixed results were found for the hypothesis that adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal psychological control would be significantly and negatively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles. Contrary to the hypothesis, results in this study did not produce significant results between parental psychological control and adolescents’ academic motivation for either parent. This result was unexpected based on previous literature which supports the notion that parental psychological control is significantly and negatively correlated with adolescents’ academic motivation. It is possible that culture (one’s own or otherwise) plays an influential role in shaping adolescents’ perceptions of
behaviors therefore impacting the results of the study. Findings in this thesis study for results of fathers’ behaviors may be attributed to less time spent with adolescent children. It is possible that Middle Eastern American youth stay academically motivated due to cultural values of higher education, even when parents engage in negative parenting practices that have previously been associated with poor adolescent development. Thus, parental monitoring and support may be more important in explaining adolescents’ academic motivation in Middle Eastern American families.

As hypothesized, this thesis study found that psychological control by mothers and fathers were significantly and negatively related to adolescents’ self-esteem. The lack of autonomous granting behaviors by parents in Middle Eastern American families may partially account for the positive statistical significance between parental psychological control and self-esteem in this current study. Previous studies have concluded that parents who use psychological control for the purpose of maintaining their own psychological status do so at the expense of intruding on their adolescents’ sense of self often resulting in adolescents’ negative self perception (Barber, Bean & Erickson, 2001). Since Middle Eastern culture places less emphasis on individuation and independence of children from parents, and instead focuses on attachment and parent-child bonding, it is not uncommon for Middle Eastern American parents to raise their children to be interdependent members of the family rather than encourage them to be independent individuals (Sharifzadeh, 2004).

Fourth Hypothesis

Mixed results were found for the hypothesis that adolescents’ reports of maternal and paternal punitiveness would be significantly and negatively related to adolescents’
academic motivation and self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families in Los Angeles. In regards to academic motivation, the hypothesis was not supported. Specifically, perceived punitiveness by mothers and fathers were not significantly related to adolescents’ academic motivation in Middle Eastern American families. These results are contrary to previous studies that have found significant correlations between parental control behaviors (e.g., punitiveness, psychological control) and lower academic motivation. Perhaps the influence of culture on the perception of parental behaviors account for this finding. As stated above, the valuing of education in Middle Eastern culture may supersede the impact of negative parenting on academic motivation.

Conflicting results were found regarding the relationship between parental punitiveness and adolescents’ self-esteem in Middle Eastern American families. Specifically, maternal and paternal punitiveness were significantly related to self-esteem in the correlations, but once entered into the multiple regression analyses with the other parenting variables, punitiveness was no longer significant. Although previous research studies with populations of varying ethnic identities have linked parental punitiveness with lower self-esteem, this study found no significant relationship between perceived mothers’ and fathers’ punitive behaviors on adolescents’ self-esteem in the multiple regression models. Findings in the present study may be because (1) punitiveness and psychological control may have a lot of shared variance with self-esteem, thus multicollinearity resulted in punitiveness not being significant in the multiple regressions; and/or (2) punitiveness was not as impactful as the other parenting variables (e.g., support, psychological control) in relation to self-esteem, thus it was not significant in the regression analyses. Thus, future studies may want to try and partially control for
multicollinearity (e.g., using structural equation models instead of multiple regressions) or examine psychological control and punitiveness in separate models.

**Implications**

Based on the findings from the present study, parental support and monitoring are of great importance in facilitating increased academic motivation and positive self-esteem among Middle Eastern American adolescents. Therefore, encouraging parents to engage with their adolescent children in a positive way may enhance the parent-adolescent relationship. Results of this study have found maternal monitoring behaviors to be positively related to adolescents’ academic motivation and self-esteem, thus it is especially important to gear interventions toward mothers of Middle Eastern American adolescents. However, given the positive relationship between maternal monitoring (versus paternal monitoring) and adolescents’ self-esteem, it is also important and relevant to encourage fathers to take on a more active role in monitoring their adolescent children. Stereotypically, fathers in Middle Eastern American culture are not accustomed to familiarizing themselves with the developmental processes (i.e., daily attributions) of their children, subsequently leaving all knowledge of this discourse to their wives. Providing meaningful training regarding the basic developmental processes that take place during adolescence could incite more interest by Middle Eastern American fathers to take note of their offspring’s personal interests and whereabouts, thus facilitating a positive father-child relationship that is open to discussion and dialogue which ultimately leads to effective monitoring.

In regards to adolescents’ self-esteem, the findings of this thesis indicate it is important to engage Middle Eastern American parents in dialogue which encourages
them to be less psychologically controlling in their approach to raising their adolescents. Middle Eastern American parents can be encouraged to use more supportive and warm approaches that do not impede upon the adolescents’ autonomy. By utilizing research results to educate the community through training workshops on adolescent development as well as informational sessions emphasizing the importance of postsecondary education, Middle Eastern American parents will gain access to the necessary tools used to positively impact the overall social competence in their adolescent children.

**Conclusion**

This research study was conducted to examine parental support, parental monitoring, parental psychological control, and parental punitiveness in relation to academic motivation and self-esteem among Middle Eastern American adolescents living in the United States. Results showed that parental support and monitoring were significantly positively related to adolescents’ self-esteem, while parental psychological control and punitiveness were significantly and negatively related to adolescents’ self-esteem. The same trend was observed with parental support and parental monitoring on adolescents’ academic motivation, thus signifying a statistically significant positive relationship. However, parental psychological control and parental punitiveness had no significant relationship to adolescents’ academic motivation in this study implying that more positive parenting practices (e.g., support, monitoring) may be more influential to academic motivation than either psychological control or punitiveness by parents in Middle Eastern American families.
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