

## Generational Changes in Parenting Styles and the Effect of Culture

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### Abstract

This study investigated generational changes in parenting styles and the effect of culture by means of a cross cultural comparison of Greek-Australians and Anglo-Australians. The community based sample of parents comprised 34 Anglo-Australians ( $M=45.74$  years,  $SD=7.28$ ) and 31 Greek-Australians ( $M=42.65$  years,  $SD=4.85$ ) who completed a series of self report questionnaires about their own parenting style and that of their parents. The Greek-Australians reported that their parents utilised an authoritarian child rearing style in the upbringing of their children significantly more than did their Anglo-Australian counterparts. However both second generation Greek-Australian parents and their Anglo-Australian counterparts reported that they were significantly more authoritative parents than were the previous generation of parents. Results also indicated that males from both generations were likely to display a more authoritarian parenting style than females; and that females from both generations were likely to display a more authoritative parenting style than males. However males from either generation did not have a more permissive style of parenting than females. A generational change in parenting styles towards a more lenient and democratic style may have occurred, but rather than being culturally based, results suggested that this reflected an overall societal trend towards an authoritative child rearing style.

**Keywords:** *parenting style; generational change; culture.*

### Introduction

Research suggests that children of immigrants generally adapt to the values of the host culture and this may be reflected in the parenting styles they adopt with their own children (Kelley & Tseng, 1992). Nevertheless, there appears to be little research investigating differences between the parenting styles of second generation immigrants and those of their first generation immigrant parents (Kelley & Tseng). Parenting style is a pattern of attitudes that parents exhibit toward the upbringing of their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Baumrind (1971; 1989) identified two broad dimensions of parenting style. The first was

demandingness, which relates to the amount of parental control exerted over children's activities and behaviour. Parents who score high on this dimension establish high standards and expect their children to meet these standards. The second dimension was responsiveness, which is determined by the amount of warmth and nurturance displayed by parents towards their children. Parents who score high in this area are highly accepting and responsive to their children. Baumrind used these dimensions to identify three parenting styles: Authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive.

Authoritative parents display high levels of both demandingness and responsiveness. They control their children's behaviour in an age appropriate manner and create a warm and affectionate environment where the children are encouraged to express their point of view and participate in family decision making (Baumrind, 1971; 1989). In individualistic cultures such as Australia, this style of parenting has been found to be the most effective, resulting in children scoring high on measures of competence, achievement, social development and self-perception and low on measures of psychological and behavioural dysfunction (Baumrind, 1971, 1989; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornsbuch, 1991).

Authoritarian parents are characterised by high levels of demandingness and low levels of responsiveness. They exercise firm control over their children, expecting conformity and obedience and allow less room for personal autonomy and independence (Baumrind, 1971; 1989). Possibly reflecting her western perspective, Baumrind described authoritarian parents as displaying low levels of warmth and affection towards their children. The authoritarian style of parenting has been found to be more effective in collectivist cultures (Papps, Walker, Trimboli, & Trimboli, 1995; Sprott, 1994; Szapornik & Kurtines, 1993). Two aspects of demandingness have been identified: Restrictiveness, a form of psychological control, and firm control, a form of behavioural control (Baumrind, 1989). Whilst both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles encompass firm control only authoritarian parents incorporate restrictiveness.

Permissive parents exert low levels of demandingness towards their children. As such they exercise minimal control and authority over their children and fail to define appropriate limits and standards of acceptable behaviour. Children raised by permissive parents have been found to be more prone to delinquent behaviour, display poorer academic competence and achievement, and overall lower levels of psychological functioning (Baumrind, 1971, 1989; Lamborn et al., 1991).

Parenting styles reflect, at least in part, cultural value systems. When people immigrate from a predominantly collectivist culture to an individualistic culture their existing values and practices may not be considered adaptive, leading to pressures to change these values and behaviours (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996; Rosenthal & Bornholt, 1988; Rosenthal, 1984). It is argued (Triandis, 1995) that individualism is dominant in many Western industrialised nations and collectivism is more prominent in many Eastern and/or less industrialised nations (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988; Triandis, 1989). Hofstede (1980) identified Greece as being a collectivist culture. Traditional Greek culture values family loyalty, adherence to group norms and maintenance of harmony in relationships with group members. Such societies maintain that the extended family, rather than the individual, is the basic unit of society. It has been suggested that this type of value system is linked to authoritarian child rearing practices (Rosenthal, 1984). In such cultures, an authoritarian parenting style may teach the child the importance of conformity and obedience (Papps et al., 1995; Spratt, 1994; Szapornik & Kurtines, 1993; Triandis, 1989).

In contrast, Anglo cultures, such as Australia, are predominantly individualistic (Hofstede, 1980), tending to value individual needs and achievement with individuals expected to take responsibility for their actions. The interests of the individual prevail over those of the group. The family unit is smaller, consisting of parents and siblings. It is not surprising that the primary goal of child rearing practices in these cultures is to raise autonomous and independent individuals (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). In these cultures individuality and personal freedom are highly regarded (Rosenthal, 1984) whereas dependence on the group is not considered psychologically healthy and not encouraged (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Studies of parenting styles in individualistic cultures have typically found that young people benefit most from authoritative parenting and least from authoritarian and permissive parenting (Dornbusch, Ritter, Liederman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, Elman, & Mounts, 1989).

Research on first generation immigrants from collectivist cultures has shown that an authoritarian

parenting style often persists after immigration to an individualistic culture (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Nguyen & Williams, 1998; Rosenthal & Bornholt, 1988; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Some suggest that it may not be until the third or fourth generations that families fully acculturate to the host culture (Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). Nevertheless, children of immigrants tend to acculturate more readily than their parents (Nyugen & Williams, 1988; Rosenthal, 1984; Rosenthal et al., 1996), possibly because the "old" values are less established and also they have greater exposure to the host culture through education and contact with non immigrant peers (Phinney, 1990; Rosenthal et al., 1996). Thus when these children become parents their parenting styles may reflect those of the dominant culture (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993).

Most research has focused on mothers' parenting styles and not on fathers' parenting styles (Shek, 1995). Nevertheless, many cultural beliefs and mass media images portray the parenting styles of fathers and mothers as different (Lamb, 1987; Martin, 1985). Studies have typically indicated that mothers are more likely to utilise an authoritative style whilst fathers are more likely to adopt an authoritarian style (Aunola, Nurmi, Onatsu-Arvilommi, & Pulkkinen, 1999; Klein, O'Bryant, & Hopkins, 1996; Russell, Aloa, Feder, Glover, Miller, & Palmer, 1998; Russell, Hart, Robinson, & Olsen, 2003; Smetana, 1995). There is also some evidence that fathers exhibit a more permissive approach than mothers (Russell et al., 1998).

There are few studies of gender differences in the parenting styles of immigrants. Rosenthal, Bell, Demetriou, and Efklides (1989) suggested that the immigrant Greek father's role in Australia was less authoritarian than in Greece and that Greek-Australian mothers emphasised discipline. Findings from other collectivist cultures have varied (Shek, 1995). For example, a Japanese study found that Japanese fathers and mothers were both perceived by their children as being understanding and authoritative (Shwalb, Imaizumi, & Nakazawa, 1987). On the other hand, Shek (1995) found that, consistent with prevailing stereotypes, Chinese fathers were more restrictive and displayed less concern for their children than Chinese mothers.

While culture may relate to parenting style, level of the parent's education may also be related to their parenting style (Aunola et al., 1999; Fox & Platz, 1995). Studies have typically focused on mothers and have consistently indicated that the lower the level of education attained by mothers, the greater the likelihood of use of an authoritarian parenting style incorporating harsher disciplinary measures and less displays of warmth and nurturance toward the child (Aunola et al., 1999; Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Fox

& Platz, 1995; MacPhee, Fritz, & Miller-Heyl, 1996; McLoyd, 1990). In contrast better educated mothers have been found to emphasise autonomous and child centred behaviours which reflect an authoritative parenting style (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992). Numerous studies support a connection between child rearing practices and socioeconomic variables such as education of parents (Dodge et al., 1994; MacPhee et al., 1996). Indeed Dodge et al. argued that any apparent ethnicity differences disappeared once such variables were taken into consideration.

The present study investigated generational change in parenting styles in an immigrant and non-immigrant sample. Data were collected from second generation Greek-Australian and Anglo-Australian parents. The Greek and Australian cultures have been found to differ on the dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Greeks have a long history of immigration to Australia and they represent one of the largest minority groups in Australia (ABS, 2004; Rosenthal & Bornholt, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1989). Participants were asked to rate their mothers' and fathers' parenting styles as well as their own by completing two parental style questionnaires based on Baumrind's parental authority typologies. Using participants' perceptions of their parents' childrearing styles raises a number of methodological issues. Whilst one's subjective experience of parental behaviour may not necessarily reflect the parent's actual behaviour, the use of such data to determine parenting style arguably has validity (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, & Dornbusch, 1991). It has been argued that if an individual experiences his or her parents as authoritative, regardless of how the parents might describe themselves, then as far as the psychological development of that individual is concerned, that is what the parents indeed are (Buri, 1991; Steinberg et al., 1991). A second widely recognised issue is participants' concern for social desirability. This may result in participants being less self-critical and less likely to report parenting behaviours they believe may be perceived negatively both for themselves and for their parents. This bias may be at least partially overcome by ensuring participants total anonymity (Furnham & Cheng, 2000).

This study had three aims: First, to investigate adults' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles in a Greek-Australian and an Anglo-Australian sample. Second, to investigate the parenting styles utilised by these adults in raising their own children and third, to examine gender differences in participants' reports of their fathers' and mothers' parenting styles and in their self-reported parenting styles. Given their collectivist ethnic background, it was hypothesised that first generation Greek Australian parents would be reported

as primarily using an authoritarian child rearing style whilst their Anglo-Australian counterparts would be reported as primarily using an authoritative child rearing style. Given the influence of the individualistic host culture and the effects of acculturation, it was hypothesised that second generation Greek Australian parents would use significantly more attributes of an authoritative parenting style than their first generation Greek-Australian parents, whilst the Anglo-Australian sample would report fewer differences in parenting styles cross-generationally. Finally, it was hypothesised that first generation immigrant mothers would be reported to have used a more authoritative parenting style than first generation immigrant fathers, that these fathers would use significantly more attributes of an authoritarian and a permissive parenting style than the mothers and that these differences would also be found in the second generation of parents.

## Method

### Participants

The sample consisted of 65 participants aged between 34 and 63 years ( $M = 44.26$  years,  $SD = 6.39$ ); 34 Anglo-Australians ( $M = 45.74$  years,  $SD = 7.28$ ) and 31 Greek-Australians ( $M = 42.65$  years,  $SD = 4.85$ ). All were parents of at least one child. The Anglo-Australian group consisted of 23 females ( $M = 43.65$  years,  $SD = 5.87$ ) and 11 males ( $M = 50.09$  years,  $SD = 8.28$ ). The Greek-Australian group comprised 18 females ( $M = 42.83$  years,  $SD = 4.90$ ) and 13 males ( $M = 42.38$  years,  $SD = 4.96$ ). A modified version of Casella and Kearins's (1993) classification of Anglo-Australians and Italian-Australians was used to define the two groups. Participants were classified as Anglo-Australians if they were born in Australia, reported their parents as either being born in Australia or of Northwestern European origin and English was the only language spoken at home. To be classified as Greek-Australian, participants were either born in Australia or immigrated no later than their teenage years, reported their parents as being of Greek origin and Greek was one of the main languages spoken at home with their parents. The Greek-Australian sample indicated that 67.7% spoke Greek and 32.3% spoke both English and Greek with their parents. In contrast, 54.8% currently speak English alone with their children whilst 45.2% speak either Greek or both English and Greek. The majority of the immigrant group arrived in Australia in the 1960s and none later than 1971. For the purposes of this study the Greek-Australian group were deemed to have originated from a collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1980).

There were three education variables: the amount of education completed by participants as well as the amount completed by their mother and father.

Education was coded as: 1 = primary, 2 = some secondary, 3 = completed secondary, 4 = trade qualification, 5 = TAFE or diploma level, 6 = incomplete tertiary, 7 = completed tertiary and 8 = postgraduate. Overall, the Anglo-Australian participants' parents were more highly educated than the Greek-Australian participants' parents and the participants were also more highly educated than their parents. Anglo-Australians reported that 14.7% of their mothers had tertiary completion or higher, 29.3% had completed secondary, a trade qualification or TAFE or diploma level, 52.9% had completed some secondary and 2.9% had primary level whilst Greek Australians said that 12.9% of their mothers had completed secondary or a trade qualification, 9.7% had some secondary but the overwhelming majority (77.4%) had only attained primary level education. Anglo-Australians reported that 23.5% of their fathers had tertiary completion or higher, 35.3% had completed secondary, a trade qualification or TAFE or diploma level, 35.3% had completed some secondary and 5.9% had primary level whilst Greek Australians said that 6.5% of their fathers had completed tertiary, 12.9% had a trade qualification or TAFE or diploma level, 19.4% had some secondary but the overwhelming majority of 61.3% had only attained primary level education. The Greek-Australian and Anglo-Australian participants' education levels were similar with 41.9% of Greek-Australian participants having tertiary completion or higher, 51.7% having completed secondary, a trade qualification, TAFE or diploma level or incomplete tertiary and 6.5% having completed some secondary. The Anglo-Australians participants indicated that 38.2% had tertiary completion or higher, 52.9% had completed secondary, a trade qualification, TAFE or diploma level or incomplete tertiary and 8.8% had completed some secondary.

## Materials

Participants initially responded to demographic questions regarding age, gender, country of birth, parent's country of birth, ethnic background, languages spoken at home and highest educational level they and their parents attained. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was used to measure perceptions of parenting styles used by the participant's mother and father. This scale assessed participants' recollections of the manner in which their parents raised them. It consisted of 30 items per parent comprising authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting sub-scales of 10 items per sub-scale. The authoritarian sub-scale included items such as "Even if her children didn't agree with her, my mother felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what she thought was right". The authoritative sub-scale included statements such as: "As I was growing up my mother

directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline". The permissive sub-scale included statements such as: "As I was growing up my mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behaviour". Items are scored on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The PAQ produces 6 separate scores: mother's authoritarianism (PAQ-An (Mother)); mother's authoritativeness (PAQ-Av (Mother)); mother's permissiveness (PAQ-Perm (Mother)); father's authoritarianism (PAQ-An (Father)); father's authoritativeness (PAQ-Av (Father)); and father's permissiveness (PAQ-Perm (Father)). Scores can range from 10 to 50 on each variable with high scores representing a greater degree of the parental style measured. Buri (1991) reported Cronbach coefficient alpha values for these subscales ranging from .87 to .74. The content, criterion, and discriminant validity were reported to be high (Buri, 1991). Subscale Cronbach coefficient alpha values for the present study ranged from .90 to .77.

Buri's (1991) Parental Authority Questionnaire was modified to examine the parenting styles used by participants in raising their own children. It consisted of 30 items comprising an authoritarian, an authoritative and a permissive parenting sub-scale of 10 items per sub-scale. The authoritarian sub-scale (PAQ2-An) included items such as "As the children were growing up I let them know what behaviour I expected from them, and if they didn't meet those expectations, I punished them". The authoritative sub-scale (PAQ2-Av) included statements such as: "I gave the children direction for their behaviour and activities as they were growing up and I expected them to follow my direction, but I was always willing to listen to their concerns and to discuss that direction with them". The permissive sub-scale (PAQ2-Perm) included statements such as: "As they were growing up I allowed the children to form their own point of view on family matters and I generally allowed them to decide for themselves what they were going to do". A 5 point Likert-type scale assessed each participant's individual parenting style with 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The PAQ2 produces 3 separate scores: participant's authoritarianism; participant's authoritativeness; and participant's permissiveness. Scores ranged from 10 to 50 on each variable with higher scores reflecting a greater degree of the parental style measured. Cronbach coefficient alpha values for the present study were: .81 for authoritarianism, .67 for authoritativeness, and .71 for permissiveness.

## Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to a community based sample of Anglo-Australian and second generation Greek-Australian parents using the snowball technique.

There was a 46% response rate. The questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Upon completion, participants were requested to mail their questionnaire in an enclosed postage paid addressed envelope. Participants were assured that their responses were completely anonymous and confidential, and that they were free to withdraw at any time from the study. Completion of the questionnaire was deemed to denote participants' informed consent. The two cultural groups lived in middle class suburban areas, were similar on age and education, and all were parents of at least one child.

## Results

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13. Means and standard deviations for each parenting style by cultural group are shown in Table 1. As these scores represent participants' responses for themselves and their perceptions of their parents' parenting styles all of the PAQ and PAQ2 sub-scales are within-group variables as reported by the participants.

To test whether second generation Greek-Australian adults would perceive their parents as using a more authoritarian parenting style than would the Anglo-Australian sample two 2(culture) x 2 (parent) mixed design factorial ANOVAs were conducted with Culture (Greek-Australian & Anglo-Australian) as the between-participants factor and Parent (mothers' and fathers'

PAQ-An scores) as the within-participants factor.

The within-participants ANOVA revealed no significant interaction effect between Parent and Cultural group,  $F(1, 61) = .33, p > .05$ . The between-participants ANOVA showed a significant main effect for Culture,  $F(1, 63) = 3.86, p = .05, \eta^2 = .06$ , indicating that the Greek-Australian sample reported that their parents used a more authoritarian parenting style than did the Anglo-Australians for their parents. There was also a significant main effect for Parent,  $F(1.63) = 6.34, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09$ , suggesting that the reported mothers' and fathers' scores on the PAQ-An differed significantly from each other for both sample groups. Examination of the mean scores (see Table 1) shows that fathers reportedly used an authoritarian parenting style more than did mothers.

To test whether the second generation Greek-Australian sample would use a more authoritative parenting style than they reported their first generation Greek-Australian parents having used, and whether Anglo-Australians would report that both they and their parents used authoritative parenting styles a 2 (culture) x 3 (parent) mixed design factorial ANOVA was conducted with Culture (Greek-Australian & Anglo-Australian) as the between-participants factor and Parent (mothers' and fathers' PAQ-Av scores and participants' PAQ2-Av scores) as the within-participants factor. Means, standard deviations and sample sizes for each cultural group are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Mean PAQ and PAQ2 Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive Sub-Scale Parenting Scores by Ethnic Group*

	Anglo-Australian <i>n</i> = 34		Greek-Australian <i>n</i> = 31		Total <i>N</i> = 65	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PAQ-An(Mother)	30.97	7.45	33.65	6.93	32.25	7.28
PAQ-An(Father)	32.56	6.83	36.03	6.97	34.22	7.06
PAQ2-An(Respondent)	26.75	6.20	27.59	5.57	27.15	5.88
PAQ-Av(Mother)	34.24	7.17	30.34	8.83	32.38	8.18
PAQ-Av(Father)	32.71	7.13	28.82	9.37	30.85	8.43
PAQ2-Av(Respondent)	40.12	3.27	41.29	3.31	40.68	3.29
PAQ-Perm(Mother)	22.06	4.19	20.97	6.81	21.54	5.58
PAQ-Perm(Father)	22.00	4.35	20.19	7.10	21.14	5.85
PAQ2-Perm(Respondent)	23.04	4.22	22.99	5.58	23.01	4.88

*Note:* PAQ = Parental Authority Questionnaire completed by participants about their mothers' and fathers' parenting styles; PAQ2 = Parental Authority Questionnaire completed by the participants about their own parenting styles; An = Authoritarian sub-scale of PAQ & PAQ2; Av = Authoritative sub-scale of PAQ & PAQ2; and Perm = Permissive sub-scale of PAQ & PAQ2.

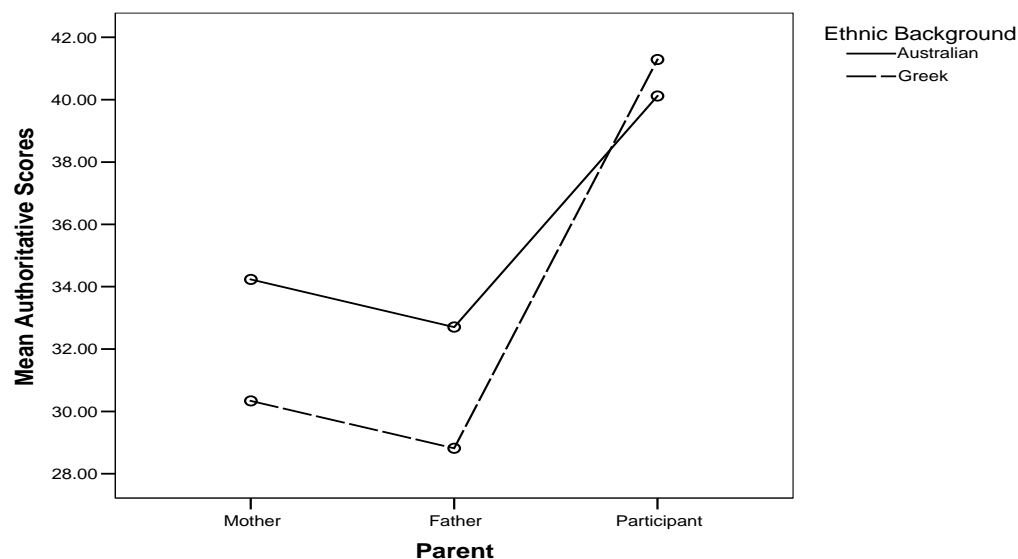


Figure 1. Mean PAQ -Av Mothers', PAQ-Av Fathers' and PAQ2-Av Participants' Sub-Scale Scores by ethnic group

Results revealed a significant interaction effect between Parent and Culture,  $F(1, 63) = 4.87, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$ . This interaction is depicted in Figure 1.

Post hoc paired samples  $t$ -tests split for culture were carried out to investigate the nature of this interaction further. Results indicated that the Anglo-Australian sample displayed a significant difference between PAQ2-Av scores for participants and PAQ-Av scores for both mothers ( $t(33) = 4.60, p < .001, \eta^2 = .39$ ) and fathers ( $t(33) = 5.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = .47$ ). Contrary to expectations Anglo-Australian participants reportedly used a more authoritative parenting style than their mothers and their fathers. Results for the Greek-Australian sample also indicated that there was a significant difference between PAQ2-Av scores for participants and PAQ-Av scores for both mothers ( $t(30) = 6.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = .57$ ) and fathers ( $t(30) = 7.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .63$ ). As predicted Greek-Australian participants used significantly more attributes of an authoritative parenting style than they reported their mothers and fathers using.

Results also revealed a significant main effect for parent,  $F(1, 63) = 60.23, p < .001, \eta^2 = .49$ , suggesting that mothers' PAQ-Av, fathers' PAQ-Av and participants' PAQ2-Av parenting sub-scale scores

differed. There was no significant main effect for culture,  $F(1, 63) = 2.90, p > .05$ , indicating that

Greek-Australian parents' PAQ-Av scores did not differ significantly from Anglo-Australians parents' PAQ-Av scores.

To examine gender differences in parenting three paired samples  $t$ -tests were performed. Means, standard deviations and sample sizes for mothers' and fathers' PAQ-An, -Av and -Perm sub-scale scores are depicted in Table 1.

Results indicated that, as predicted, there were significant differences between PAQ-Av mothers' and PAQ-Av fathers' scores ( $t(64) = 2.13, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$ ) suggesting that mothers generally used a more authoritative parenting style than fathers. A significant difference was found between PAQ-An mothers' and PAQ-An fathers' scores ( $t(64) = 2.51, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$ ). As predicted, fathers reportedly had a more authoritarian parenting style than mothers. Contrary to expectations mothers' PAQ-Perm and fathers' PAQ-Perm scores did not differ significantly ( $t(64) = .95, p > .05$ ) indicating that fathers were not reported to be more permissive than were mothers.

To examine whether female participants would report themselves to be more authoritative than male participants, and whether males would report

Table 2

*Mean PAQ2 Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive Sub-Scale Parenting Scores of Female and Male Participants*

	Female <i>n</i> = 41		Male <i>n</i> = 24	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PAQ2-An	25.94	5.64	29.21	5.82
PAQ2-Av	41.75	2.92	38.83	3.12
PAQ2-Perm	23.17	4.50	22.75	5.56

*Note:* PAQ2 = Parental Authority Questionnaire completed by the participants about their own parenting styles; An = Authoritarian sub-scale of the PAQ2; Av = Authoritative sub-scale of the PAQ2; and Perm = Permissive sub-scale of the PAQ2

themselves as being more authoritarian and permissive than female participants, three independent samples *t*-tests were performed. Means, standard deviations and sample sizes for male and female participants are depicted in Table 2.

Results indicated that there was a significant difference between female and male participants, PAQ-Av scores ( $t(63) = 3.80, p < .001, \eta^2 = .02$ ). As predicted, mothers in the sample reported themselves as more authoritative than did the fathers. Also, fathers reported a more authoritarian parenting style than did mothers: PAQ2-An scores ( $t(63) = 2.123, p < .05, \eta^2 = .07$ ). Contrary to expectations no significant differences were found between mother and fathers' PAQ-Perm scores ( $t(63) = .33, p > .05$ ) suggesting that fathers did not say they were more permissive than did mothers.

### Discussion

Results supported the hypothesis that the Greek-Australian sample would perceive their first generation immigrant parents as using a more authoritarian child rearing style than did the Anglo-Australian sample. The hypothesis that the second generation Greek-Australian parents would report adopting a more authoritative parenting style with their own children than their first generation Greek-Australian was supported. However, contrary to expectations, results from the Anglo-Australian group were very similar to those of the Greek-Australians with Anglo-Australian participants also reporting that they used a more authoritative parenting style than did their parents. Thus both cultural groups

reported significant cross-generational differences in parenting styles.

Regarding gender differences between mothers and fathers of the previous generation in both cultural groups, the findings supported the hypothesis that mothers would be reported as more authoritative than fathers. As predicted also, fathers were reported as having a more authoritarian parenting style than mothers. Contrary to expectations fathers were not perceived as more permissive than mothers and in fact there was little variation between the genders in permissive parenting scores.

In relation to gender differences between male and female participants, the findings supported the hypothesis that the mothers reported themselves as more authoritative than did the fathers sampled, who reported themselves as more authoritarian in their parenting style than did mothers. There were no gender differences in self-reported permissive parenting style.

The reported authoritarian parenting style of the first generation Greek-Australian immigrants was consistent with previous research findings which have indicated that first generation immigrants from collectivist cultures maintain an authoritarian parenting style even after immigration to an individualistic culture (Herz & Gullone, 1999; Nguyen & Williams, 1988; Rosenthal & Bornholt, 1988; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). In addition, the findings concerning the Anglo-Australian comparison group were consistent with previous research findings indicating that as members of an individualistic culture, the Anglo-Australians would be reported to use a more authoritative parenting style with

fewer attributes of an authoritarian parenting style (Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Rosenthal, 1984).

Nevertheless, although this cultural difference was significant, the effect was small, suggesting that the differences may involve other factors. For example, education differences between both the Greek and Anglo participants and their parents may be relevant, as argued in previous research (Dodge et al., 1994; MacPhee et al., 1996). The current study sample did not have a broad spread of educational levels amongst the previous generation, particularly amongst the first generation Greek-Australians. This is unsurprising given their immigrant status. This small spread of educational levels limited the possibility of relating parenting style to education. There were considerable educational differences between participants in both cultural groups and their parents. The great majority of the first generation Greek-Australian immigrants had only completed primary level or less schooling. Whilst their Anglo-Australian counterparts were slightly more educated, the great majority of them had also only completed some secondary schooling. The less educated first generation Greek-Australians were slightly more authoritarian than the Anglo-Australians. However, neither of the groups was highly educated and both were reported as having more authoritarian parenting styles than the subsequent generation. This is consistent with research demonstrating a link between lower levels of parental education and a more authoritarian parenting style (Aunola et al., 1999; Dodge et al., 1994; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Fox & Platz, 1995; Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992; MacPhee et al., 1996; McLoyd, 1990).

Thus while the second generation Greek-Australians used a more authoritative parenting style than their parents this may have been due either to acculturation to prevailing Australian values and beliefs about child rearing (Nyugen & Williams, 1988; Rosenthal, 1984; Rosenthal et al., 1996) and/or to the second generation's higher education levels. Supporting the role of education was the finding that Anglo-Australian participants also reported substantially more attributes of an authoritative parenting style than their parents. Whilst the differences obtained between the first and second generation Greek-Australians were expected, this finding that the two successive generations of Anglo-Australians would display marked variations in their parenting styles was not anticipated.

This change may best be described as a cohort effect, possibly reflective of changes in the Australian culture rather than reflective of acculturation processes in the Greek sample. The changes may be due to a combination of educational and societal factors. Generally all

participants were more highly educated than their parents. Dornbusch et al. (1987) found that higher levels of parental education were associated with a more authoritative parenting style.

Arguably within the Australian culture ideas about child rearing have changed over the past decades from a rigid authoritarian approach to a more flexible authoritative approach. A very brief examination of Australian social history from the 1920's, based on the qualitative research of Mackay (1997), provides an insight into these societal changes. The parents of the generation born in the 1920's and 1930's imposed very strict, rigid standards in the raising of their children. Parents believed that they had a right to impose their standards on their children and it was widely maintained that parental authority was paramount and had to be respected at all times. During the Depression of the 1920's and 1930's, accounts of harsh disciplinary measures used against their children were rife particularly amongst the uneducated, working class parents of that era. These accounts of harsh disciplinary measures are consistent with findings by McLoyd (1990) indicating that during periods of harsh economic deprivation, parents placed more emphasis on obedience to authority and often resorted to a more austere authoritarian type of parenting style. It was not until after World War II, throughout the 1950's and early 1960's, that Australia began to experience unprecedented economic growth and social development. This would appear to have been accompanied by changes to less rigid and authoritarian attitudes towards child rearing and a greater emphasis on the parent-child relationship. Parenting was also being studied more closely during this time with influential publications such as Dr Spock's *Baby and Child Care* encouraging a more child-centered approach to parenting (Mackay, 1997).

In the present sample, authoritative parenting was the most widespread style of parenting reported with the incidence of authoritarian parenting (as reported by the sample) having declined markedly. This cohort effect apparently influenced both Anglo and Greek participants, although it is accompanied by a considerable increase in education between the two generations.

The finding that mothers from both generations were reported as having significantly more attributes of an authoritative parenting style than fathers from both generations was consistent with a number of previous studies (Aunola et al., 1999; Klein et al., 1996; Russell et al., 1998; Russell et al., 2003; Smetana, 1995). The finding that fathers from both generations displayed significantly more attributes of an authoritarian parenting style than mothers of both generations is also congruent with previous research findings (Aunola et al., 1999;



Klein et al., 1996; Russell et al., 1998; Russell et al., 2003; Smetana, 1995).

There are a number of possible explanations for mothers' parenting being perceived as more authoritative and fathers' parenting as more authoritarian. One is that mothers generally spend more time with their children than fathers and may therefore be more care-oriented and attuned to the needs of their children (Aunola et al., 1999). Another explanation relates to gender differences in interpersonal style. Research has shown that females are higher on expressiveness and tend to be more connected with others, have more emotional openness and sensitivity to others' needs than males. This type of interpersonal style may foster a more responsive and democratic authoritative type of parenting style. Males have been found to be higher on instrumentality which refers to the striving of independence, mastery, task accomplishment and self assertiveness. These characteristics may be more likely to foster a less responsive style of parenting in favour of one that uses a more direct, non-reasoning and power asserting approach (Eagly, 1987). A third possible explanation may be that fathers are seen as providers and firm disciplinarians rather than as nurturers (Russell et al., 1998).

It is therefore of particular interest that the previous generation of fathers was reportedly more authoritarian than the current generation of fathers and that the previous generation of mothers was less authoritative than the current generation of mothers. This may reflect a societal trend towards a more lenient style of parenting that has influenced both males and females. Alternatively, social desirability considerations may have led participants to be more ready to report that their parents were more authoritarian and less authoritative than they reported themselves to be.

Contrary to the findings of previous research concerning permissive parenting styles (Russell et al., 1998) were the findings that neither the previous nor the current generation of fathers reportedly displayed a more permissive parenting style than mothers of either generation. Findings indicated little variation between the genders in permissiveness. In fact, the permissive parenting scores across both generations changed minimally and remained considerably lower than either authoritarian or authoritative parenting styles. Whilst the reasons for this are not clear, it may be that the study's largely middle class participants, and their parents before them, provided a structured family environment for their children and were interested in their children's wellbeing. Permissive parenting practices such as poor supervision, neglect and indifference towards their children were not

reported as characteristics of the current sample and their parents.

While the study's small sample requires that findings be treated cautiously, results suggest that a generational change has occurred in the preferred mode of parenting style. This suggestion of a societal trend towards an authoritative style implies that cultural explanations of changes in child rearing patterns may not be as applicable as has been believed. For example, these findings do not support the argument that in some instances it is not until the third or fourth generations that families fully acculturate and take on the characteristics of the host culture, at least regarding parenting styles (Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). While parenting involves important value systems, it may be subject to relatively rapid change from one generation to the next. It is probable that other elements of the old culture, for example, preparation and enjoyment of Greek food, are more strongly maintained by subsequent generations. Future research could investigate which cultural aspects from immigrants' country of origin are retained and which are replaced by those of the host culture.

The finding that fathers across both generations and both cultural groups were more authoritarian and mothers more authoritative supports a traditional image of parenting (Klein et al., 1996). This may imply that children acquire gender typed preferences and behaviours from their parents and model their own behaviour on their same-sex parent, consistent with gender schema theory (Martin & Halverson, 1981; Russell et al., 1998).

It is also important to note that the present study's assessment of parenting styles relied on self reports of participants' own parenting styles and on participants' perceptions of the way they were parented by their mothers and fathers. However the effectiveness of such data in determining parenting styles has been established in existing parenting literature (Lamborn et al., 1991; Smetana, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1989, 1991).

In conclusion, findings suggested that first generation Greek-Australians were slightly more authoritarian parents than their respective Anglo-Australian counterparts. This style of parenting declined markedly with the following generation who were found to exhibit more authoritative tendencies regardless of their cultural background. Whilst this supported the notion that second generation immigrants acculturated more readily than their parents, the fact that Anglo-Australian participants child rearing patterns also differed significantly from those of their parents suggested that there may be an overall societal trend towards a more lenient and democratic style of parenting. Gender differences were

also observed with males from both generations displaying a greater tendency towards an authoritarian style and females of both generations demonstrating greater use of an authoritative parenting style. As an authoritative style in individualistic cultures is deemed by child development experts to be one of the most positive and effective parenting methods, males' parenting skills could perhaps be enhanced by encouraging them to foster more attributes of an authoritative parenting style.

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### Research Profile

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