Chapter 4
Perceived Parenting-Style: Its Central Role in Psychological Adjustment and Academic Achievement of Argentinean Students

Mercedes Fernández Liporace and Guadalupe de la Iglesia

4.1 Introduction

Parenting has been historically supported in cultural traditions. These customs used to rely on philosophical or religious values imparted generationally or by religious leaders. Recently the topic acquired a new scientific interest. This new found curiosity triggered a vast amount of studies on the subject. Since then, research on this matter has proliferated.

Most of the questions aim to detect which parenting styles or practices function as protective factors of the individual's psychological adjustment or achievement in different areas – mostly educational ones. Which styles promote a better academic performance? Does perceived parenting relate to adaptive coping? How is parenting associated to social support? These are some examples of inquiries which are – with time – increasingly starting to get answers.

4.2 How Is Parenting Studied?

A controversy in the study of parenting relies upon which is the right methodology for data recollection. Is it better to ask the offspring about their parents´ behavior? Would it be more accurate to request the parents to describe their parenting practices? Or should researchers cover both sources of information and investigate both parties? Certainly, this last option is the least accessible though the most reliable.

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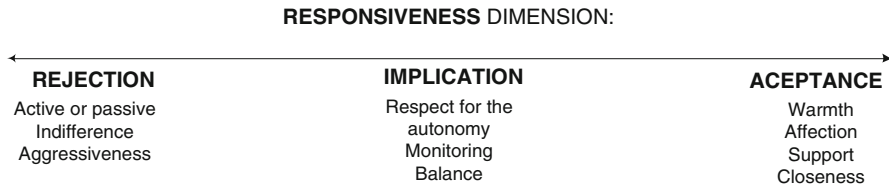e-mail: mliporac@psi.uba.ar; gdelaiglesia@psi.uba.ar

RESPONSIVENESS DIMENSION:

REJECTION	IMPLICATION	ACEPTANCE
Active or passive Indifference Aggressiveness	Respect for the autonomy Monitoring Balance	Warmth Affection Support Closeness

Fig. 4.1 Parenting dimensions: responsiveness

From a cognitive perspective the spotlight is on assessing the perception that children have of their parents´ behavior dismissing their real conduct (Ausubel et al., 1954; Schaefer, 1965; Serot & Teevan, 1961). In this respect, Maccoby and Martin (1983) indicate that the participants of an interaction react not just to the other's behavior but to their own interpretation of what the other is doing. This way, an analysis from the offspring perspective results a valid method for measuring parenting.

In addition, the study of parenting has had various angles, varying from author to author and even within one researcher's work across time. In occasions the analysis comprehended the postulation of global *dimensions* that compose the phenomenon; in others, several *categories* of parenting styles were constituted by theoretical or statistical criteria. This two major methods – the dimensional and the categorical – have been the most commonly used when trying to measure parenting (Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

4.2.1   Dimensions or Categories?

The operationalization of parenting from the dimensional approach converged in the study of two major aspects: parental *responsiveness* and *demandingness*. One can see how these two components are pointed out as central in the tasks parents have when socializing their children. This happens even in theories which in essence are very different, like the work of Erikson (1963) or that of Minuchin (1974), who represent two theories as dissimilar as psychoanalysis and the systemic model. These two dimensions were the base of practically every proposed parenting model and are identifiable throughout many other theoretical postulations. To begin with, we shall describe them.

The main component of this *response to the child* is related to the degree of affection expressed by parents in terms of warmth, concern, dialogue, closeness, affection, support, listening. This dimension is considered bipolar –see Fig. 4.1, with affective acceptance in one extreme and affective rejection in the other (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1971; Baumrind, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rohner, 2004).

The principal characteristic of the second dimension is the demand of certain behaviors from parents to the children – see Fig. 4.2. This entails the set in motion of some control over them which will include limits, prohibitions, punishments, rules, discipline. Also a bipolar dimension, firmness is in one pole and negligence in the
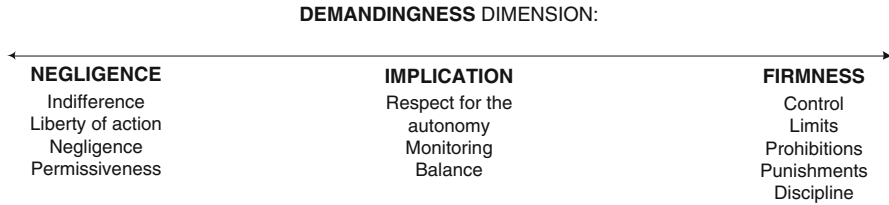
DEMANDINGNESS DIMENSION:

NEGLIGENCE	IMPLICATION	FIRMNESS
Indifference	Respect for the	Control
Liberty of action	autonomy	Limits
Negligence	Monitoring	Prohibitions
Permissiveness	Balance	Punishments
		Discipline

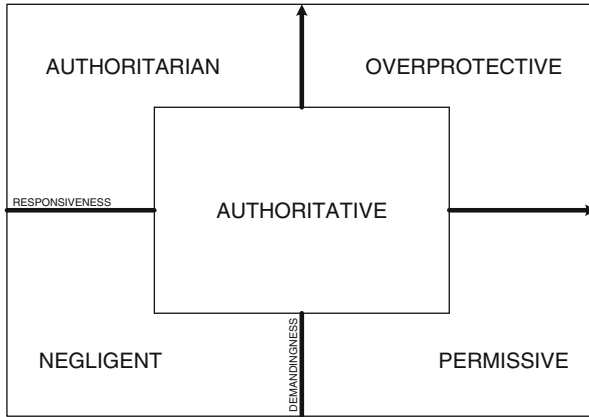**Fig. 4.2** Parenting dimensions: demandingness

Fig. 4.3 Five parenting styles model (de la Iglesia et al., 2011a; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Schaefer, 1997)

opposite. Sometimes when control is present it is assessed as normal or pathological. The presented approach for the measurement of the demandingness dimension does not contemplate that difference as it measures the degree of presence of control but not its type (Ballesteros, 2001; Baumrind, 1996; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009).

But, as mentioned before, there is another very used method to study parenting: the categorical perspective. Under this perspective, a complete consensus was not found either. However, Maccoby and Martin's (1983) four-styles model has shown to be the most employed – authoritarian, permissive, negligent and authoritative. Yet, it does not cover completely the possible parenting styles – not including the overprotective one (Levy, 1931, 1938, 1939, 1966; Schaefer, 1997) and it is not accurate in the representation of a parenting style named authoritative, described as the most balanced position. In aiming to amend this, a five-style typology that combines Maccoby and Martin's (1983) as well as Schaefer's (1997) – a typology that includes the overprotective style along with several intermediate styles – proposals was introduced (de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernandez Liporace, 2011a). It included the following parenting styles: authoritarian, permissive, negligent, overprotective and authoritative – see Fig. 4.3. As its predecessors it is based in the combination of parental responsiveness and demandingness.

The *authoritarian* style (Baumrind, 1966, 1991a, 1991b; Dwairy, 2007; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Merino & Arndt, 2004) is characterized for its emphasis in child control. The main target is obtaining child obedience. Parents use punishment as a way of control. Their goal is that their children follow their behavior standards. They value obedience and allow themselves to take punitive or force measures in conflictive situations. The environment thus generated is regulated by rules with not explained justifications.

Parents with a *permissive* style (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b; Dwairy, 2007; Merino & Arndt, 2004) tend to allow child autonomy, expecting that they self-regulate their own behaviors by making their own decisions. They are warm to their children. Avoiding confrontation is also one of their main characteristics.

Negligent parents (Baumrind, 1966, 1991a, 1991b; Merino & Arndt, 2004) are not punitive and show little or no interest in their parenting responsibilities. They accept any impulse or behavior of their children as natural. Usually this is perceived by children as a resource to obtain what they want. In this case parents pretend that their children self-regulate their behaviors. Moreover, they are rejecting and neglecting their parental responsibilities.

The *overprotective* style (Levy, 1938, 1939, 1966; Richaud de Minzi & Sacchi, 2004) is characteristic of parents who do not allow their children to develop their own initiative and who control their relations with peers. Physical and social contact is excessive. Infantilization is prolonged. They discourage independent behavior and social maturity. There is excessive parental control or overindulgence.

Finally, the *authoritative* style is thought to be the one which favors a better psychological state (Baumrind, 1971). Authoritative parents (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Merino & Arndt, 2004) impart warmth and control, allowing their children to become more and more autonomous. They use reasoning to impart their limits justifying their decisions and rules. They dialogue with their children listening to what they have to say. They are assertive but not intrusive or restrictive.

So which is the better approach? The dimensional or the categorical? Although the major dimensions have an unquestionable effect on children's outcomes, they are mutually influenced, resulting in the categorical perspective as the most complete view (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). However, both standpoints are recognized as relevant and necessary. The first one allows us to consider the effect of each dimension independently and the latter permits us to watch the combined effect.

4.3   What Kind of Consequences Perceived Parenting Promotes in the Offspring?

The central tendency in the research line is focused in identifying, among other things, the consequences that perceived parenting has in psychological adjustment and achievement in areas of importance according to age. When thinking about infants is common knowledge that the way parents raise them will affect in

an important degree their lives as a whole. Adolescents, also show clear traits of their upbringing. But, do parenting styles still have impact in young adulthood? Some seem to think this is certain and should be regarded with the same importance that scholars assume it has in childhood and in adolescence (Anisman, Zaharia, Meaney, & Merali, 1998; Maccoby, 1994; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Rothrauff, Cooney & An, 2009).

The consequences of parenting have been mostly assessed in children population, being infants the most studied group about their perceived parenting. Researchers around the world have concluded, for example that some styles were predictors of social responsibility, high academic achievement and self-regulated, independent, purposive behavior (Baumrind, 1971, 1975; Cheah, Leung, Tahseen, & Schultz, 2009; Jennings et al., 2008). Other parenting styles, however, were pointed out as the cause of difficulties in the expression of emotions, the lack of social responsibility, the presence of child fears, irritability and vulnerability, as well as the possibility of less independence and personal responsibility and alcohol abuse (Baumrind, 1971; Lengua, 2006; Lengua & Kovacs, 2005; Tildesley & Andrews, 2008).

In adolescents, some socialization practices have been identified as protective factors of possible alcohol and substance abuse, and have been linked to high self-esteem, better academic achievement, social competence, psychological adjustment or prosocial behaviors (Baumrind, 1991a, 1991b; Brody et al., 2009; Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson, 2007; Fletcher, Steinberg, & Sellers, 1999; García & Gracia, 2009; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Simons & Conger, 2007). In contrast, other parenting behaviors promote unpleasant results such as antisocial behaviors, psychological disorders, decelerating the development of social self-confidence, independence and initiative (Benson, Buehler, & Gerard, 2008; Brand, Crous, Bernhardt, & Hanekom, 1990; Dwairy, 2007; Dwairy & Dor, 2009; Jablonski, 2008; Saint-Jacques & Lépine, 2009; Vieno, Nation, Pastore, & Santinello, 2009).

Rohner and Veneziano (2001) ascertained that parenting affects the offspring development from childhood to adulthood. Nevertheless, young adults have not been subjects of much interest in the research of parenting and its possible consequences. Some findings in this population show that psychological distress, depressive states, self-criticism and lack of self-confidence are related to particular parenting styles (McCranie & Bass, 1984; Schwarz & Zuroff, 1979). The study of this age group is of interest in psychology and there is a clear lack of knowledge of how the effects of socialization practices remain in adult life.

4.4 Perceived Parenting in Latin America

Parenting investigations in Latin America are recent but have developed widely in a short time. Though Brazil, Mexico and Colombia stand out as the countries with most research on the subject, these are not the only countries. Peru, Costa Rica, Chile, and of course, Argentina have began to make their way in this field.

4.4.1 Brazilian Results

Brazil, as said, is the country that shows most research in the subject (Mafioletti Macarini, Dal Forno Martins, Minetto, & Vieira, 2010).

Some psychometric tests have been developed or adapted (da Costa, Teixeira, & Gomes, 2000; Pereira Teixeira, Machado Oliveira, & Hastenpflug Wottrich, 2006). Simultaneously, Dobrianskyj Weber, Müller Prado, Viezzer, and Justen Brandenburg (2004) tried to answer the mentioned methodological question concerning the measure of parenting from the parents or the offspring view. They found that despite the fact that both measures were not exactly the same, they correlated positively and significantly.

Additionally, parenting from a broad perspective has been found to be determined in some degree by the family socioeconomic status (de Castro Ribas & Bornstein, 2005; de Castro Ribas, Seidl de Moura, & Bornstein, 2003) and has been linked to the development of personal values in adolescents (Moraes, Camino, da Costa, Camino, & Cruz, 2007; Pereira Teixeira & Melo Lopes, 2005). Positive parenting practices have been associated with high academic achievement (Sapienza, Aznar-Farias, & Silvares, 2009) and negative ones were more likely to be perceived by firstborns (Sampaio & Vieira, 2010). Also, divorced mothers were found to be more involved with their children (Grzybowski & Wagner, 2010). Mothers were more intrusive and simultaneously more rejecting with their sons than with their daughters (de Oliveira, Frizzo, & Marin, 2000). Demandingness was associated with adolescents stress while responsiveness functioned as a protective factor for stress (Justo & Novaes Lipp, 2010) and depression (Nuhlmann Schneider & Röhnelt Ramires, 2007). In this line, authoritarian styles predicted behavior problems (de Oliveira, College, Marin, Pires, & Frizzo, 2002) and the development of Anti-Social Personality Disorder (Wellausen & Ruschel Bandeira, 2010). Lastly, consistent parenting was more likely in children with better social skills (Turini Bolsoni Silva & Marturano, 2007).

4.4.2 Mexican Research

Mexican researchers have also developed various psychometric instruments to assess parenting (Aguilar, Valencia, & Romero, 2004; Andrade & Betancourt, 2008; Betancourt Ocampo & Andrade Palos, 2007; Márquez-Caraveo, Hernández-Guzmán, Aguilar Villalobos, Pérez-Barrón, & Reyes-Sandoval, 2007; Palacios & Andrade, 2006; Rivera Heredia & Andrade Palos, 2010; Segura-Celis Ochoa, Vallejo-Casarín, Osorno-Munguía, Rojas-Rivera, & Reyes-García, 2011).

When it comes to results of investigations that involved parenting dimensions or styles, Betancourt Ocampo and Andrade Palos (2011), for example, found that psychological control had a bigger influence than behavior control in matters of emotional and behavioral problems in Mexican adolescents. In this line, an authoritarian style of either parent was related to depressive symptoms in female teenagers

(Vallejo Casarín, Osorno Murguía, & Mazadiego Infante, 2008). Also, it was found that in male adolescents, perception of love from the father was associated with less depressive symptoms, a more positive body image, and when combined with less mother control, it was related to higher self-esteem (Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001). Andrade Palos, Betancourt Ocampo, and Palacios Delgado, (2006) detected that female teenagers who had initiated their sexual activity had less communication and attachment with both parents and felt more rejection from the mother. In the case of boys, more communication and more permissiveness from both parents, as well as more perceived rejection from the mother characterized them.

Mexican adolescents also had higher self-esteem when parents monitored their behavior and respected their autonomy – had an authoritative style (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004). Parental overprotection, on the other hand, correlated negatively with one of the components of their conception of psychological well being: positive relations with other (Vallejo, Aguilar, & Valencia, 2001, 2002).

Solís-Cámara, Díaz, Medina-Cuevas, and Barranco-Jiménez (2008) studied the prevalence of interparental inconsistency and its relation to the upbringing and expectations of their children. Mexican scholars have emphasized the need for research on the relationship between parenting and academic achievement in their society (Vallejo Casarín & Mazadiego Infante, 2006), and some have already found associations with it in children (Solís-Cámara et al., 2007). Finally, an interesting breakthrough in Mexican research is the evaluation of a training program which aims to train leaders in parenting which will eventually carry on interventions for training parents (Solís-Cámara & Díaz Romero, 1999).

4.4.3   The Colombian Case

An emphasized research line in Colombia is the study of roles and their changes in the Colombian family (Ardila, 1988; Gutiérrez, 1976; Maldonado & Micolta, 2003; Martínez, 2001; Micolta León, 2007; Puyana, 2003; Vanegas & Londoño, 2000). However, the study of consequences associated with parenting styles seems to be also a trend and research focused in the use of one psychometric test for parenting assessment in particular (Ballesteros, 2001). Parental control was found to be connected to lesser time dedicated to play with children (Caycedo et al., 2005), anxiety, depression, aggressive behavior and breaking of rules in adolescents (Cabrera García, Guevara Marín, & Barrera Currea, 2006). Aggressive behaviors in parents were related to aggressive behaviors in children (Álvarez Gallego, 2010; Chaux, 2003).

Parents were found to be more controlling with adolescents and more affectionate with children (Mahecha & Martínez, 2005). Dialogue was related to adherence to treatment in diabetic children (Novoa Gómez, Morales Palencia, Osorio Domínguez, & Vargas Gutiérrez, 2008). An authoritative style was associated with a better emotional development in terms of sympathy, emotional regulation and emotional comprehension (Henao López & García Vesga, 2009).

4.4.4   *Peruvian, Costa Rican and Chilean Findings*

As mentioned before, although other Latin American countries do not represent the *avant-garde* in the subject, some of them have some attractive findings to show.

In Peru, for instance, the study of the evolution of parenting in families has also been of interest (Izzedin Bouquet & Pachajoa Londoño, 2009; Merino, 2006). Merino and Arndt (2004) found that the parenting styles more frequently perceived by adolescents were authoritarian, permissive and negligent, and that fathers were more negligent with boys and more authoritarian with girls. Various psychometric tests have been adapted to assess parenting from the perspective of children (Merino, Cohen, & Díaz, 2003), adolescents (Merino, 2003), adults (Merino & Díaz, 2003) and parents (Becerra, Roldán, & Aguirre, 2008; Merino Soto, Díaz Casapía, & DeRoma, 2004).

Finally, Costa Rica accounts a qualitative research line of how children theorize about punishments imposed by parents (Sánchez Gutierrez, 2009). Chile developed a scale to measure in what degree parents perceive themselves as efficient in playing their parenting roles (Farkas Klein, 2008).

4.5   Perceived Parenting in Argentina

Research on parenting has some precedents in Argentina, being studied only in children and adolescents. A few psychometric scales were developed in Argentinean population for the assessment of perceived parenting in children (Richaud de Minzi, 2002, 2007), in adolescents (Richaud de Minzi, 2005a; Schmidt, Barreyro, & Maglio, 2010) and in young adults (de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernández Liporace, 2011b), and for the measurement of parental tolerance towards children behavior as well (Samaniego, 2010).

When it comes to the study of parenting and its consequences in offspring's outcomes, Richaud de Minzi (2006a, 2006b, 2009), for instance, found that parental acceptance was related to adaptive coping, to prosocial behaviors, and functioned as a protective factor from loneliness and depression during childhood. Concerning adolescence, some investigations aimed to describe parenting in this stage of life (Moreno, 2007). Permissive styles were related to autonomy and were identified as protective factors from loneliness, while acceptance was linked to adaptive coping and pathological control was associated with depression and perfectionism (Richaud de Minzi, 2005a, 2005b; Richaud de Minzi, Sacchi, Moreno, & Oros, 2005). Other studies showed that a warm relationship has a clear link to self-esteem, less substance abuse, depressive symptoms and antisocial behavior (Facio, Batistuta, Micocci, & Vivas, 2003; Facio & Resett, 2007).

Gallo (2010) studied with a qualitative methodology how the liaisons with parental authority have changed over time and also analyzed its reflection in liaisons with school authority. To finish, Casullo and Fernández Liporace (2008) studied perceived parental consistency in adolescents. They found that the parental couple had

a moderate interparental consistency in the level of control imparted as well as when intraparental consistency was considered. Parental consistency was also characteristic of mothers and fathers with higher educational level and higher socioeconomic status. Also, the levels of perceived control were lower in the case of fathers when parents were divorced.

4.5.1 How Are Argentinean People Raised?

The culture in which the family is living in has a fundamental influence in the way parents conceive and practice their children´s socialization (Dwairy, 2007). Harkness and Super (2006) described *parental ethnotheories* as different implicit assumptions of which is the "natural" way of raising children. They can be more *etic*, thought likely universal and being found in many cultures across de world, and consequently studied by the scientific community as an outsider observer; otherwise they can be more specific or *emic,* being considered particular of a group or population and therefore being analyzed taking into account what the very social actors say about the investigated phenomenon (McNeely & Barber, 2010; Pike, 1954; Yau-Fai Ho, 1994).

Moreno (2007) pointed out that in the first half of the twentieth century, Argentinean upbringing was characterized by people being raised in a very structured family system, defined by the obedience of children. Parents were regarded as role models. In the second half of the same century, however, parents started to lose power and authority. The imposition of norms began to be seen as repressive. As a consequence, parents stopped setting boundaries, with the current scene distinguished by the lack of control over offspring behavior.

In the same line, but from a philosophical approach, Barylko (1992) refers that 1950 was the beginning of the *permissive century*. In Spain – a country that shares many similarities with Argentina since many Argentineans have Spanish ascendance, the outlook is the same. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2003) remarked that the scenario of Spanish childrearing is inserted in and individualized society in which the lack of guidelines and responsibilities in the family prevail. Meil (1999) also shares this view, highlighting the great amount of Spanish fathers and mothers that show permissive parenting styles having little control over their children and, in consequence, a likely symmetrical relation with them.

Bornstein et al. (1998) carried out a study that examined the self-perception of parenting in mothers from many countries: Argentina, Belgium, France, Israel, Italy, Japan and the United States. At first they described Argentinean parenting practices as *uncertain* as there were no clear rules about how a father or a mother should behave. Despite this uncertainty, they indicated that the authoritarian style is the most frequent. Results also included a description of the self-perception of Argentinean mothers regarding their parenting. They described themselves as little competent in their parental role and little involved in their children upbringing. The authors emphasized that Argentina does not have a public health system that

provides help or advice on parenting. A consequence of this is that mothers go to family members or friends for advice, and also they tend to undermine their parenting role. It is interesting to be noticed that this research included urban middle class and low-middle class cases – majority in Argentinean population, excluding higher class and lower class participants.

4.5.2   Which Is the Picture for Argentinean College Students?

With the purpose of continuing the ongoing research in Argentina, a study including 369 college students was carried out. They were asked about their perception of parenting with the *Perceived Parenting Styles and Inconsistency Scale* – EPIPP (de la Iglesia et al., 2011b), developed *ad hoc* for the same authors. This instrument assesses parenting in a dimensional and categorical manner. Results of measures include: parent responsiveness, parent demandingness, interparental inconsistency, intraparental inconsistency, and parenting style, represented by the five-factor model as a result of the integration of Maccoby and Martin's (1983) and Schaefer's (1997) proposals – authoritarian, permissive, negligent, overprotective and authoritative[1] (de la Iglesia et al., 2011a).

In addition, participants were questioned about their perceived social support by means of the *Social Support Scale* (Fernández Liporace, Castro Solano, & Contini de González, 2006; Fernández Liporace & Ongarato, 2005; Nolten, 1994) which in this case was used to measure perceived total social support. Also, their coping styles were examined by the *Coping Inventory for Adolescents and College Students* (Moss, 1993; Ongarato, de la Iglesia, Stover, & Fernández Liporace, 2009; Rial Boubeta, de la Iglesia, Ongarato, & Fernández Liporace, 2011) considering the frequency of use of approach coping – cognitive and behavioral – and avoidance coping – cognitive and behavioral. Finally, it was of interest to assess some aspects of their academic achievement such as: the amount of passed courses in total, the proportion of passed courses regarding the time since initiating college studies, how many failed evaluations they had, how many times they dropped out of a course, and if they finished an introductory and mandatory course for all careers on the stipulated time.

4.5.3   Perceived Parental Responsiveness and Demandingness in Argentinean College Students

Initial analyses considered parenting dimensions related to coping styles – Fig. 4.4. As expected, students who used more frequently cognitive and behavioral approaches for coping – considered as healthy ways to deal with stressful situations – perceived

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[1] This integration, proposed by de la Iglesia et al. (2011a), was described in the paragraph titled *Dimensions or categories?*
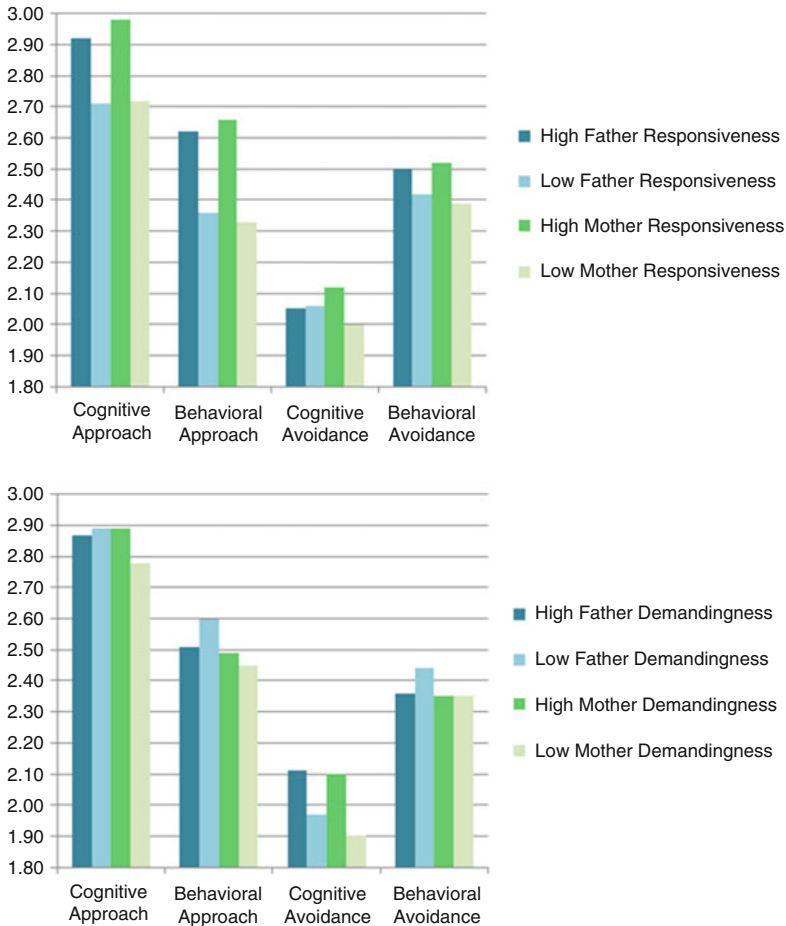
Fig. 4.4 Differences in coping styles regarding parental responsiveness and demandingness

high responsiveness from fathers and mothers. On the other hand, the perception of high demandingness from the mother was found in those students who used an avoidant cognitive coping modality more often.

Next, perceived social support was examined. In this case differences were only found in parental responsiveness – Fig. 4.5. A high perception of responsiveness from the father as well as from the mother was related to a higher perception of social support. No differences were found when considering parental demandingness.

Looking into one of the different aspects of academic achievement included in the study, students who had a higher proportion of passed courses perceived higher father and mother responsiveness – Fig. 4.6. No differences were found when studying parental demandingness.
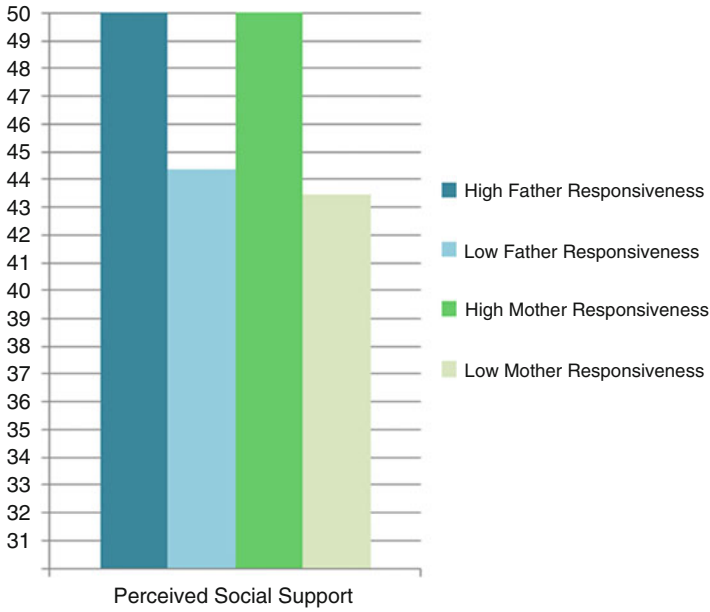
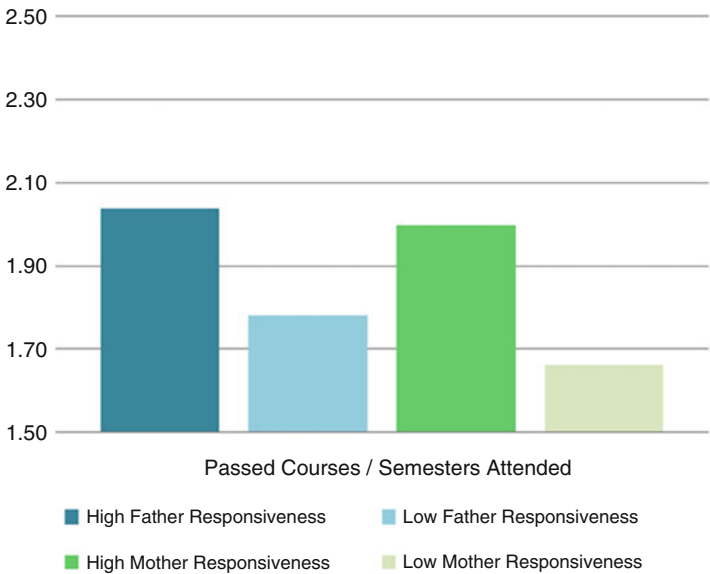**Fig. 4.5** Differences in perceived social support regarding parental responsiveness

Fig. 4.6 Differences in the proportion of passed courses/semesters attended regarding parental responsiveness
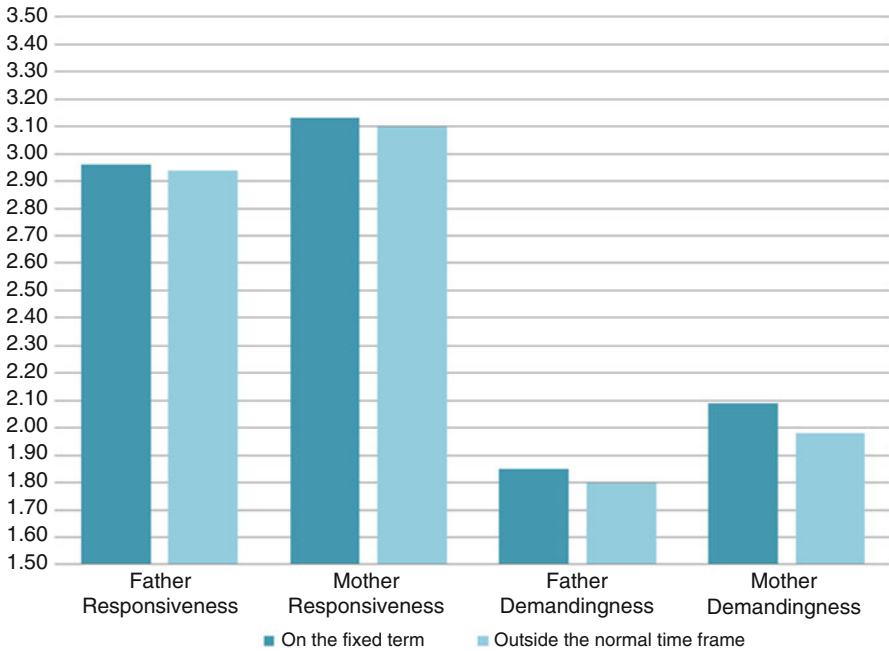
Fig. 4.7 Parenting dimensions in students who finished on time and outside the normal time frame

On the other hand, students who passed the introductory and mandatory courses on time – another indicator of academic achievement – perceived higher mother demandingness. As seen in Fig. 4.7, although no significant differences were found when contemplating parental – mother and father – responsiveness and father demandingness, the tendency was the same.

Finally, students who had dropped out of at least one course in their academic career perceived higher father demandingness – Fig. 4.8. In this case no differences were found regarding parental responsiveness and mother demandingness though again the tendency was the same as the one found on father demandingness.

4.5.4   Perceived Parenting Styles in Argentinean College Students

From a parenting styles perspective, the authoritarian one showed to be the most harmful. For instance, when analyzing coping styles students exhibited a lesser use of approach cognitive coping style if the father was authoritarian. Also, they used less approach cognitive coping when the mother was authoritarian or neglectful, and less approach behavioral coping style when the mother was authoritarian – Fig. 4.9.
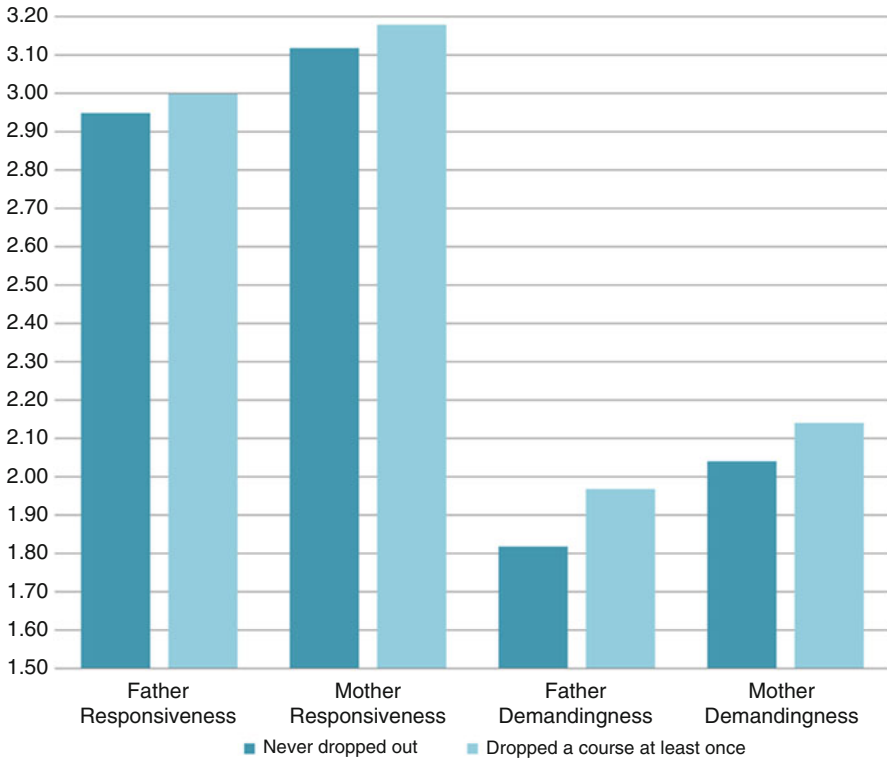
Fig. 4.8 Parenting dimensions for students who never dropped a course and those who dropped a course at least once

Besides, measures of social support showed that authoritarian styles from the father or the mother were common in those students who perceived less support – Fig. 4.10.

Finally, students with an authoritarian mother had passed less courses considering the amount of time since started studying – Fig. 4.11.

4.6 Conclusions: The Importance of Responsiveness

Previous studies provided clear foundations for the assumption that when taking into account only parental *responsiveness,* its importance in psychological well-being is unquestionable whether considering children (Jennings et al., 2008; Lengua, 2006; Novoa Gómez et al., 2008; Richaud de Minzi, 2005b, 2006b) or adolescents (Benjet & Hernandez-Guzman, 2001; Brody et al., 2009; Carlo et al., 2007; Facio & Resett, 2007; Facio et al., 2003; Fletcher et al., 1999; Justo & Novaes Lipp, 2010; Saint-Jacques & Lépine, 2009).
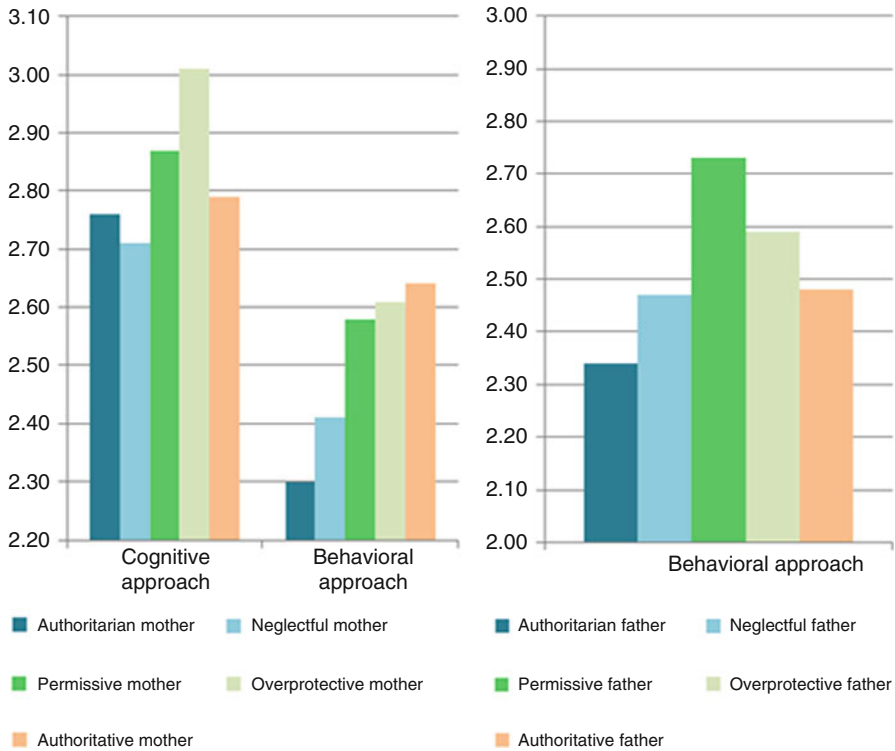
Fig. 4.9 Coping styles regarding parenting styles

When looking into the variables analyzed here, the state of the art showed that more responsive parenting was linked to a higher perception of social support (Gayman, Turner, Cislo, & Eliassen, 2011) and to the use of adaptive coping responses (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Valiente, Fabes, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2004; Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & Swanson, 2009).

In the analysis carried out with Argentinean college students, responsiveness – as expected – stood out as the most important parenting dimension. Similarly to what was found in other age groups by the above mentioned researches, social support was higher when parents were more responsive. In addition, parental responsiveness made a difference in the way students cope with stress. Adaptive coping – cognitive and behavioral approach – was a characteristic of those who perceived higher affection. As this kind of coping allows individuals to search different ways to solve stressful situations and, in addition, to set in motion several possible actions, it is described as a definite healthy attribute to have. When studying other age groups, high controlling parenting was linked to avoidant coping (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Richaud de Minzi, 2006a; Zhou et al., 2008). This style of management of stressing settings has been proved to be unhealthy as the unstable factor does not
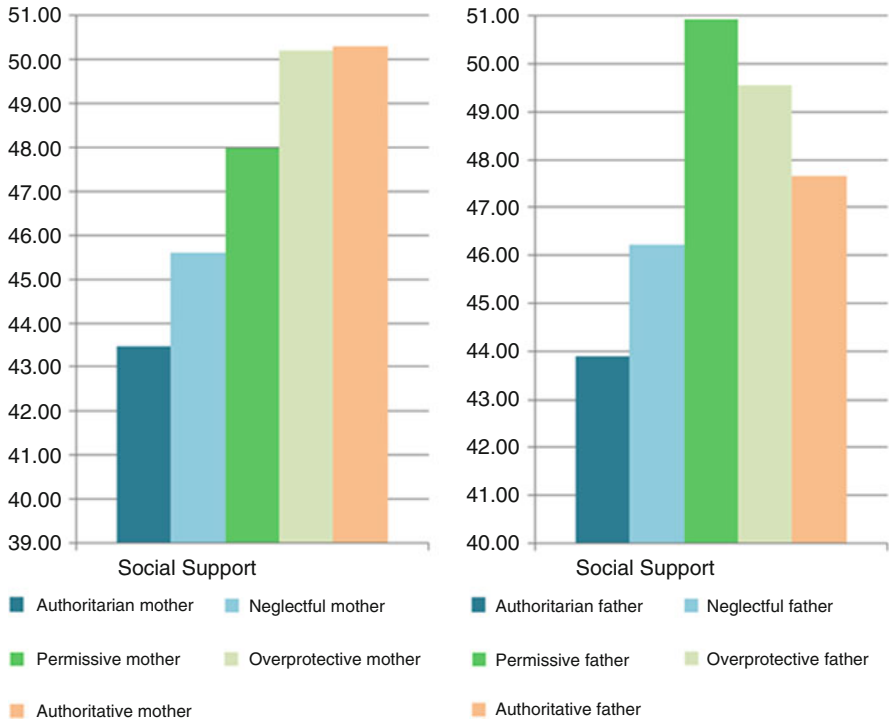
**Fig. 4.10** Social support regarding parenting styles

disappear for the individual, who does not deal with it. In the college sample this finding was replicated since demandingness was associated with avoidant coping – behavioral.

Finally, responsiveness was linked to a higher academic achievement in elementary school (Iruka, Burchinal, & Cai, 2010; Saracho, 2007) and high school (Fletcher et al., 1999; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Sapienza et al., 2009). In the sample studied here, a better academic achievement was related to both high responsiveness and demandingness.

It is interesting that from the dimensional perspective responsiveness occupies a distinctive part in the emergence of healthy psychological states and demandingness seems to be associated mostly to the opposite. Furthermore, the way students perceive warmth or the limits their parents imparted have a clear relation with those outcomes, albeit several of them no longer live with them. This remarks the fact that socialization practices still have an impact on offspring as they go through adulthood (Anisman, Zaharia et al., 1998; Maccoby, 1994; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Rothrauff et al., 2009).

Despite the importance of these findings, there is a lack of the consideration that both central socialization dimensions do not occur independently one from another.

Fig. 4.11 Proportion of passed curses/semesters attended regarding parenting styles
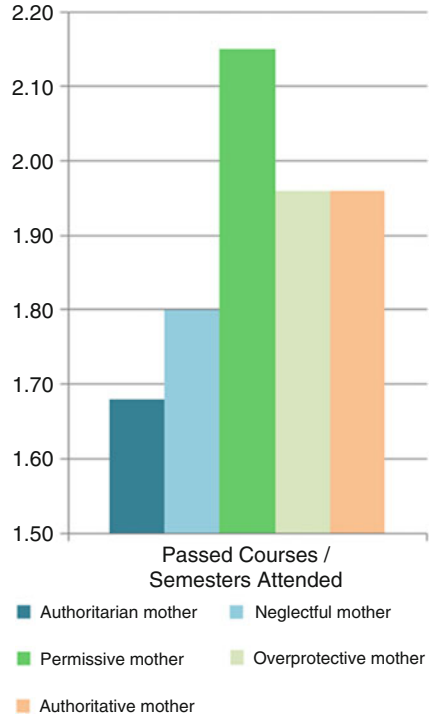
The categorical approach of perceived parenting allows us to see the phenomenon as a whole, contemplating both dimensions in conjunction. In previous research, authoritative and permissive styles were associated with approach coping strategy (Dusek & Danko, 1994; Richaud de Minzi, 2006a) and overprotective parents were characterized as having children who use avoidance coping strategies (Blechman & Culhane, 1993). Argentinean college students used, in general, less approach coping style when parents were authoritarian and, in the case of the mother also when she was neglectful. Having a parent with an authoritarian style was also a characteristic of students who perceived less social support, particular finding which is not comparable with any previous study.

When looking into academic achievement authoritative style has been linked to better achievement in children (Baumrind, 1971; Cheah et al., 2009) and to permissive style in adolescents (Fletcher et al., 1999; García & Gracia, 2009; Kim & Rohner, 2002; Simons & Conger, 2007). In contrast, authoritarian style has been coupled with poor academic achievement in children (Baumrind, 1971, 1991a; Kim & Rohner, 2002; García & Gracia, 2009) and with negligent parenting style in adolescents (García & Gracia, 2009). Again, replicating results in other populations, Argentinean college students had worse academic performance when the mother was authoritarian.

In sum, a curious happening occurs when analyzing from a parenting styles perspective. The parenting style that shows to be associated with worse psychological and academic achievement consequences is the authoritarian one. This is, the presence of high demandingness and low responsiveness. One may think that high demandingness would have an even *worse* influence, no matter the amount of responsiveness perceived. Yet, responsiveness seems to have a protective role and function as a buffer. An example of this is the fact that overprotective parenting had no harmful outcomes associated to it, despite the high demandingness it contemplates. Another evidence of this, and an extremely important revelation, was the difference in academic achievement when analyzing from a dimensional and a categorical perspective. As the reader may recall, academic achievement was higher in students who perceived high responsiveness and also in those who perceived high demandingness. Nevertheless, when both dimensions were considered simultaneously high demandingness showed to have a detrimental effect when not associated with the presence of parent response. This is, the authoritarian style, once more, was the most damaging one.

Positive parenting practices characterized by love, affection, dialogue, not only has a positive effect in different aspects of offspring's adjustment but it also functions as a protective factor when negative parenting practices – demandingness – are also present. Since the effects of the degree of parental responsiveness and demandingness occur simultaneously the central role of parental responsiveness stands out. Intervention on parents is a controversial matter but – if possible – they would improve individuals´ well-being not only in childhood and adolescence, but also in adulthood.

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