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## Identity, perception of parent-adolescent relation and adjustment in a group of university students

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### Abstract

The parent-adolescent relations play an important role in developing identity process (Berzonsky, Branje, & Meeus, 2007; Meeus, Iedema, & Engels, 2005). This study investigates the role that identity plays in mediating relationships between parenting and social adjustment in a group of 112 college students. They completed: Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Bush-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995), Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker, Turpin, & Brown, 1979) and Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Results show associations between parental support and relational adjustment, between identity status and relational adjustment. Therefore, the identity commitment represents an important variable for emotional and social adjustment in adolescence.

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### 1. Introduction

Marcia (1989) defines the identity as a dynamic and not static structure whose formation depends on two key components: exploration of alternatives in relation to the objectives, beliefs and convictions; identity commitment with which adolescents make decisions on the relevant issues (Pellerone, 2013a).

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The exploration is often a sign of a crisis or the presence of doubts about important choices for their lives, which act as obstacles to the simultaneous formation of the commitment of identity (Lucky, Goossens, & Soenens, 2006; Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Wang, 2009).

Analyzing the two dimensions of identity, Marcia identifies four states that correspond to as many modes of relating to the events: a) Achievement (high level of exploration and commitment), b) Moratorium (good exploration commitment but not yet started), c) Foreclosure (commitment without-free exploration), d) Diffusion (low level of exploration and commitment).

From the Marcia's model, literature has investigated the relationship between identity and personality variables such as, social adaptation and relationships with parental figures, and found that: adolescents in the state of Achievement manifest a positive personality profile, with a few psycho-social problems and a good relationship with parents; adolescents in the state of Foreclosure have good communication with their parents, are not very outgoing, but available and open to changes. The subjects in the Moratorium, characterized by anxiety and tension for choices, show an adversarial relationship with parents; finally teenagers in state Diffusion explicit few psycho-social problems and establish an ambivalent relationship with their parents (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008). Furthermore, adolescents in a Foreclosure state and diffusion show a tendency to somatization and depression, and hostile behavior; adolescents in state of Achievement manifest a reduced level of anxiety, and they are more independent than those in Moratorium.

The interaction between socio - contextual and family factors seems crucial in determining behaviors, cognitive styles, personality characteristics, ways of relating that the individual in the process of identity formation feels as his own (Pellerone & Micciche, 2014b).

Psychological theorists (eg Blos, 1967; Erikson, 1968) have suggested that in this period adolescents are about to change their relationships with parents and the creation of their own identity. The teenagers begin to perceive themselves as active agent, responsible for their successes or failures, and to evaluate choices as a result of stand-alone processing. In this phase, the parental support has a fundamental role in the processes of autonomy identity; in particular, a secure attachment relationship with parents allows the adolescent to experience the emotional proximity, internalize the rules and parental values, acquire the "indicators" in which the young can see in the formulation of their choices (Pellerone & Micciche, 2014).

The family is, therefore, an important laboratory for decision -making adolescent: a good family communication allows adolescents to discuss options with parents decision and act on the basis of advice received (Pellerone, 2013b); when communication is problematic, adolescents have less chance to meet with their parents and accept the advice and suggestions received (Craparo, Gori, Mazzola, Petrucci, Pellerone & Rotondo, 2014).

As the adolescent grows and develops an adequate commitment decreases the instrumental and emotional support offered by the family. The latter is perceived as less important for the emotional adjustment of the young people, who feel that their ability to adapt can be attributed to their skills, and the peer group, and not to support that the family provides (Pellerone, 2014).

Meeus and colleagues (Meeus, Keijsers, & Branje, 2010) in this regard, shows how the social groups adolescents belong to may provide an important resource for the development of identity: the group provides the necessary emotional support that can improve the degree of commitment in the choices that you take; it becomes a resource for the quality and quantity of exploration in the choices that the adolescent monitors (identification processes).

In fact, while the family influences the level of commitment and exploration that the adolescent manifests in schools; the peer group influences the development of identity that the teenager will manifest in the relational domain.

## 2. Objectives and research hypothesis

This study investigates the role that development of identity plays in mediating the relationship between parenting and socio - relational adjustment in a group of adolescents . In particular it is assumed that:

- according to the literature (Wyttenbach, 2008) the parenting tie with the mother is positively related to socio - relational adaptation;
- the identity status is correlated with the socio - relational adjustment, as confirmed by literature (Meeus, Iedema, Maassen, & Engels, 2005);

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