

Loneliness and Depression in Middle and Late Childhood: The Relationship to Attachment and Parental Styles

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ABSTRACT. In this study, the author analyzed the relationship between (a) parenting and attachment and (b) self-competence, loneliness, and depression in children aged 8–12 years. The author administered (a) the Argentine Scale of Perception of the Relationships with Parents (M. C. Richaud de Minzi, 2004), (b) the Kerns' Security Scale (K. A. Kerns, L. Klepac, & A. K. Cole, 1996; M. C. Richaud de Minzi, C. Sacchi, & J. E. Moreno, 2001, Argentine adaptation), (c) the Self-Perception Profile for Children (S. Harter, 1985; M. C. Richaud de Minzi et al.), (d) the Dimensions of Depression Profile for Children and Adolescents (S. Harter & M. Nowakowski, 1987), and (e) the Louvain Loneliness Scale for Children and Adolescents (A. Marcoen, L. Goossens, & P. Caes, 1987; M. C. Richaud de Minzi et al.) to 1,019 children (8–12 years of age, 483 boys, 536 girls). Results indicated that attachment and parent–child relationship styles were differentiated constructs. Parents' acceptance promoted secure attachment and positive outcomes in children. Moreover, fathers' lack of interest had a marked negative effect. The author found differences in the perceptions and influences of fathers and mothers, which follow the cultural patterns of gender attribution.

Key words: attachment, loneliness, parenting, self-competence

IN THE RELATIONSHIP between parents and their children's healthy growth, some researchers have indicated that children are passive recipients (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969; Bowlby, 1969). Others have found that some children were biologically more prone than were others to develop a secure attachment. These differences show innate competence of children to persuade their caregivers to satisfy their physical needs and to help them regulate their emotional and behavioral reactions (Bronson, 2000). Therefore, the attachment system that children develop is the result of the interaction between the resources children bring at birth and the response capacity of their caregivers.

Secure attachment is manifest during infancy as an intimate relationship between the caregiver and the child, particularly in times of distress, "and the

child's use of the caregiver as a 'secure base' for exploration during times of nondistress. Regarding representations, the securely attached child would have a mental model of the caregiver as responsive and available and a corresponding model of its own self as worthy of care" (Dwyer, 2005, p. 158).

From this perspective, attachment security does not cover all, or even most, aspects of the parent-child relationship (Thompson, 1998). Although attachment security may be related to positive parent-child relationship quality and children's perceptions of supportive parenting (e.g., acceptance, commitment; Richaud de Minzi & Sacchi, 1997) the constructs are not identical. Therefore, it is important to determine the possible differential effects of attachment security and other aspects of the parent-child relationship on child development (Dwyer, 2005).

According to this perspective, one can presume that only some aspects of the parenting style would be specially connected with the development of the attachment system. This development and the relationships with parents may exert a differential influence on behavioral and emotional variables associated with children's development. The attachment system may have a special influence on various aspects of a child's development. The system will be different whether it proceeds mostly from children's perception of their parents' trust or of their availability.

Researchers have shown that caregivers who respond positively to children's demands increase the children's commitment to social relations and their desire to learn and comply with the norms of their social world (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974; Kochanska, 1993). In this way, the caregivers foster the development of social competence, which is essential for self-control and cognitive development. At the same time, the models, which are provided by people who are significant to children through their style of relationship also may influence prosocial behavior.

Physical contact, social and sense stimulation, and the capacity to respond to children's signs can contribute to feelings of security (Ainsworth et al., 1974). These feelings are at the basis of the development of trust (Erikson, 1963) and competent motivation (White, 1959, 1960), which promote an effective commitment to the physical and social environment.

It is therefore crucial to discover the different connections between attachment development and the wider parenting style and the evolution of social and cognitive self-competence, as well as with protection to experiencing feelings of depression and loneliness.

This study was supported by Grant PICT 1999 04-06300 from the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research, Argentina.

The author thanks Carla Sacchi, Matilde Bogani, and Máximo Eckel for their assistance with the test administration and evaluation.

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Gender and cultural differences occur in the development of the attachment system and in parent–child relationships. As in infancy (van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999), in middle and late childhood there might be cultural differences in the situations that activate the attachment system and in the kind of relationships with parents. Children tend to be more or less distressed by particular events depending on experiences and expectations within their culture. “Variations across cultures in the expression of negative emotions and expectations of autonomy and independence may influence both the activation and deactivation of the attachment behavioral system” (Dwyer, 2005, p. 158).

Belsky and Cassidy (1994) examined the development of attachment during infancy and early childhood. They also studied adolescents’ and adults’ general representations regarding attachment. However, few researchers have studied attachment during middle and late childhood (Dwyer, 2005).

Throughout childhood, cognitive and social abilities improve and knowledge bases increase; therefore, parents grant more autonomy and children expect more independence (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002). The purpose of attachment behavior is to achieve proximity from one person in particular to (a) be able to feel secure and thus deactivate the attachment system (Hinde, 1997) and (b) allow for the activation of other important behavioral systems, such as the exploratory and sociable systems (Dwyer, 2005).

Researchers have studied the influence of parenting during middle and late childhood but, to date, none have drawn a clear picture of the specific connection between parenting and attachment. Positive father–child relationships in middle childhood provide protection against depression and contribute to functional coping strategies, academic achievement, peer competence, and self-esteem (Grossmann, Grossmann, & Zimmermann, 1999; Kerns & Barth, 1995; Kerns & Stevens, 1996; Richaud de Minzi, 2005; Suess, Grossman, & Sroufe, 1992; Wagner & Phillips, 1992).

Involvement, encouragement of psychological autonomy, and demands for age-appropriate behavior in combination with limit setting and monitoring contribute to good psychosocial, academic, and behavioral adjustment among children and adolescents (Baumrind, 1991; Doyle, Moretti, Brendgen, & Bukowski, 2004; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). Doyle et al. indicated that parental involvement, psychological autonomy granting, and behavioral control are associated with security of attachment in middle and late childhood.

Child adjustment, parental involvement, and behavioral control are associated with greater social competence, autonomy, positive attitudes toward school and work, academic achievement, and self-esteem, as well as with less depression, less misconduct at school, and less delinquency and drug use (Allen & Hauser, 1996; Doyle et al., 2004; Parish & McCluskey, 1992; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). To protect against depressive moods, children’s security with their mothers seems to be particularly important (Margolese, Markiewicz, & Campini, 2001).

To study some of those issues during middle and late childhood, I analyzed the following points:

1. Because the attachment system is the result of the interaction between the characteristics of caregivers and children, how much does the type of parenting account for attachment development in children 8 to 12 years of age?
2. What is the connection between attachment and self-competence, depression, and loneliness in children 8 to 12 years of age?
3. What is the connection between parenting and self-competence, depression, and loneliness in children between 8 and 12 years of age?
4. Are there any differences in the influence of attachment and parent-child relationships on self-competence, loneliness, and depression?
5. Do these connections hold beyond gender and culture?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 1,019 children from middle-class backgrounds (184 eight-year-olds, 201 nine-year-olds, 205 ten-year-olds, 224 eleven-year-olds, and 205 twelve-year-olds; 483 boys, 536 girls), who attended four primary schools (two state-run, two public) and who lived in the city of Buenos Aires or in towns in the province of Buenos Aires. Three psychologists administered the instruments in two 1-hr sessions to 67 groups of 15 children each and to 1 group of 14 children.

I explained the characteristics of my research to the heads of the schools, asked for their collaboration, and gave them a copy of the design and purposes of the project. After that, I sent letters to the fathers and mothers of each child and explained the aims of my project and the work I would do with their children. I expressly told each parent that participation was voluntary and anonymous. I committed myself to give no individual information to the school staff unless both parents expressly asked me to do so. I received a written permission from each father and each mother before launching the field work. Last, I told the children that I needed to know their opinions of their relationship with their parents and that they did not have to answer. There were no objections from principals, teachers, parents, or children.

Instruments

To test the instruments, which were (a) the Argentine Scale of Perception of the Relationships with Parents (Richaud de Minzi, 2004), (b) the Kerns' Security Scale (Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996; Richaud de Minzi, Sacchi, & Moreno, 2001, Argentine adaptation), (c) the Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985), (d) the Dimensions of Depression Profile for Children and Adoles-

cents (Harter & Nowakowski, 1987), and (e) the Louvain Loneliness Scale for Children and Adolescents (Marcoen, Goossens, & Caes, 1987; Richaud de Minzi et al.), three psychologists administered the Argentine adaptations to 1,423 children (235 eight-year-olds, 247 nine-year-olds, 302 ten-year-olds, 374 eleven-year-olds, and 265 twelve-year-olds; 684 boys, 739 girls) from middle-class backgrounds who attended one of four primary schools (2 state run, 2 public) and who lived in the city of Buenos Aires or in towns in the province of Buenos Aires.

Argentine Scale of Perception of the Relationships with Parents for 8- to 12-Year-Old Children (Richaud de Minzi, 2004). This instrument is a self-report questionnaire designed for use with 8- to 12-year-old children and is used to assess children's perceptions of parent-child relationships. The instrument is composed of 32 items in which the children respond either *yes*, *more or less*, or *no*.

Factor analysis of the Argentine Scale of Perception of the Relationships with Parents ($N = 1,421$) showed five types of relationship: (a) acceptance ($\alpha = .92$ for mothers, $\alpha = .89$ for fathers), (b) normal or acceptable control ($\alpha = .75$ for both parents), (c) strict control, nonpathological but less accepted ($\alpha = .81$ for mothers, $\alpha = .65$ for fathers), (d) pathological control ($\alpha = .72$ for mothers, $\alpha = .81$ for fathers), and (e) extreme autonomy ($\alpha = .60$ for both parents).

The first type of relationship included the following dimensions: (a) acceptance, (b) child centeredness, (c) acceptance of individuation, and (d) positive involvement. The second type included control-related items that were correlated with acceptance (e.g., "When I misbehave my parents worry because I will suffer the consequences when I become an adult," and "My parents make sure I am back home on time."). The third type, strict control, included items such as: "My parents insist I do my homework," or "My parents make sure I obey orders." The fourth type covered the following dimensions: (a) hostile control, (b) instilling persistent anxiety, (c) withdrawal of relations, and (d) control through guilt. The fifth type, extreme autonomy, included lax discipline. Therefore, my results represented warmth and acceptance or commitment style and extreme control and restrictive style, as well as a permissive style and control through punishment-rejection behaviors.

Kerns' Security Scale. I chose the Kerns' Security Scale (Kerns et al., 1996; Richaud de Minzi et al., 2001, Argentine adaptation), which is a self-report, because to my knowledge, it is the only instrument especially designed for use with children in middle and late childhood (8–12 year olds; Dwyer, 2005). This instrument is a self-report questionnaire that assesses children's perceptions of security in specific parent-child relationships during middle childhood. The scale was designed to assess children's perceptions of a particular attachment relationship (i.e., attachment to mother and father are assessed separately). Items express a child's belief that a parent is responsive and available, open to communication, and a reliable source of

help and comfort when needed (Kerns et al., 1996). The measure yields scores on a single, continuous dimension of security, but Lieberman, Doyle, and Markiewicz (1999) suggested an alternative scoring to derive two attachment dimensions—availability and reliance on the attachment figure.

The security scale demonstrated coefficient alphas ranging from .64 to .93 for attachment to mothers and .81 to .88 for attachment to fathers (Granot & Mayseless, 2001; Kerns, Aspelmeier, Gentzler, & Grabill, 2001; Kerns et al., 1996; Kerns, Tomich, Aspelmeier, & Contreras, 2000; Lieberman et al., 1999; Verschuere & Marcoen, 2002).

In the scale-study with the Argentine sample, I kept only 10 items (5 connected to trust, 5 connected to availability) out of 15 items in the original scale. I omitted items concerning communication quality because they were not consistent in the Argentine sample.

Factor analyses of items connected to trust in parents' love and availability perception in Kerns' Security Scale for mothers and fathers ($N = 1,423$) showed two factors in both: (a) one related to trust ($\alpha = .70$ for mothers, $\alpha = .69$ for fathers) and (b) one related to availability ($\alpha = .71$ for mothers, $\alpha = .70$ for fathers).

Self-Perception Profile for Children (Harter, 1985; Richaud de Minzi et al., 2001, Argentine adaptation). To study scholastic and social competence in middle childhood, I chose this instrument, which is a revised version of the Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1979, 1982). This instrument assesses children's judgments of their competence in three domains—cognitive, social, and athletic—as well as a global perception of their self-worth or self-esteem as a person. The present version of the instrument contains six separate subscales covering five specific domains: (a) scholastic competence, (b) social acceptance, (c) athletic competence, (d) physical appearance, and (e) behavioral conduct. The sixth subscale is global self-worth.

For the present study, I used only the scholastic competence scale and the social acceptance scale. I used the scholastic competence scale to investigate children's perception of their competence or ability within the realm of scholastic performance (Harter, 1985). I used the social acceptance scale to assess the degree to which the child was accepted by peers or felt popular. The items did not refer to social skills.

Each of the subscales contains 6 items. The internal consistency reliability for all six scales, based on Cronbach's alpha, was fairly acceptable (Harter, 1985). Cronbach's alphas for scholastic competence, across several samples, ranged from .80 to .87, and for social acceptance from .75 to .86 (Eapen, Naqvi, & Al-Dhaheeri, 2000; Harter, 1985; Van den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999). The test-retest reliability of the subscales for 24 children over a 3-year period was also satisfactory (Granleese & Joseph, 1994).

On the basis of the factorial analysis of the 12 items (6 corresponding to scholastic self-competence, 6 corresponding to social self-competence) in the original scales, I built a shorter, 8-item version. As a result of a new factoring of

these eight items, I obtained two factors—scholastic ($\alpha = .75$) and social acceptance ($\alpha = .71$).

Dimensions of Depression Profile for Children and Adolescents (Harter & Nowakowski, 1987; Richaud de Minzi et al., 2001, Argentine adaptation). The initial version of this instrument is a self-report instrument that operationalizes four dimensions of depression: (a) mood/affect (the extent to which one feels cheerful and happy vs. sad and depressed), (b) global self-worth (the extent to which one feels pleased with oneself), (c) energy or interest (the extent to which one feels wide awake and energetic), and (d) self-blame (believing that things that go wrong are one's own fault). The instrument provides a profile of scores across dimensions. Although the initial version of the instrument contained four scales, the profile I used in this study included a fifth subscale—suicide ideation, the extent to which one considers committing suicide (Harter & Nowakowski). Each of the subscales contained six items.

The internal consistency reliability for all five scales, based on Cronbach's alpha, was fairly acceptable (Harter & Nowakowski, 1987). Cronbach's alphas for (a) mood/affect across several samples ranged from .84 to .88, (b) self-worth ranged from .81 to .84, (c) energy and interest ranged from .72 to .87, (d) self-blame ranged from .76 to .86, and (e) suicidal ideation ranged from .88 to .90 (Eapen et al., 2000; Harter & Nowakowski, 1987; Van den Bergh & Marcoen, 1999). The profile study with the Argentine sample did not include the suicidal ideation subscale because I was working with children with no pathologies.

Factor analysis ($N = 1,421$) showed four factors corresponding to dimensions posited by Harter and Nowakowski (1987). I worked with a new scale formed by the three items with greater weight in each factor—a total of 12 items. The Cronbach's alphas for all four scales were: .76 (self-blame), .71 (self-worth), .75 (energy or interest), and .77 (mood/affect).

The Louvain Loneliness Scale for Children and Adolescents (Marcoen et al., 1987; Richaud de Minzi et al., 2001, Argentine Adaptation). This instrument is a 48-item measure, which contains four subscales with 12 items each. These subscales are: (a) loneliness in the relationships with parents, (b) loneliness in the relationships with peers, (c) aversion to aloneness or negative attitude toward aloneness, and (d) affinity for aloneness or positive attitude toward being alone. Participants respond on a 4-point Likert-type scale (*often, sometimes, seldom, never*). Total scores range between 12 and 48 for each subscale. Internal consistency estimates (α) showed adequate levels (α s of .80 or above; Goossens, Marcoen, van Hees, & van de Woestijne, 1998).

In the Argentine study, I factor analyzed the 48-items. I obtained the four factors indicated by its authors. I chose the more weighted items in each factor and constructed a shorter, 16-item version, which was better suited for children

between 8 and 12 years of age. Factoring of these 16 items resulted in four factors, which coincided with the four dimensions of loneliness proposed by Mar-coen et al. (1987): (a) loneliness in relationships with parents ($\alpha = .70$), (b) loneliness in relationships with peers ($\alpha = .72$), (c) aversion to aloneness ($\alpha = .71$), and (d) affinity for aloneness ($\alpha = .75$).

To determine the attachment proportion of variance that accounted for parent-child relationships and the attachment and parent-child relationship aspects that accounted for children's competence, depression, and loneliness, in general and in consideration of gender, I conducted multiple correlation and multiple regression analyses.

Results

Parent-Child Relationships and Attachment

Table 1 shows the regression F s and multiple correlation coefficients (R) corresponding to the types of parent-child relationships (acceptance, acceptable control, strict control, pathological control, extreme autonomy) with parents as the independent variable over the dependent variables attachment, depression, loneliness, loneliness in relationships with parents, loneliness in relationships with peers, aversion to aloneness, affinity for aloneness, scholastic competence, and social acceptance.

Results showed that, in general, the parent-child interaction style, as perceived by the child, had a significant positive correlation ($R = .73$) with the development of secure attachment in children (reliance, availability), which accounted for 53% of variance. At the same time, parent-child interaction style presented a high correlation with depression ($R = .77$), which accounted for 57% of variance.

TABLE 1. Regression F s and Multiple Correlation Coefficients of Parent-Child Relationships Over Attachment, Depression, Loneliness, and Self-Competence

Parent-child relationship	$F_{\text{regression}}$	df	p	R
Attachment	85.77	10, 7740	.000	.73
Depression	129.83	10, 1008	.000	.75
Loneliness	13.33	10, 1008	.000	.34
Loneliness in relationships with parents	19.76	10, 1008	.000	.41
Loneliness in relationships with peers	10.77	10, 1008	.000	.31
Aversion to aloneness	5.63	10, 1008	.000	.23
Affinity for aloneness	8.81	10, 1008	.000	.28
Scholastic competence	7.44	10, 1008	.000	.26
Social acceptance	10.43	10, 1008	.000	.31

From the analysis of the standardized regression coefficients (β) of each style of relationships with parents (acceptance, acceptable control, strict control, pathological control, extreme autonomy), I observed that the type of relationship with the greatest negative influence on the attachment system in middle and late childhood was extreme autonomy from fathers ($\beta = -.50, p < .000$), followed by fathers' acceptance ($\beta = .26, p < .000$) and pathological control ($\beta = -.18, p < .000$), and mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .21, p < .000$) and pathological control ($\beta = -.15, p < .000$).

An analysis of the influence of styles of relationships with parents on depression in children showed that the child's perception of indifference on the part of fathers (extreme autonomy) had the largest weight on depression ($\beta = .71, p < .000$). At the same time, with regard to the correlation between the different attachment dimensions (availability and reliance on the attachment figure) and depression, I found that fathers' availability carried the most negative correlation with depression ($\beta = -.66, p < .001$), as well as absence of reliance in the fathers ($\beta = -.21, p < .000$).

Parent–Child Relationships Over Self-Competence and Loneliness

When I analyzed the influence of parent–child relationships on the development of academic and social self-competence and the child's feeling of loneliness, I found that the type of relationship with the parents accounted for 7% of scholastic competence ($R = .26$) and 9% of social acceptance ($R = .31$). The analysis of standardized regression coefficients of each style of relationship with parents indicated that the types of relationships with the greatest influence on child scholastic competence were fathers' and mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .15, p < .000$; $\beta = .13, p < .000$, respectively), and negatively, fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = -.11, p < .000$). With respect to perceived social acceptance, the most important types of relationships were mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .16, p < .000$) and negatively, fathers' pathological control ($\beta = -.15, p < .000$).

With regard to loneliness, parenting explained 11% of variance ($R = .34$). The standardized regression coefficients indicated that mothers' and fathers' acceptance ($\beta = -.13, p < .000$; $\beta = -.14, p < .000$, respectively) protected children from loneliness, whereas fathers' pathological control caused feelings of loneliness ($\beta = .15, p < .000$).

With regard to loneliness in relationships with parents, the type of relationship with the children accounted for 16% of variance ($R = .41$) and the standardized regression coefficients indicated that the most important styles were mothers' and fathers' acceptance ($\beta = -.15, p < .000$; $\beta = -.26, p < .000$, respectively). In the case of loneliness in relationships with peers, parent–child relationships explained 10% of variance ($R = .31$) and the only influence came from the fathers' pathological control ($\beta = .21, p < .000$), whereas in the case of affinity for aloneness, mothers' and fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = .12, p < .000$; $\beta = .13, p < .000$).

.000, respectively) showed significant influence. Last, aversion to aloneness was influenced only by fathers' pathological control ($\beta = .10, p < .010$).

Attachment Over Self-Competence and Loneliness

Table 2 shows the regression F s and multiple correlation coefficients corresponding to attachment (trust, availability) in both parents (independent variable) over depression, loneliness, loneliness in relations with parents, loneliness in relations with peers, aversion to aloneness and affinity for aloneness, scholastic competence, and social acceptance (dependent variables).

An analysis of the influence of the attachment system on the development of academic and social self-competence and of the feeling of loneliness in the child, showed that attachment accounted for 11% of scholastic competence ($R = .34$) and 7% of social acceptance ($R = .26$). The analysis of standardized regression coefficients of each style of relationship with parents indicated that the relationship types with the greatest influence on child scholastic competence were mothers' availability ($\beta = .18, p < .000$) and fathers' reliance ($\beta = .12, p < .010$). With respect to perceived social acceptance, the only important attachment dimension was mothers' availability ($\beta = .21, p < .000$).

In the case of loneliness, attachment accounted for 19% of variance ($R = .43$) and the standardized regression coefficients indicated that mothers' reliance and availability ($\beta = -.19, p < .000$; $\beta = -.22, p < .000$, respectively) protected children from feelings of loneliness.

When analyzing the influence of attachment on loneliness in relationships with parents ($R = .28$), mothers' and fathers' reliance ($\beta = -.15, p < .000$; $\beta = -.18, p < .000$, respectively) showed greater weight, whereas in the case of loneliness in relationships with peers ($R = .37$), mothers' availability and reliance ($\beta = -.26, p < .000$; $\beta = -.12, p < .001$, respectively) were the most important.

TABLE 2. Regression F s and Multiple Correlation Coefficients of Attachment Over Depression, Loneliness, and Self-Competence

Attachment	$F_{\text{regression}}$	df	p	R
Depression	358.96	4, 1014	.000	.77
Loneliness	46.07	4, 1014	.000	.40
Loneliness in relationships with parents	21.52	4, 1014	.000	.28
Loneliness in relationships with peers	39.59	4, 1014	.000	.37
Affinity for aloneness	19.24	4, 1014	.000	.27
Aversion to aloneness	6.40	4, 1014	.000	.16
Scholastic competence	33.07	4, 1014	.000	.34
Social acceptance	18.04	4, 1014	.000	.26

In the case of affinity for aloneness, attachment accounted for 7% of variance ($R = .27$) and the main attachment dimensions were mothers' reliance ($\beta = -.16, p < .000$) and fathers' availability ($\beta = -.16, p < .000$). Last, aversion to aloneness accounted for mothers' availability ($\beta = -.14, p < .000$).

Gender Influence

Table 3 shows regression F s and multiple correlation coefficients corresponding to the types of relationship with the child (i.e., acceptance, acceptable control, strict control, pathological control, extreme autonomy), in both parents (independent variable), over (a) attachment, (b) depression, (c) loneliness, (d) loneliness in relationships with parents, (e) loneliness in relationships with peers, (f) aversion to aloneness, (g) affinity for aloneness, (h) scholastic competence, and (i) social acceptance (dependent variables), according to gender.

Table 4 shows regression F s and multiple correlation coefficients corresponding to attachment (reliance, availability), in both parents (independent variable) over (a) depression, (b) loneliness, (c) loneliness in relationships with parents, (d) loneliness in relationships with peers, (e) aversion to aloneness and affinity for aloneness, (f) scholastic competence, and (g) social acceptance (dependent variables), according to gender.

Parental Styles, Attachment, and Depression

In the case of boys, parental style accounted for 56% of the attachment variance and β coefficients indicated that fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = -.51, p < .000$) and pathological control ($\beta = .18, p < .000$) and mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .28, p < .000$) were more fully explanatory styles, whereas for girls, parental style accounted for 48% of the attachment variance, and β coefficients indicated that fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = -.48, p < .000$), acceptance ($\beta = .36, p < .000$) and pathological control ($\beta = -.20, p < .000$), and mothers' pathological control ($\beta = -.15, p < .004$) were the more fully explanatory styles.

With regard to depression, in both boys and girls, the greatest weight fell on fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = .75, p < .000$; $\beta = .74, p < .000$, respectively). When I analyzed the effect of attachment on depression, I found that boys and girls witnessed the same pattern: fathers' availability ($\beta_{\text{boys}} = -.71, p < .000$; $\beta_{\text{girls}} = -.67, p < .000$, respectively) and reliance ($\beta_{\text{boys}} = -.21, p < .000$; $\beta_{\text{girls}} = -.28, p < .000$, respectively) and mothers' availability ($\beta_{\text{boys}} = .20, p < .000$; $\beta_{\text{girls}} = .19, p < .000$, respectively).

Parental Styles, Self-Competence, and Loneliness

In studies of scholastic competence, parental styles explained 7% of variance in boys ($R = .27$) and 9% of variance in girls ($R = .31$). The beta coefficients indi-

TABLE 3. Regression *F*s and Multiple Correlation Coefficients According to Child's Gender for Parent-Child Relationships Over Attachment, Depression, Loneliness, and Self-Competence

Parent-child relationship	<i>F</i> _{regression}		<i>df</i>		<i>p</i>		<i>R</i>	
	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl	Boy	Girl
Attachment	44.93	37.05	10, 357	10, 406	.000	.000	.75	.69
Depression	62.02	66.87	10, 472	10, 525	.000	.000	.75	.75
Loneliness	8.30	7.44	10, 472	10, 525	.000	.000	.39	.35
Loneliness in relationships with parents	9.25	7.62	10, 240	10, 270	.000	.000	.53	.47
Loneliness in relationships with peers	4.98	3.61	10, 238	10, 271	.000	.000	.42	.34
Aversion to aloneness	4.98	2.02	10, 238	10, 271	.000	.031	.42	.26
Affinity for aloneness	2.63	4.04	10, 238	10, 277	.005	.000	.32	.36
Scholastic competence	3.76	5.43	10, 472	10, 525	.000	.000	.27	.31
Social Acceptance	3.96	8.13	10, 472	10, 525	.000	.000	.28	.37

TABLE 4. Regression *F*s and Multiple Correlation Coefficients According to Parents' Gender for Attachment Over Depression, Loneliness, and Self-Competence

Attachment	<i>F</i> _{regression}		<i>df</i>		<i>p</i>		<i>R</i>	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Depression								
Loneliness	18.67	19.67	4, 282	4, 324	.000	.000	.46	.44
Loneliness in relationships with parents	10.60	11.46	4, 304	4, 342	.000	.000	.35	.34
Loneliness in relationships with peers	16.80	17.08	4, 301	4, 338	.000	.000	.43	.41
Affinity for aloneness	5.41	9.44	4, 303	4, 344	.000	.000	.26	.31
Aversion to aloneness	3.12	2.03	4, 298	4, 348	.016	.090	.20	.15
Scholastic competence	16.49	15.95	4, 304	4, 340	.000	.000	.42	.40
Social self-competence	8.53	10.97	4, 301	4, 337	.000	.000	.32	.34

cated that, in boys, the most important styles were mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .18$, $p < .000$) and fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .007$), and in girls, the most important styles were fathers' acceptance ($\beta = .22$, $p < .000$) and extreme autonomy ($\beta = -.11$, $p < .008$).

With regard to social acceptance, the most influential parental styles in boys were ($R = .28$, explained variance = 8%) mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .16$, $p < .002$) and fathers' pathological control ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .019$), and in girls were ($R = .37$, explained variance = 13%) mothers' acceptance ($\beta = .15$, $p < .002$) and fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = .14$, $p < .001$) and pathological control ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .002$).

For loneliness, parent-child relationships accounted for 15% of variance in boys and 12% of variance in girls. The types of parent-child relationships that carried greater weight were fathers' pathological control ($\beta = .25$, $p < .000$) in boys, and fathers' acceptance ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .000$), mothers' acceptance ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .010$), extreme autonomy ($\beta = .12$, $p < .010$), and pathological control ($\beta = .15$, $p < .010$) in girls.

When I analyzed the different dimensions of loneliness, I found that, in loneliness in relationships with parents, the most significant parental style in both boys and girls was fathers' acceptance ($\beta_{\text{boys}} = -.33$, $p < .000$; $\beta_{\text{girls}} = -.34$, $p < .000$, respectively). In loneliness in relationships with peers, the most significant parental style was fathers' pathological control ($\beta_{\text{boys}} = .36$, $p < .000$; $\beta_{\text{girls}} = .23$, $p < .010$). In affinity for aloneness ($R = .32$, explained variance = 10%) no particular style had greater influence than others for boys, whereas in girls ($R = .36$, explained variance = 13%), the most influential parental styles were mothers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = .18$, $p < .002$) and fathers' extreme autonomy ($\beta = .19$, $p < .001$). Last, with respect to aversion to aloneness, parental styles explained 17% of variance ($R = .42$) in boys and only 7% of variance ($R = .26$) in girls. At the same time, in boys, coefficients indicated that fathers' pathological control ($\beta = .31$, $p < .010$) and mothers' accepted control ($\beta = .25$, $p < .010$) were the most influential styles, whereas in girls there was no sign of specific parental styles being particularly significant.

Attachment, Self-Competence, and Loneliness

On the basis of an analysis of the influence of the attachment system in the development of academic and social self-competence and feeling of loneliness, I found that attachment in boys accounted for 18% of scholastic competence ($R = .42$) and 10% of social acceptance ($R = .32$), whereas in girls, attachment accounted for 16% of scholastic competence ($R = .40$) and 12% social acceptance ($R = .34$). The analysis of standardized regression coefficient of each dimension of the attachment system indicated that attachment dimensions with the most significant influence on child scholastic competence were mothers' reliance ($\beta = .19$, $p < .010$) among boys, and mothers' availability ($\beta = .31$, $p < .000$) and fathers' reliance ($\beta = .22$, $p < .010$) among girls. With regard to perceived social accep-

tance, the only important attachment dimension was mothers' availability both among boys ($\beta = .22, p < .010$) and girls ($\beta = .33, p < .000$).

With regard to loneliness, attachment explained 21% of variance ($R = .46$) in boys and 20% in girls ($R = .44$). The standardized regression coefficients indicated that mothers' reliance and fathers' availability (both $\beta = -.21, p < .000$) in boys and mothers' availability in girls ($\beta = -.29, p < .000$) protected children from feelings of loneliness.

In the different dimensions of loneliness, I noticed that the most influential attachment dimension (a) in loneliness in relations with parents was fathers' reliance in boys ($\beta = -.38, p < .000$) and mothers' reliance in girls ($\beta = -.21, p < .010$); (b) in loneliness in relationships with peers, mothers' reliance in boys ($\beta = -.21, p < .010$) and mothers' availability in girls ($\beta = -.31, p < .000$); and (c) in affinity for aloneness, fathers' availability in boys ($\beta = -.24, p < .010$) and mothers' reliance in girls ($\beta = -.18, p < .010$).

Last, with respect to aversion to aloneness, attachment accounted for only 4% of variance ($R = .20$) in boys and 2% of variance ($R = .15$) in girls. At the same time, in boys, beta coefficients indicated that fathers' availability ($\beta = -.24, p < .010$) was the most influential attachment dimension, whereas I observed no influence from specific attachment dimensions among girls.

Discussion

According to my first hypothesis, I found that the style of interpersonal relationships with parents explained a significant proportion of the development of the attachment style, although the unexplained variance allowed me to presume, with a fair amount of certainty, that constructs attachment and style in relationships with their parents, as seen by the children, were closely interconnected but still different.

Like Richaud de Minzi and Sacchi (1997), I found that a relationship based on acceptance would facilitate adjustment, whereas a bad relationship, especially if marked by distancing, was connected to nonadjusted behavior, such as inhibition. In the present study, I hypothesized that acceptance by mothers and fathers would be positively connected to the development of a secure attachment (i.e., children feeling sure that they could depend on their parents and that the parents were available when they needed them and were committed to see to their development). The relevant influence of fathers was particularly noticeable because the type of relationship with the most significant negative influence on the attachment system in these children in middle and late childhood was extreme autonomy or lack of interest on the part of fathers. Researchers have underscored the mothers' importance in the constitution of the attachment system. It would seem that in middle and late childhood, it would be fathers who would have the greatest influence on the system—although in a negative way through carelessness and negligence. Richaud de Minzi and Sacchi had not observed this result when working with younger children, they only saw the fathers' influence among children older than 6 years of age.

The importance of the kind of relationship established with fathers in the development of feelings of depression among children, which, according to Harter and Nowakowski (1987), are the counterpart of feelings of security constituent of good attachment. Here too, the children's perception of indifference on the part of their fathers was the most influential factor.

This result was underscored by analyzing the correlation between the various dimensions of attachment (availability, reliance on the attachment figure) and depression. Yet again, lack of fathers' availability and reliance showed the greatest connection with depression. The results can be compared with the children's perceptions of the fathers' negligence or absence. At the same time, when children perceive that their parents accept them, respect their opinion, and feel proud of them, they are protected from feelings of depression.

With regard to the second, third, and fourth questions on the connection between styles of parent-child relationship and attachment with the development of academic and social self-competence and feelings of loneliness among children aged 8 to 12 years, I found that attachment explained academic success more clearly than it did social self-competence. In contrast, the style of relationship with parents accounted for social competence slightly more than for academic competence. From the point of view of parental styles, acceptance and commitment by both parents, and especially fathers' acceptance, were important for the child's scholarly achievement. When I analyzed the influence of the attachment system, the mothers' availability was more relevant for the child, probably not so much for practical help connected to performance (help with homework and studies, explanations of difficult points) as for the feeling of security associated with the knowledge that when difficult situations arose at school or with studies, mothers offered support (mostly emotional). In both cases (attachment, style of relationship), children allotted importance to their confidence in the parents' love and their concern for them.

A relevant difference is that in the study of the influence of attachment on competence, there was no counterpart connected to the negative weight of the style of relationship to extreme autonomy on the part of the father. From the perspective of attachment, it would probably correspond to lack of fathers' availability. It would seem, however, that availability is more connected to a feeling of being able to depend on an attachment figure, especially in an emotional sense, whereas extreme autonomy would be related to perceiving actual behavior of negligence or lack of interest.

With regard to perceived social acceptance (social self-competence), mothers' availability was most important, but I found no indication of fathers' influence as it occurs in the analysis of relationship styles. In the case of the latter, pathological control by fathers was important because it seemed to inhibit the child's perception of social acceptance, because threats of punishment and expressions of concern about children's inadequate performance makes them feel rejected by others. In contrast, mothers' availability (attachment) and acceptance

(style of relationship) constituted a solid basis from which children could dare to approach others.

With regard to feeling accepted by others (social self-competence), acceptance by both parents was important and, from the point of view of attachment, only mothers' availability was important. Just as with social self-competence, however, I found no indication of fathers' influence as an attachment figure, but I found a negative influence of fathers' pathological control as a style of relationship. Therefore, it is plausible that the same model that explained development of social competence among children may be repeated in connection to loneliness. With regard to feelings of loneliness in connection with parents, this idea is influenced by perception of acceptance from both parents, as well as trust in their love in a sense of protection against loneliness.

Affinity for aloneness predominated when there was no feeling of security from both parents (low trust in mothers' love, fathers' availability in attachment) and on the side of the parent-child relationship in which the child perceived behavior showing lack of concern in both parents.

Marcoen et al. (1987) differentiated between (a) aversion to aloneness and (b) affinity for aloneness.

One group of persons show negative views of their being alone, tend to attribute their aloneness to other people's inadequacies, and try to cope with their being alone through seeking contact with others. Other types of people exhibit a positive evaluation of being alone, attribute their aloneness to their own inclinations and habits, and try to rely on their own resources in coping with being alone (Marcoen et al., p. 563).

In this study, however, I found that affinity for aloneness was associated with Latino children with extreme autonomy by both parents, which gave it a negative character (for an operational description see Marcoen et al., 1987). Therefore, it would not be a kind of aloneness that fosters thought and peace; on the contrary, it would mean wanting to be alone because of lack of trust of and rejection by others.

Weiss (1973) made a distinction between loneliness caused by emotional isolation and loneliness caused by social isolation. The former occurs in the absence of close emotional attachment, whereas the latter occurs in the absence of an engaging social network. Affinity for aloneness corresponds to emotional isolation, whereas aversion to aloneness corresponds to social isolation.

Low emotional affinity on the part of mothers and the perception of pathological control (through instilling persistent anxiety, setting a relative distance toward children to punish them, developing aggressive behavior toward the children) by the fathers was connected with aversion to aloneness, that is, with not wanting to be alone, feeling rejected by others, and feeling inadequate because they had not been allowed to develop autonomy. Parents who were characterized by a restrictive style imposed many rules in numerous domains, including restricting the children's freedom to choose after school activities or friends or to make decisions about the children's choices of clothing (Lautrey, 1980).

Monitoring or supervision of offspring seems to be beneficial, but the opposite may be the case with excessive parental control (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). Applying coercive discipline aimed at controlling offspring and ensuring their submission fosters social isolation and psychological problems. Holmes and Robbins (1987) have further shown that coercive techniques in upbringing are associated with emotional and behavioral problems in children.

In general, it seems that the use of coercive discipline to control children and turn them submissive favors a tendency toward social isolation (Richaud de Minzi, 1999). According to Lautrey (1980), although restrictive parenting can be seen as training for the compromises of social life, parental granting of autonomy allows children the freedom to learn by means of greater interaction with other children, other adults, and the physical environment. Restricting children's interactions and short circuiting interpersonal conflicts by imposing rules that totally prevent conflict from occurring may deprive children opportunities to practice the skills of compromise and conflict resolution in relationships. Excessive restriction also may lead to resentment, which may affect children's general approach to others (aversion to aloneness). However, some restrictions may be necessary to promote children's peer relations. (Allès-Jardel, Fourdrinier, Roux, & Schneider, 2002). Complete autonomy with insufficient parental monitoring of the child's activities has been associated with antisocial behavior (Dishion, 1990). The laissez-faire style involves little restriction of child autonomy and a general lack of routine and consistency (Lautrey). Authoritarian parenting has especially adverse effects in the realm of psychosocial development because it restricts the child's sense of competence and independence. Notwithstanding that, parental control may act as a deterrent to deviance (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). The reverse might be true for indulgently raised children, who may enjoy benefits in the realm of psychosocial development but show evidence of higher rates of deviance (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbush, 1991).

In studying the possible influence of gender in the development pattern of attachment and parent-child relationships, and in view of cultural differences in the upbringing of girls and boys, I found that the influence of parenting styles on attachment followed the general pattern I described, with the sole difference that the influence of parents' acceptance in developing secure attachment came from the fathers in the case of girls and from the mothers in the case of boys. I found similar results concerning the influence of parenting styles and attachment over academic competence.

On separate observation of boys and girls regarding influence of parenting styles on development of feelings of loneliness, I noted that influence of parent acceptance followed a general pattern. Nevertheless, there are differences insofar as pathological control in girls comes from the mother, compounded by perception of negligence on the mothers' side. In the case of boys, influence came exclusively from the fathers' pathological control. Something similar happened with attachment—lack of trust in the fathers' love influenced boys, whereas the feel-

ing of lack of love from mothers influenced girls. With regard to the various types of loneliness, there are differences according to gender with regard to affinity for aloneness. No particular parenting styles were associated with loneliness in the case of boys. Among girls, the general pattern I described is followed in connection with the influence of perception of lack of interest from both mothers and fathers. I also observed differences in aversion to aloneness—in boys there was influence of control of both parents over aversion and the feeling of lack of emotional availability on the part of the father. I did not see this result among girls, who followed the general pattern of lack of influence of specific parenting styles.

Overall, I found that within a general, common pattern with regard to the influence of the system of attachment and parent–child parenting styles, girls tended to perceive positive aspects in their fathers and negative ones in their mothers, whereas the opposite applied to boys. This result coincides with the cultural patterns of Latino culture in which the father is more permissive, understanding, and protective toward girls and more demanding and harsher with boys. Mothers are thought of as more considerate and permissive with boys and more demanding and controlling with girls.

In sum, attachment and parent–child relationship styles are differentiated constructs, albeit with several points in common. Parents' acceptance promotes secure attachment and positive outcomes in children and defends them from depression, but in this developmental stage, the fathers' involvement with the children's development is particularly important. The children's perception of their fathers' lack of interest or negligence had a marked negative effect. There are differences in the perception and influence of fathers and mothers, which follow the cultural patterns of gender attribution.

I obtained the results discussed in this article from middle-class Argentine children, who were living in cities, and whose upbringing could have been deemed typical of a Latino culture. It is therefore highly probable that these results apply within this culture but may undergo changes among societies with other cultural patterns.

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Received March 13, 2006

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