

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Adolescent Identity Style with  
Regard to Perceived Support from Parents, Teachers, and Mentors

by

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*Certificate of Approval*

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Lindsay A. Olson has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Psychology.

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### Abstract

The present study assessed the effects of socioeconomic status (SES) on adolescent identity development and the role of relational support from parents, teachers, and mentors. We tested 43 high school students using Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory (ISI3) to assess Diffuse-Avoidant, Normative, and Informational identity styles and the Quality of Relationship Inventory (QRI) to assess perceived relational support from parents, teachers, and mentors (Pierce, 1994). Low SES adolescents had significantly lower perceived support scores than mid-high SES adolescents. Low SES adolescents scored significantly higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. Teacher support correlated with the adaptability of the identity style for low SES participants; parent and mentor support did not correlate for any participants. High overall support correlated with high scores in the Informational identity style while low overall support correlated with high scores in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. Implications for the roles of poverty and relational support in identity development are discussed.

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### The Effects of Socioeconomic Status on Adolescent Identity Style with Regard to Perceived Support from Parents, Teachers, and Mentors

Identity development is the primary task of adolescence (Erikson, 1968; 1980). By developing an identity structure, individuals gain a frame of reference for “making decisions, problem-solving, and interpreting experiences and self-relevant information” (Berzonsky, Cieciuch, Duriez, & Soenens, 2011, p. 295). Developing an identity structure introduces stability over a lifetime and enables individuals to draw meaning from life experiences (Berzonsky et al., 2011; DeHaan & MacDermid, 1999; Meeus, 2011). Identity development in adolescence is a process of simultaneous reflection and observation; one that allows the individual to create a balance between the self and the outside world (Beyers & Cok, 2008; Erikson, 1980).

An identity gives individuals a sense of personal stability and a belief in the continuity of their surroundings (DeHaan & MacDermid, 1999; Erikson, 1968; 1980; Marcia, 1980). Achieving an identity allows individuals to consider life choices including occupational possibilities, values, and friendships, as well as to make decisions confidently based on their stable senses of themselves (Erikson, 1968). Strongly developed identities give individuals an awareness of their uniqueness and their own strengths and weaknesses (Marcia, 1980). Adolescents with less developed identities are less likely to understand their distinctiveness and are more likely to look to external sources to evaluate themselves (Marcia, 1980). In a review on research conducted on ethnic identity and well-being in college students, individuals with strongly developed identities were more likely to have high self-esteem, positive self-concepts, and experience less psychological distress (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997).

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Marcia (1980; 1988) created one of the most widely recognized paradigms of identity development by focusing on the dimensions of exploration and commitment. Exploration refers to "problem-solving behavior aimed at eliciting information about oneself or one's environment in order to make a decision about an important life choice" (Grotevant, 1987, p. 204; Marcia, 1988). Adolescents who undergo adequate exploration will have a broader understanding of their environment and how they can form an identity within that environment. Commitment refers to one's adherence to a certain set of goals, values, and beliefs (Marcia, 1988). Adolescents with a high level of commitment have more defined and stable identities. In Marcia's paradigm, identity statuses are character types as opposed to stages (Cote & Levine, 1988; Grotevant, 1986; Meeus, Iedema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; van Hoof, 1999). Character types are set categories that are determined by exploration and commitment levels and remain stable across time (Marcia, 1988). However, because identity development is dynamic and defined by construction and revision, we have chosen to use Berzonsky's Identity Style Model to assess identity formation (Berzonsky, 1988; Berzonsky et al., 2011; Schwartz, 2001).

Berzonsky's model accounts for the multidimensional nature of identity development (Berzonsky, 1990; Cote & Levin, 1988). It introduces three distinct identity styles that originate from problem-solving strategies and coping mechanisms exhibited by an individual: Informational, Normative, and Diffuse-Avoidant (Berzonsky, 1990). The Informational style involves active information seeking and exploration, need for cognition, high levels of self-esteem, and problem-focused coping, and is the most adaptive style (Berzonsky, 1990; Schwartz, 2001). Individuals who score highest in the

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Informational style are likely to actively and deliberately seek information about themselves and are willing to update their self-perception if they encounter contradictory information. They tend to define themselves in terms of their values and goals. The Normative style is defined by imitation and conformity. An individual who scores highest in the Normative style is likely to possess stable self-concepts, rigid and dogmatic commitment, and a resistance to exploration (Berzonsky, 1990; Schwartz, 2001). Lastly, the Diffuse-Avoidant style is common in an individual who procrastinates and avoids active coping and/or problem solving. This style is associated with low levels of commitment, low self-esteem, and little concern for long-term consequences of decisions (Berzonsky, 1990; Schwartz, 2001). Those who score highest in this identity style tend to define themselves in terms of reputation and popularity (Berzonsky, 1994; Berzonsky et al., 2011). Individuals get a score for each of the three identity styles. The style in which they score highest is their predominant identity style; it is possible for adolescents to have more than one predominant identity style (Berzonsky, 1990).

Mainstream psychological research on identity development has tended to portray adolescents as the sole agents involved in their identity formation (Kuczynski, Marshall, & Schell, 1997). However, several recent studies have challenged this view, emphasizing the vast effect that parents, peers, and significant others have on adolescent identity development (Meeus, Oostewegel, & Vollebergh, 2002; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Adolescent identity formation is heavily influenced by important people in adolescents' lives (Meeus et al., 2002; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Berzonsky places special emphasis on the role of social interactions in one's identity development, arguing that people work as self-theorists, creating working models of the world around them



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(Berzonsky, 1990; Schwartz, 2001). Identity development is enhanced when adolescents have others who assist them in exploring different identities and eventually making commitments (Alliman-Brisset, Turner, & Skovholt, 2004; Kerpelman & White, 2006; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). These important people are known as identity agents-- people who actively interact with a child or youth with the intention of participating in their identity formation (Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

Not surprisingly, research indicates that the most common identity agents are the adolescent's parent(s) (Berzonsky, Branje, & Meeus, 2007; Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Kerpelman & Smith, 1999; Meeus et al., 2002; Sartor & Youniss, 2002). Parents play an integral role in communicating values, interests, and goals to their children (Kerpelman, Eryigit & Stephens, 2008). All three of these factors play an important role in how adolescents view their futures. There is a significant positive correlation between adolescents' future expectations and their parents' expectations (Kerpelman et. al, 2008). For example, parental support significantly influenced career identity evaluation in young adults (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010). Parental support is also related to more complete identity formation (Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; Hall & Brassard, 2008; O'Connor, Hetherington, Reiss, & Plomin, 1995). Parents can help children incorporate their own self-concepts into a larger social context (Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

Over time, parents' feelings toward their children become an important factor in shaping the children's sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and agency to help themselves through difficult situations (Sarason, Pierce, Bannerman, & Sarason, 1993). A child's perception of parental support reflects an inferential process in which the child may or may not develop confidence in his or her abilities to deal with events (Sarason et

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al., 1993). For example, the more adolescents felt attached to a parent, the easier it was for them to make career decisions (Pierce, Bannerman, & Sarason, 1993).

In the same way that parental support can encourage healthy identity development in children and adolescents, a lack of support can have negative effects on identity formation (Luyckx, Soenens, Vasteenkiste, Goossens, & Berzonsky, 2007). A longitudinal study examined the effects of psychologically controlling parents on college freshmen's autonomy and level of commitment (Luyckx et. al., 2007). The more psychologically controlling the parents, the less they respected their children's needs and values. The parents were also very likely to pressure children to comply with their own standards and needs. Such psychological control inhibited the autonomy in adolescents and ultimately introduced difficulty into the adolescents' personal commitment. The more controlling a child perceived his or her parents, the more difficulties the child was likely to experience in establishing committed choices, and therefore, in developing his or her identity (Luyckx et. al., 2007). A lack of parental support during childhood was also found to be associated with significantly increased levels of depressive symptoms in early adulthood (Shaw, Krause, Chatters, Connell, & Ingersoll-Dayton, 2004). Depressive symptoms correlate with a less positive self-concept, a factor closely related to identity development (Phinney, 1989; Phinney & Kohatsu, 1997; Watson, 2006).

Although research points to parents having a significant influence on identity formation, some aspects of parental support and its connection to identity development are unclear. For example, it is unknown whether the number of children in a household affects parent support and its connection to identity development. Additionally, parents' age could influence how they support their children which could possibly affect identity

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style. Cultural background and norms could also play a significant role in how parents support their children and how their children perceive that support. Despite these uncertainties, research indicates that parents play a significant role in adolescent identity development. For this reason, one purpose of the present study was to investigate the quality of perceived parental support and its relation to one's identity style.

In addition to parents, teachers also play a major role in adolescent identity development (Chear, 2004; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Van Tassel-Baska, 2010). Teachers collectively spend more than 30 hours a week with students, inevitably influencing their identity formation (Van Tassel-Baska, 2010). Teachers influence their students' attitudes regarding achievement, motivation for learning, and involvement in school (Anderman, 2002; Wentzel, 2002). Teachers are also influential because they are, in addition to parents, important adults from the earlier generation who are the "bearers of societal standards" and present adolescents with information regarding what is needed for a successful life (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005, p. 73).

One of the most important things teachers must do to facilitate healthy identity development is to seek out and show adolescents valued abilities (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005; Smith, 1972; St. John, 1971). By doing so, teachers help students identify roles or occupations, personal or academic, for which they might be well suited (Berzonsky, 2005; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). These roles can be particularly easy to identify in high-achieving students but finding them in low-achieving, disengaged students is more difficult (Phelan, Davidson & Yu, 1998). Teachers can negatively influence the identity development of these low-achieving students if they fail to emphasize to their students

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the ability to change and grow (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). If teachers do not acknowledge their students' capacity for positive development, academic initiative can be crippled and likelihood for exploration severely weakened (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). This could lead to either Normative or Diffuse-Avoidant styles of identity. To counteract this outcome, teachers can identify one or more positive qualities of these low-achieving students (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005).

Another way in which teachers facilitate healthy identity formation is by creating safe learning environments, allowing students to explore their identities without any pressure (Chear, 2004; Goodenow 1993; Hamman & Hendricks, 2005; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; James 1986; Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering 2003). During identity formation, adolescents may try out new identities and may appear disengaged or even obnoxious. In a safe learning environment, however, teachers allow for these changes in adolescent behavior and avoid labeling their students based on their behavior (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). By creating safe learning environments where students feel comfortable experimenting with their identities, teachers can help students expand their views on what they may become (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005). Teaching in a way that encourages identity exploration will make adolescents more likely to achieve an Informational identity style associated with active questioning, high levels of self-esteem, and general psychological health (Berzonsky, 1990).

In addition to creating positive learning environments, teachers can influence identity development by using specific pedagogies. Transformative pedagogy, for example, emphasizes collaborative learning and can create dynamic relationships between teachers and students (Greene, 2005; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010).

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Transformative pedagogy influences identity formation because it provides a process-oriented context that encourages students to construct and reconstruct their identities within a school context (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010). Perceived support from teachers relates to a more positive academic adjustment for children and adolescents (Cadima, Leal, & Burchinal, 2010; Pianta, 1999; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). A second purpose of the present study was to examine perceived support from teachers and its relation to adolescent identity development.

In addition to teachers, we have reason to believe that mentors influence identity development. In 2006, there were more than 5,000 mentoring programs in the United States serving an estimated three million youth (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2006). Mentoring improves outcomes across “behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains of young people’s development” (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011 p. 57; DuBois, & Karcher, 2005; Hayes, Castonguay, & Goldfried, 1996; Kuperminc, Thomason, Dimeo, & Broomfield-Massey, 2011). In a meta-analysis on mentor program effectiveness, mentors helped youth cope with negative experiences and approach these experiences as opportunities to learn and grow (DuBois et al., 2011). Moreover, just by listening, mentors help adolescents understand and regulate their emotions (DuBois et al., 2011; McDowell, Kim, O’Neil, & Parke, 2002).

School-based mentors, usually college aged students who meet regularly with adolescents, can provide youth with a more positive outlook on their education (Herrera, 2011; Kuperminc et al., 2011; Schwartz, 2011). Students who had mentors in school showed a higher sense of belonging and liking and were more successful academically (Schwartz, 2011). Studies that examined collaborative learning found that mentors can

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help adolescents acquire new thinking skills and become more receptive to adult perspectives (DuBois et al., 2011; Radziszewska & Rogoff, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, mentor relationships predict improvement in educational and vocational outcomes (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005a, 2005b; Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009; Klaw, Rhodes, & Fitzgerald, 2003). Having a mentor resulted in a positive change in grade point average for ninth to twelfth grade students (Erikson et al., 2009). Working with a mentor is also positively related to the likelihood of full time employment for young adults, ages 23-28 (Erikson et al., 2009).

Mentors also positively influence adolescent identity development (DuBois et al., 2011; Karcher, 2005). They can help adolescents broaden their views of both current and future identities (Karcher, 2008). According to Markus and Nurius (1986), mentors may promote exploration of youths' ideas of "possible selves": "what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they fear becoming" (p. 62). Relationships with mentors may expose adolescents to different activities, resources, and opportunities that they can use to construct their identities (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, & Matsuda, 2002; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, & Jucovy, 2007). For example, Herrera et al. (2007) found that youth who were randomly assigned to mentors were more likely to report having a "special adult" in their lives who had introduced them to new activities (p. 346). Youth in this study also had more positive perceptions of their academic performance (Herrera et al., 2007).

Additionally, mentor relationships may significantly improve youths' views of their relationships with parents, peers, and other role models (DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Rhodes,

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Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005). DuBois et al. (2002) conducted a detailed study of 50 mentor relationships in a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program by assessing relationship benefits for youth at the end of each year. They found that adolescents who had positive relationships with their mentors also reported improvements in their other relationships.

Mentors model caring and provide support; by doing so, they can make up for unsatisfactory relationships with parents or other caregivers (Hayes, Castonguay, & Goldfried, 1996). Mentors can also challenge negative views that youth may hold of themselves (Hayes et al., 1996; Herrera et al., 2011). Theoretically, mentors could have more of an impact for children or adolescents who do not have secure relationships with other adults (Herrera et al., 2011). Mentor programs were found to be more effective when they targeted youth with backgrounds of environmental risk or disadvantage (e.g., academic failure, behavior problems). For some students, mentors may be the only protective adults who can help them navigate the challenges of development and identity formation (Herrera et al., 2011). Because mentors influence adolescent identity development, especially for at-risk youth, a third goal of our study was to explore how mentor support influences adolescent identity style.

Another factor that may significantly influence identity formation is socioeconomic status (SES). In 2009, 21% of children in the United States lived below the poverty level (Anthony, King, & Austin, 2011). Growing up in poverty affects nearly every facet of development in children and adolescents (Beegle, 2000, 2007; Freire, 1970, Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Poverty can influence everyday things from where people live, to what kind of education they receive, to what kind of food they eat (Beegle, 2007). Families in poverty experience underemployment, low levels of education, single

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parenting, inadequate medical care, reduced access to childcare, drug and alcohol addictions, and unsafe neighborhoods (Robinson, 2003). Economic stress due to poverty negatively impacts quality of parenting, familial interactions, and child's adjustment (Bradley & Corwin, 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Valenzuela, 1997), which in turn increases adolescents' risk for loneliness, depression, unruly behavior, and substance use (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz & Simons, 1994; Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simmons, 1989). Because of this, poverty can work against the best efforts of well-meaning parents (VanTassel-Baska, 2010).

Much of the extreme stress associated with poverty directly affects the family unit (Beegle, 2007; Brown & Lynn, 2010). Poverty often requires parents and working age children to work in order to make ends meet. Parents may be unable to encourage their children to explore their different opportunities because they need to focus on meeting their basic family needs—paying bills, providing food, clothing, and shelter (Beegle, 2007; Conger, et al., 1994). Growing up in poverty affects families not only physically, but emotionally as well. Daily stress associated with poverty affects parents' moods negatively and takes a toll on their children (Brown & Lynn, 2010). Ackerman, Brown, and Izard (2004) examined the relation between persistence of poverty and a child's school adjustment. Economically disadvantaged families experienced frequent periods of transition such as multiple changes of partner relationships and frequent changes in residence. In turn, the volatile family circumstances associated with poverty inhibited elementary school children from adjusting smoothly to a school environment. These children exhibited more frequent behavioral difficulties in school than their mid-high SES counterparts (Ackerman et al., 2004).



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Poverty may affect children and adolescents on many components of identity formation, including self-relevant information, opportunity structure, and level of stress (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Self-relevant information is information about oneself received from encounters with others. The stigma of poverty is such a powerful force that the associated shame and embarrassment due to marginalization may result in adolescents' inability to maintain positive views of themselves. This decrease in confidence and feelings of agency may prove harmful to the final stages of identity development because internalizing such negative self-relevant information can result in lowered morale. These negative feelings can impinge on exploration and eventually identity achievement (Beegle, 2007; Phillips & Pittman, 2003).

Regarding opportunity structure, research has repeatedly shown that poverty is associated with limited life opportunities and constrained scope of aspirations for one's future (Figueira-McDonough, 1998; Powers, 1996). Professional and educational aspirations can be limited by poverty (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Expectations for jobs and careers are directly linked to social class (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Adolescents in poverty form expectations for their jobs based on their parents' jobs and by others around them (Coleman, 1998). Phillips and Pittman (2003) propose that adolescents' lowered expectations regarding education and job opportunities may limit identity exploration.

In addition, children and adolescents growing up in poverty experience significantly more stress than their mid-high SES counterparts (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Phillips and Pittman (2003) argue that chronic stress associated with growing up in poverty will have a negative effect on identity development, either by straining cognitive processing resources and limiting access to representations of self, or by

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depleting personal motivational resources. Such strain can negatively influence identity development for adolescents because they may see themselves as poor students (Van Tassel-Baska, 2010). Such students are more likely to have either Normative or Diffuse-Avoidant identity styles. A detailed study of stress on cognitive processes showed evidence that stress causes a cognitive load in adolescents (Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990). Participants were asked to answer questions about self-concept by choosing between keys labeled *ME* and *NOT ME* while presented with a series of adjectives. When research participants were placed under significant cognitive load by having to complete memorization tasks before the procedure, they were less likely to complete cognitive tasks in the allotted time than those who were not asked to memorize things first (Swann et al., 1990). Therefore, the stress associated with poverty makes it more difficult to complete cognitive tasks and may ultimately compromise identity development.

Thus, these factors associated specifically with poverty—derogatory self-relevant information, limitations in opportunity structure, and excessive stress—could hinder identity development in low SES adolescents (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). It is possible that these factors alter the trajectory for children and adolescents of low SES, resulting in a lack of awareness of their possible life paths, and therefore reduced exploration and early commitment to an identity (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). However, little is known about the actual developmental trajectory of identity formation in adolescents from different SES. A fourth purpose of the present study was to measure the identity style of low and mid-high SES adolescents to see whether negative factors associated with living

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in poverty influence identity style. In addition, we explored the influence of parents, teachers, and mentors in mid-high and low SES adolescents.

We predicted that support from parents, teachers, and mentors would affect identity style; those who had more support from parents, teachers and mentors would score higher in Normative or Informational identity styles, whereas those with lower support scores would score higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant style. We predicted that overall, low SES adolescents would perceive less total support from parents, teachers, and mentors than mid-high SES adolescents. We also predicted that low SES adolescents would score higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant style, whereas mid-high SES adolescents would tend to score higher in the Normative and Informational styles. We predicted that differences in support scores from parents, teachers, and mentors would depend on SES differences.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

We recruited 43 participants from Walla Walla High School ( $N = 33$ ) and Lincoln Alternative High School ( $N = 10$ ) in Walla Walla, Washington. The sample included 14 boys and 29 girls. Participant ages ranged as follows: 15 ( $N = 6$ ), 16 ( $N = 15$ ), 17 ( $N = 6$ ), 18 ( $N = 15$ ), 20 ( $N = 1$ ). We recruited 18 mid-high SES and 25 low SES participants. Students were from regular classes and Advanced Placement classes.

#### **Measures**

##### *Socioeconomic Status*

We used mother's education level as reported by a parent as the indicator of socioeconomic status (see Appendix A). In the case that the participant was not a minor,

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he or she indicated mother's education level. Mother's education level is a widely used measure of SES (Stevens, Lauinger, & Neville, 2009). We also asked parents to report whether or not their children were eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch. We classified those participants whose mothers have completed high school or less as low SES. We also classified those participants who qualified to receive free or reduced-price lunch as low SES, regardless of their mothers' education level.

### *Identity Development*

The 40-item Revised Version of the Identity Style Inventory (ISI3) (Berzonsky, 1992; See appendix B) assesses identity style in individuals and gives each participant a score in three identity styles: Informational (i.e. "I've spent a great deal of time thinking seriously about what I should do with my life."), Normative (i.e. "I've more-or-less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up."), and Diffuse-Avoidant (i.e. "When I know a situation is going to cause me stress, I try to avoid it."). The identity style in which adolescents score highest is their predominant identity style. The inventory has 11 items assessing the Informational style, nine items for the Normative style, and ten items for the Diffuse-Avoidant style. As there was an uneven number of items assessing each style, the sum of each scale was divided by the number of items in the scale. The inventory also had a commitment scale that we chose not to analyze. We chose not to analyze the commitment scale because it is not an identity style but rather another indicator of social and mental maturity (Berzonsky, 1990). Because commitment is related to identity style but is not a style in itself we chose not to analyze it because it is not entirely pertinent to the purpose of our study. Participants answered questions on a 5-point Likert scale.

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Reliability data from the published Identity Style Inventory is as follows:

Informational style, 0.70; Normative style, 0.64; and Diffuse-Avoidant style: 0.76, with very good test-retest reliability (Berzonsky, 1997).

### *Relational Support*

To assess interpersonal relationships between the student and their parent, teacher, and mentor of choice, we used the Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; see Appendix C). The QRI provides an index of relationship qualities. The index contains 25 items which participants rate using a 4-point scale. The participants completed the QRI three times to assess the relationships with their parent, teacher, and mentor of choice. The QRI assesses three aspects of relationships: support (i.e. “How much do you depend on this person?”), conflict (i.e. “How often does this person make you feel angry?”), and depth (i.e. “How close will your relationship be with this person in 10 years?”). These aspects are all “hypothesized to play an important role in social support processes” (Pierce, 1994, p. 259). We did not analyze the conflict or depth scales from the QRI because we were most interested in social support, specifically, and its role in identity formation. The QRI can be used for a broad range of relationships--parent-child, peer, co-worker, family, spouses, etc. (Pierce, 1994, pp. 247-259).

### **Procedure**

We asked teachers to recruit their students to participate in this study. We also went to classrooms and recruited students. All participants received a packet including a consent form, a set of three QRI surveys, and one Identity Style survey. Students were told that the present study explored how their interpersonal relationships affected their identity style. Students under the age of 18 had their parent or guardian sign the consent

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form while those over 18 signed it themselves. Students completed the surveys outside of class. After the students completed the surveys they mailed them back.

### Results

To test whether there was a difference in perceived relational support based on SES differences, we ran a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with SES as the between-subjects factor and support source (either parent, teacher, or mentor) as the within-subjects factor. In this ANOVA the support source was the repeated measure because each participant filled out the support measure 3 times, once for parent, teacher, and mentor. Consistent with our first hypothesis, we found a main effect for SES and support scores. Mid-high SES participants had significantly higher overall support scores than low SES participants. The support score means for low and mid-high SES participants were 2.885 and 3.188, respectively, ( $F(1) = 5.224, p < .05$ ); (see Table 1, Figure 1).

We found a main effect for support source; support scores differed significantly between parents, teachers, and mentors, ( $F(1) = 6.468, p < .01$ ); (see Table 1, Figure 1). We conducted post-hoc t-tests to see how support scores differed between parents, teachers, and mentors. There was no significant difference between parent support scores and mentor support scores (see Table 2). Parent support scores were, however, significantly higher than teacher support scores and mentor support scores were also significantly higher than teacher support scores (see Table 2).

We hypothesized that differences in support scores of parents, teachers, and mentors would be based on SES differences. Support for this hypothesis would have

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come from a significant interaction in the mixed ANOVA between support source and SES. However, that interaction was not statistically significant (see Table 1, Figure 1).

To test for correlations between overall support scores and identity style scores regardless of SES, we created a new variable: overall support score (the sum of parent, teacher, and mentor support scores for each adolescent). We ran a correlation between overall support score and identity style scores for all participants. Consistent with our fourth hypothesis, we found significant correlations between overall support scores and identity style scores for Diffuse-Avoidant identity style scores and Informational identity style scores (see Table 3). Overall lower support correlated with higher scores in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. Overall higher support correlated with higher scores in the Informational identity style. There was no significant correlation between overall support score and Normative identity style scores.

In order to test the effect of SES on participants' identity style scores, we conducted a one-way ANOVA. SES was the between subjects independent variable and the identity style scores were the dependent variable. Consistent with our second hypothesis, we found that low SES adolescents scored significantly higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style than mid-high SES adolescents (see Table 4, Figure 2). Means for the Diffuse-avoidant identity style for low and mid-high SES participants (with standard deviation in parentheses) were 2.75 (.557) and 2.27 (.482), respectively. There were no significant SES differences in the Normative or Informational identity style scores.

We ran correlations to test for relationships between support scores and identity style scores. Consistent with our third hypothesis, there was a significant correlation between teacher support and identity style scores for low SES participants (see Table 5).

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For the low SES participants, teacher support negatively correlated with Diffuse-Avoidant identity style scores and positively correlated with Normative and Informational identity style scores (See table 5). Also for low SES participants, we found a marginally significant negative correlation between Diffuse-Avoidant identity style scores and parental support scores, ( $r = -.355$ ,  $p = .082$ ), (see Table 5). However, we did not find any correlations between parental support scores and Normative or Informational identity style scores, nor did we find any correlations between identity style scores and mentor support scores for low SES participants. For mid-high SES participants, there were no correlations between parent, teacher, or mentor support scores and identity style scores (see Table 6).

### **Discussion**

We predicted that overall, high support from parents, teachers, and mentors would correlate with high scores in the Normative and Informational styles and that low support scores would correlate with high scores in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. Our results supported this hypothesis. These results reinforce the theory that support for all adolescents encourages healthy identity development (Alliman-Brisset, Turner, & Skovholt, 2004; Kerpelman & White, 2006; Schachter & Ventura, 2008).

In our study, low SES adolescents had lower overall support scores than mid-high SES adolescents. Low SES parents may be less able to offer support to their children because they work long hours and deal with constant stress (Beegle, 2007; Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Low SES adolescents are also less likely to perceive social support from parents, teachers and mentors than their mid-high SES counterparts (Phillips & Pittman, 2003; Van-Tassel-Baska, 2010; Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010). These results support



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the theory that low SES adolescents perceive less social support than their mid-high SES counterparts (Phillips & Pittman, 2003).

We also predicted that low SES adolescents would score higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant style whereas mid-high SES adolescents would tend to score higher in the Normative and Informational styles. Our results supported the first part of this hypothesis; low SES adolescents had significantly higher scores in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. The Diffuse-Avoidant identity style is the least adaptive. We predicted that low SES adolescents would score higher in this identity style than their mid-high SES counterparts because of the detrimental effects of poverty on identity formation, such as negative self-evaluation and stress (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Adolescents who use the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style are less likely to exhibit active coping skills and seek out new activities that may enhance their identity development (Berzonsky, 1990).

While we found that low SES adolescents scored significantly higher in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style, there was no significant difference in the Normative identity style. It is possible that low and mid-high SES families differ in parenting styles, which might lead to similar scores in the Normative style for low and mid-high SES adolescents but through different means. Mid-high SES adolescents are more likely to have higher parental support that may lead to higher scores in the Normative identity style (Schwartz et al., 2000). Highly involved or authoritarian parents may teach their children to conform to authority and seek guidance before making decisions, which may also cause them to score higher in the Normative identity style (Schwartz, et al., 2000). In addition, associations between perceived parent-adolescent relations and the Normative identity style were found to be positive (Berzonsky, et al., 2007). On the other hand, low

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SES adolescents may be likely to possess the Normative identity style because they are not encouraged to explore and try out new identity styles. They may be more likely to conform because they have a more limited opportunity structure and lack the impetus to question their values, beliefs, and behaviors (Phillips & Pittman, 2003).

We also did not find a significant difference between low and mid-high SES adolescents in the Informational identity style. One possible explanation is that some aspects of poverty may actually promote resilience and adaptation in children, which could promote healthy identity development and exploration (Shumba, 2010). In a longitudinal study on children who grew up in poverty and high-risk environments, researchers found that one third of the at-risk individuals actually outperformed children from low-risk families in terms of job satisfaction, marriage stability, and other measures of success created by the researchers (Seccombe, 2002). It is possible that in overcoming adversity and learning how to cope with the stress of poverty, low SES adolescents are, in some cases, just as likely to possess an Informational identity style as their mid-high SES peers.

We also predicted that high support scores would correlate with the Normative and Informational identity styles and low support scores would correlate with the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style. Our results supported this hypothesis in part. For low SES adolescents, teacher support significantly correlated with lower scores in the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style and higher scores in the Normative and Informational identity styles. However, there were no correlations between parental support and the Normative or Informational styles, nor were there any correlations between mentor

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support and identity style in low SES adolescents. We did not find any correlations between parent, teacher, or mentor support and identity style for high SES adolescents.

Although teachers had a significant effect on identity style scores in low SES adolescents, they did not have an effect on identity style scores for mid-high SES adolescents. One possible explanation is that low SES adolescents are less likely to have parents who are academic role models, despite being supportive in other ways (Beegle, 2007). For low SES adolescents, teachers may be the only adults who encourage them to explore their academic potential and identities as students (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Van Tassel-Baska, 2010). Mid-high SES adolescents, however, are more likely to have parents who have a Bachelor's degree or higher. Mid-high SES parents may already provide effective academic guidance to their children. For this reason, teachers may be less influential for mid-high SES students, who already receive academic support from their parents (Hamman & Hendricks, 2005).

Contrary to what we expected, perceived parental support did not have a significant effect on identity style for low or mid-high SES adolescents. Identity formation during adolescence is characterized by separation from parents and a transfer of focus to peers (Erikson, 1980; 1989; Meeus, 2002; Piaget, 1965). Peer influence reaches its peak in adolescence (Bednar & Fisher, 2003). When adolescents decide whether to seek information from their parents or their peers, they choose whoever they perceive to be most competent in the particular subject. Although parents may be very supportive, they may not be as competent as peers in issues related to adolescence (Bednar & Fisher, 2003). Because adolescents become more autonomous as they grow older, parental support may not be the most indicative variable for their identity

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development (Meeus, 2002). One study on identity development also emphasized the important role of autonomous self-exploration during identity development; the link between autonomy and healthy identity development may begin to explain why parental support did not affect identity style for adolescents in our study (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2010).

We did not find any significant effect for mentor support and identity style adaptivity for low or mid-high SES adolescents. Mentors' interactions with students are less frequent and shorter than those of teachers (Schacter & Ventura, 2008). Most of the benefits of mentoring are dependent upon the longevity of the mentor-mentee relationship (Schwartz, 2011). The longer the relationship, the more positive the impact on the mentee (Schwartz, 2011). It is likely that many of our participants only had short-term mentors or mentors with whom they had only recently begun to interact on a regular basis, which would explain the lack of significant relationship between mentor support and identity style.

Support scores in our study differed significantly between parents, teachers, and mentors. Teacher support scores were significantly lower than both parent and mentor support scores. Possible reasons for lower teacher support scores could be due to inherent differences in these adults' roles. Both parents and mentors tend to offer an emotional type of support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Spencer & Liang, 2009). In a study on the types of support offered by parents, teachers, classmates, and close friends of adolescents, researchers found that parental support is predominantly emotional and informational whereas teacher support is solely informational (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Emotional support is defined by comfort and nurture whereas informational support is a more

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objective, emotionally uninvolved style of support (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Mentor relationships also offer emotional support (Schwartz et al., 2011). In a qualitative study conducted with 12 mentor-mentee pairs, participants indicated high levels of emotional support from their mentors and cited this support as a primary source of relief from daily stresses (Spencer & Liang, 2009). The different type of support teachers offer may explain why teacher support scores were significantly lower than mentor and parent support scores.

While we found significant differences in support scores between low and mid-high SES participants, the differences did not interact with SES. Therefore, we cannot attribute these differences in support scores to SES differences. It is possible that the differences in support scores may be due to other factors that affect support such as support style (Lagace-Seguin & DeLeavey, 2011; Smits, Soenens, Luyckx, Duriez, Berzonsky, & Goossens, 2008). For example, researchers have found that both authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles lead to low perceptions of social support (Lagace-Seguin & DeLeavey, 2011). One study examined the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent wellbeing and academic adjustment in both low and mid-high SES adolescents (Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996). They found that each parenting style yielded specific effects that were consistent across low and mid-high SES participants; thus, parenting style was a more influential factor in adolescent wellbeing than SES (Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996). Additionally, teaching and mentoring styles can affect adolescent perceptions of social support (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010).

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Living in stressful environments may also make adolescents less likely to perceive their parents, teachers, and mentors as supportive (Phillips & Pittman, 2003; Sharma & Tanmeet, 2012). Therefore, it is possible that stress was a major influencing factor in our participants' perceptions of relational support. Adolescents growing up in poverty experience more stress than their mid-high SES counterparts, and for this reason stress may be responsible for the main effect we found for support scores and SES. However, mid-high SES adolescents also experience stress, which may also have affected their perceptions of support (Sharma & Tanmeet, 2012). Because stress affects all adolescents, it may further explain why we cannot attribute the lower support scores in the low SES participants to SES alone.

When we looked at overall support without comparing by SES, support scores negatively correlated with the Diffuse-Avoidant identity style and positively correlated with the Informational identity style, which suggests that support for all adolescents encourages healthy identity development (Campbell, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; Hall & Brassard, 2008; O'Connor, Hetherington, Reiss, & Plomin, 1995). We did not find a correlation between support and the Normative identity style. The Normative style is an intermediate identity style (Berzonsky, 1990). Adolescents who use the Normative identity style tend to conform to social norms without questioning them (Berzonsky, 1980). This tendency to conform can be a result of both high and low relational support. Because the Normative identity style is neither extremely adaptive nor maladaptive, it is not specifically associated with very high or low support scores. This may explain why there was no significant correlation between support score and the Normative identity style.

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A major limitation of our study was low participation. We distributed 220 surveys to students but only received 43 completed surveys. Our limited sample size made it difficult to control for individual variation. Also, the definition of “mentor” was ambiguous and allowed for the adolescent to define anyone other than his or her parent or teacher as a mentor. This ambiguity may be why we did not find a correlation between mentor support and identity style.

Age of participants was another limitation of our study. Identity development begins around the age of 13 but the majority of our participants were 16 years or older (Erikson, 1980). We did not have enough participants to analyze them in different age groups. Fourteen-year-olds are at a different point in their identity development than 18-year-olds, and are influenced by different factors (Berzonsky, 1990; Erikson, 1980; Marcia, 1980). The former, for example, are much more influenced by parents than 18-year-olds are because by age 18, adolescents try to separate themselves from their parents (Erikson, 1980). If we had recruited more participants from each age group, we may have been able to separate them and control for possible age effects. In addition, the trajectory of low SES identity development may be different from that of mid-high SES adolescents (Phillips & Pittman, 2003). Our study addressed only the current identity style scores of the participants and did not capture the differences in identity formation throughout the course of development.

Our results indicate that higher perceived social support leads to more adaptive identity style scores. Our study does not reveal whether or not parents, teachers, or mentors are particularly influential in general adolescent identity development. A study

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with more participants could lead to a better understanding of the specific people who influence adolescent identity development.

Because high perceived teacher support positively affects identity development for low SES adolescents, it is important that teachers continue to teach in ways that encourage the building of positive interpersonal relationships (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Greene, 2005). In addition, extensive literature on mentoring continues to show that it has far-reaching positive outcomes for youth although our results did not show a significant effect for mentor support on identity style (Herrera, 2011; Kuperminc et al., 2011; Schwartz, 2011). A study with more control for mentor relationships would help to show how mentoring may encourage healthy identity development given certain conditions. The importance of stable mentor-mentee relationships should continue to be emphasized, since its importance is strongly supported by research (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011 p. 57; DuBois, & Karcher, 2005; Hayes, Castonguay, & Goldfried, 1996; Kuperminc, Thomason, Dimeo, & Broomfield-Massey, 2011).

Research on poverty's effects on identity development in adolescence would benefit from qualitative studies that may reveal the more nuanced processes of identity development; self-report measures cannot tell us everything there is to know about identity development (Grotevant, 1987). Qualitative methods such as interviews would reveal more information about the social and contextual factors that influence identity development and are difficult to discern via quantitative research (Grotevant, 1987).

Future research should be modeled after Berzonsky's model of identity development, as it emphasizes a dynamic process that leaves room for revision as the



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adolescent matures and changes (Berzonsky, 1990). Researchers should continue to take into account the vast importance of interpersonal relationships when investigating identity development. Future researchers might also consider analyzing the depth and conflict scores from the QRI because these relationship qualities could reveal a more detailed perspective of the types of relationships that enhance identity development (Pierce, 1994).

Our final suggestion for future researchers is that they recruit a random, more diverse sample, which would be more representative of the general population. We hope that this study may serve as a starting point for future research on poverty and its effects on identity development. Healthy identity development in adolescence increases the likelihood for success in future relationships and careers (Erikson, 1980). Researchers can focus attention on how identity agents can effectively promote positive identity development for all adolescents regardless of their SES.

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EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Appendix A

**Demographic Information**

**Name:**

**Name of your child:**

**Age of your child (or your age if you are 18 and participating in the study):**

What is your Child's Race (or yours, if you are 18 and participating in the study)? Mark all that apply and include percentages.

\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaska Native

\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_ Black or African American

\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_ Other (Please indicate)

**Maternal education report (circle one):**

Partial high school

High school diploma

Partial college

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree or higher

Does your child (or you) qualify to receive free or reduced lunch? (please circle)

Yes    or    No



EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Appendix B

Quality of Relationships Inventory (Pierce, 1994)

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions regarding your relationship with the parent/teacher/mentor you are closest to.

- | 1  | 2        | 3           | 4         |
|--|----------|-------------|-----------|
| Not at all   | A little | Quite a bit | Very Much |
| 1. To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?   |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |
| 2. How often do you need to work hard to avoid conflict with this person?  |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |
| 3. To what extent could you count on this person for help with a problem?  |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |
| 4. How upset does this person sometimes make you feel?   |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |
| 5. To what extent can you count on this person to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it? |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |
| 6. How much does this person make you feel guilty?   |          |             | 1 2 3 4   |

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

7. How much do you have to “give in” in this relationship? 1 2 3 4
8. To what extent can you count on this person to help you if a family member very close to you died? 1 2 3 4
9. How much does this person want you to change? 1 2 3 4
10. How positive a role does this person play in your life? 1 2 3 4
11. How significant is this relationship in your life? 1 2 3 4
12. How close will your relationship with this person in 10 years? 1 2 3 4
13. How much would you miss this person if the two of you could not see or talk with each other for a month? 1 2 3 4
14. How critical of you is this person? 1 2 3 4
15. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that this person would be willing to do something with you? 1 2 3 4

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

16. How responsible do you feel for this person's well-being? 1 2 3 4
17. How much do you depend on this person? 1 2 3 4
18. To what extent can you count on this person to listen to you  
when you are very angry at someone? 1 2 3 4
19. How much would you like this person to change? 1 2 3 4
20. How angry does this person make you feel? 1 2 3 4
21. How much do you argue with this person? 1 2 3 4
22. To what extent can you really count on this person to distract  
you from your worries when you feel under stress? 1 2 3 4
23. How often does this person make you feel angry? 1 2 3 4
24. How often does this person try to control or influence your life? 1 2 3 4
25. How much more do you give than you get from this relationship? 1 2 3 4

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Appendix C

IDENTITY STYLE INVENTORY (ISI3)

(Revised Version)

Michael D. Berzonsky

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Cortland, New York 13045

1992

Scoring Instructions:

Information-Orientation =

(2 + 5 + 6 + 16 + 18 + 25 + 26 + 30 + 33 + 35 + 37)

Normative-Orientation = (4 + 10 + 19 + 21 + 23 + 28 + 32 + 34 + 40)

Diffuse-Orientation = (3 + 8 + 13 + 17 + 24 + 27 + 29 + 31 + 36 + 38)

Commitment = (1 + 7 + 9\* + 11\* + 12 + 14\* + 15 + 20\* + 22 + 39)

\*For scoring purposes these items are reversed (9, 11, 14 & 20). I'd appreciate

information about any investigations in which the measure is used.

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

INSTRUCTIONS

You will find a number of statements about beliefs, attitudes, and/or ways of dealing with issues. Read each carefully, then use it to describe yourself. On the answer sheet, bubble in the number which indicates the extent to which you think the statement represents you. There are no right or wrong answers. For instance, if the statement is very much like you, mark a 5, if it is not like you at all, mark a 1. Use the 1 to 5 point scale to indicate the degree to which you think each statement is uncharacteristic (1) or characteristic (5) of yourself.

Regarding religious beliefs, I know basically what I believe and don't believe.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've spent a great deal of time thinking seriously about what I should do with my life. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm not really sure what I'm doing in school; I guess things will work themselves out. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

I've more-or-less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've spent a good deal of time reading and talking to others about religious ideas. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When I discuss an issue with someone, I try to assume their point of view and see the problem from their perspective. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I know what I want to do with my future. (COMM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

It doesn't pay to worry about values in advance; I decide things as they happen. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

I'm not really sure what I believe about religion. (COMM/REV)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've always had purpose in my life; I was brought up to know what to strive for. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm not sure which values I really hold. (COMM/REV)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I have some consistent political views; I have a definite stand on where the government and country should be headed. (COMM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

Many times by not concerning myself with personal problems, they work themselves out.

(DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm not sure what I want to do in the future. (COMM/REV)

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm really into my major; it's the academic area that is right for me. (COMM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've spent a lot of time reading and trying to make some sense out of political issues. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm not really thinking about my future now; it's still a long way off. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've spent a lot of time and talked to a lot of people trying to develop a set of values that make sense to me. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)



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Regarding religion, I've always known what I believe and don't believe; I never really had any serious doubts. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I'm not sure what I should major in (or change to). (COMM/REV)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I've known since high school that I was going to college and what I was going to major in. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I have a definite set of values that I use in order to make personal decisions. (COMM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I think it's better to have a firm set of beliefs than to be openminded. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible in order to see what will

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happen. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When I have a personal problem, I try to analyze the situation in order to understand it. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I find it's best to seek out advice from professionals (e.g., clergy, doctors, lawyers) when I have problems. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

It's best for me not to take life too seriously; I just try to enjoy it. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I think it's better to have fixed values, than to consider alternative value systems.

(NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I try not to think about or deal with problems as long as I can. (DIFF)

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(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I find that personal problems often turn out to be interesting challenges. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I try to avoid personal situations that will require me to think a lot and deal with them on my own. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

Once I know the correct way to handle a problem, I prefer to stick with it. (NORM)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When I have to make a decision, I like to spend a lot of time thinking about my options. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I prefer to deal with situations where I can rely on social norms and standards. (NORM)

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(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

I like to have the responsibility for handling problems in my life that require me to think on my own. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

Sometimes I refuse to believe a problem will happen, and things manage to work themselves out. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When making important decisions I like to have as much information as possible. (INFO)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

When I know a situation is going to cause me stress, I try to avoid it. (DIFF)

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE ME)

To live a complete life, I think people need to get emotionally involved and commit

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

themselves to specific values and ideals.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE  
ME)

I find it's best for me to rely on the advice of close friends or relatives when I have a  
problem.

(NOT AT ALL LIKE ME) 1 2 3 4 5 (VERY MUCH LIKE  
ME)

## RELIABILITY DATA FOR THE IDENTITY STYLE INVENTORY

(Third Revision: ISI3)

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(January, 1997)

### TEST-RETEST TWO-WEEK INTERVAL (N=94)

INFORMATIONAL = .87

NORMATIVE = .87

DIFFUSE/AVOIDANT = .83

COMMITMENT = .89

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

### ALPHA COEFFICIENTS (N=618)

INFORMATIONAL	=	.70	M = 35.16	SD = 5.50
NORMATIVE	=	.64	M = 29.43	SD = 4.83
DIFFUSE/AVOIDANT	=	.76	M = 24.90	SD = 6.15
COMMITMENT	=	.71	M = 36.94	SD = 6.02

NOTE: In this revision only the Informational and Normative Scales were modified. Correlations between the ISI2 and ISI3 scales were: Informational2 X Informational3 =.98; Normative2 X Normative3 =.94.

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Table 1. *Repeated Measures ANOVA Support Scores and SES*

Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SES	2.837	1	2.837	5.224	.028
Error	21.721	40	.543		

Test of Within-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SupportScore	5.661	2	2.831	6.468	.002
SupportScore * SES	1.719	2	.860	1.964	.147
Error	35.011	80	.438		

(SupportScore)

*Note.* SupportScore\*SES represents the interaction.

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Table 2

*Post-hoc t-tests Differences Between Parent, Teacher, and Mentor Support Scores*

	<u>Support Source</u>				
Pair 1	Parent	Mentor	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Parent-Mentor Support Scores	3.115	3.184	-0.44	41	0.662
	(0.702)	(0.698)			
<hr/>					
	<u>Support Source</u>				
Pair 2	Parent	Teacher	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Parent-Teacher Support Scores	3.115	2.737	2.468	42	.018
	(.702)	(.702)			
<hr/>					
	<u>Support Source</u>				
Pair 3	Mentor	Teacher	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mentor-Teacher Support Scores	3.184	2.737	-3.23	41	.003
	(.698)	(.702)			



EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Table 3

*Correlation Between Overall Support Score and Identity Style*

Measure	1	2	3	4
1 Overall support score	--			
2 Diffuse-avoidant	-0.534**	--		
3 Normative	0.151	-0.047	--	
4 Informational	0.308*	-0.237	0.395**	--

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

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Table 4

*One-way ANOVA SES Effect on Identity Style Scores*

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Diffuse-avoidant	Between Groups	2.425	1	2.425	8.712	.005
	Within Groups	11.412	41	.278		
	Total	13.837	42			
Normative	Between Groups	.266	1	.266	.451	.506
	Within Groups	24.183	41	.590		
	Total	24.449	42			
Informational	Between Groups	.007	1	.007	.019	.891
	Within Groups	15.045	41	.367		
	Total	15.052	42			

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

Table 5  
*Identity Style and Support Score Correlation Matrix Low SES*

---

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Diffuse-avoidant	--					
2 Normative	-.148	--				
3 Informational	-.260	.646**	--			
4 Parent Support	-.355	-.032	-.136	--		
5 Teacher Support	-.472*	.420*	.530**	-.090	--	
6 Mentor Support	-.282	.002	.268	-.020	.327	--

---

*Note.* \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY

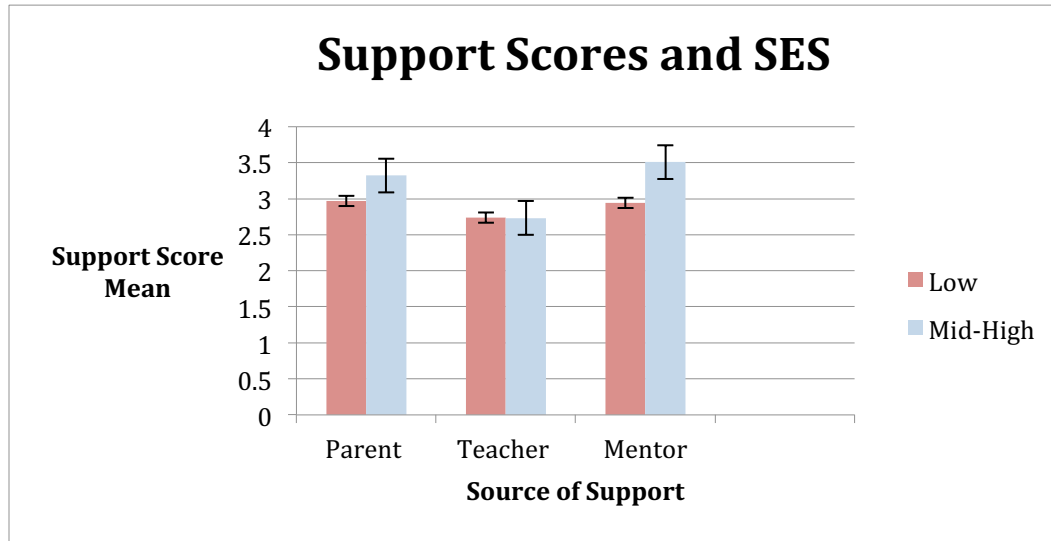
Table 6

*Identity Style and Support Score Correlation Matrix Mid-High SES*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Diffuse-avoidant	--					
2 Normative	-0.011	--				
3 Informational	-0.234	-0.059	--			
4 Parent Support	-0.336	0.078	0.094	--		
5 Teacher Support	0.031	0.164	0.176	0.104	--	
6 Mentor Support	0.001	0.004	0.113	0.181	-0.144	--

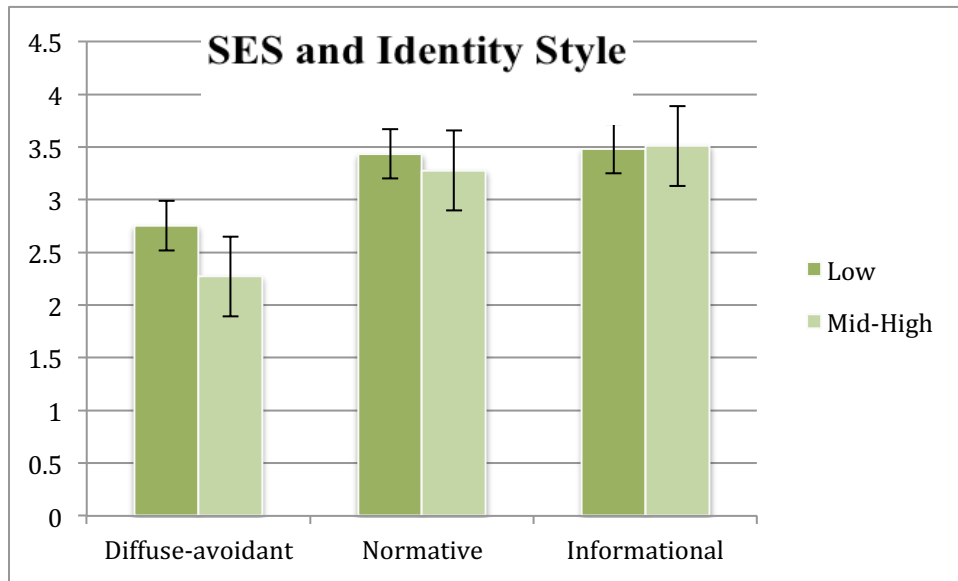
*Note.* \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY



*Figure 1.* Mean parent, teacher, and mentor support scores of low and mid-high SES participants are represented. High SES participants had higher overall support scores than low SES participants. Standard errors are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.

## EFFECTS OF SES ON IDENTITY



*Figure 2.* Average scores for each of the identity styles for low and mid-high SES participants are represented. Low SES adolescents scored significantly higher in the Diffuse-avoidant identity style than mid-high SES participants. There were no significant differences between low and mid-high SES participants in the Normative or Informational identity styles. Standard errors are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.