



Military REACH's review of  
**THE ROLE OF PARENTING STYLE OF SINGLE  
PARENTS IN YOUNG CHILDREN'S RISK-TAKING**

Wood, E. E., Kennison, S. M., & Jackson, G. C. (2019). The role of parenting style of single parents in young children's risk-taking. *Current Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00178-0>

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** This article examined the relationship between parenting styles of single parents and risk-taking behaviors in young children. Research suggests that there are four primary parenting styles:

1. Authoritative parenting – Demonstrating high warmth and high parental control
2. Permissive parenting – Demonstrating high warmth and low parental control
3. Authoritarian parenting – Demonstrating low warmth and high parental control
4. Neglectful parenting – Demonstrating low warmth and low parental control

In a sample of 200 single parents with a child between the ages of two and five, parents were asked to evaluate their approach to parenting and to assess their child's risk-taking behaviors (e.g., runs out into the street, plays with fire). The results revealed that higher levels of authoritarian parenting among single mothers were related to higher levels of risk-taking behaviors for their children. Additionally, the findings showed that higher levels of permissive parenting among single fathers were related to higher risk-taking behaviors for their sons but not for their daughters.

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

- Boys were not more likely than girls to engage in risk-taking behaviors.
- Risk-taking behavior does not significantly differ between children of single fathers and children of single mothers.
- For single mothers, authoritarian parenting style was associated with risk-taking behaviors for daughters and sons.
- For single fathers, permissive and authoritarian parenting were associated with greater risk-taking behaviors for sons but not for daughters.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILIES**

- Evaluate your parenting style and consider how it might be affecting your children. Overall, aim for a balance of high warmth and demandingness ([authoritative](#)).
- Get involved with other single parents. Options may include participating in a support group or setting up a play date for your children.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS**

- Offer programs for first-time single parents with education on parenting styles and young children's risk-taking behavior.
- Help parents understand how their parenting behaviors may be influencing their children's actions.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP**

- Single parents experience a multitude of challenges. Providing parenting programs and creating parent-friendly policies to help single parents navigate these challenges can help reduce risk-taking behaviors among children of single parents.

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Total of 200 single parents: 102 single mothers and 98 single fathers
- ✓ 93 single parents provided data for a daughter; 107 single parents provided data for a son
- ✓ The majority of participants were Caucasian (83%) and employed full-time (58%)
- ✓ The majority of participants reported earning less than \$29,999 per year (52.5%)

## METHODOLOGY

- Participants were recruited through in-person interactions, flyers posted at community childcare centers, and announcements on various social media platforms.
- To be included in the analytic sample, single parents had to have a child between the ages of two and five and spend at least 25 percent of the month with the child.
- Self-report data were collected from parents to measure parenting styles, gender roles, children’s sensation seeking, and children’s risk-taking behaviors.
- A cross-sectional design\* was used to examine the association between all variables for the different parent-child dyads (mother-son, mother-daughter, father-son, father-daughter).
- Separate multiple regressions\* were used to further assess how parenting style predicts risk-taking behavior in children.

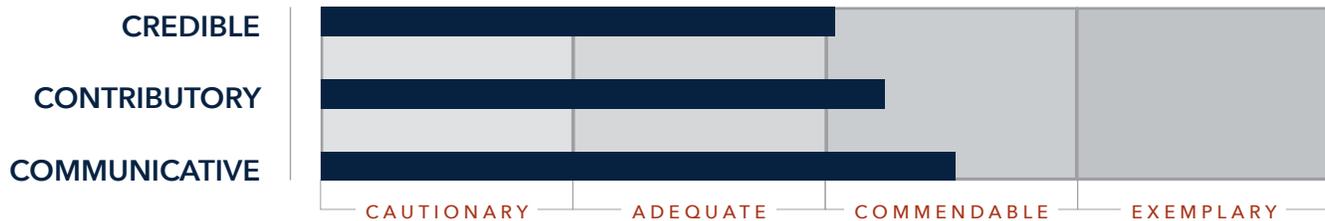
## STRENGTHS

- By concisely reviewing a collection of relevant literature, the authors made it clear that this study was primarily conducted to expand previous research and further examine the relationship of parenting style and children’s risk-taking behavior.
- The study used straightforward writing and clearly defined the terms and concepts related to parenting style and risk-taking behavior.
- The study used previously designed measures that were found to have high reliability.

## LIMITATIONS

- The design of the study was cross-sectional, which does not allow for causal explanations between the variables.
- The survey was completed by the parent, which may lead to bias regarding children’s risk-taking behaviors and parenting behaviors.
- The sample size was small and primarily Caucasian and low-income, so the results may not be generalizable\* to different types of single-parent families.
- There was no explicit framework stated to guide the study, so it was difficult to follow the implications of the results.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY



\*Term defined in the Military REACH Dictionary

### DIMENSIONS OF ASSESSMENT

- CREDIBLE: Research that is rigorous, transparent, consistent, and generalizable. This dimension reflects an evaluation of the study’s scientific methodology.
- CONTRIBUTORY: Research that is original, applicable, and has the potential to enhance the well-being of military families. This dimension examines the impact of the study.
- COMMUNICATIVE: Research that is coherent, understandable, and readable. This dimension assesses how effectively the authors convey the content of the study.

\* These dimensions are adapted from the work of Mårtensson et al. (2016). For more information on the REACH evaluation framework and rubric visit: [militaryREACH.org](http://militaryREACH.org)

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