

## **Construction and Validation of the Parenting Style Inventory II (PSI-II)**

Nancy Darling, Ph.D.  
Teru Toyokawa, MA

Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
The Pennsylvania State University

**DRAFT: DO NOT QUOTE WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM AUTHOR**

Correspondence regarding this paper can be send to Nancy Darling, Department of Human Development and Family Studies; 110 Henderson Bldg. South; The Pennsylvania State University; University Park, PA 16802. E-mail [nxd10@psu.edu](mailto:nxd10@psu.edu)

## Construction and Validation of the Parenting Style Inventory II (PSI-II)

### Background and Significance:

Darling & Steinberg define parenting style as "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parents' behaviors are expressed" (1993, p 488). Parenting style is distinguished from parenting practices, in that parenting practices are directed towards particular goals--encouraging academic achievement, for example--while parenting style refers to the overall emotional climate in which particular parent:child interactions occur. One limitation of many scales used to assess parenting style (for example, Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987) is that they confound parenting style and practice by including questions regarding the content or goals of socialization. For example, Steinberg, et al (1992) includes items assessing helping with homework in their measurement of parenting style. This makes it difficult to assess whether the association found between parenting style and academic outcomes is due to parenting style, per se, or to specific practices parents use to promote academics (helping with homework). This confounding of parenting practice and style also makes it impossible to test Darling & Steinberg's (1993) hypothesis that parenting style influences developmental outcomes primarily indirectly by moderating the effectiveness of specific parenting practices and be influencing children's openness to socialization. (For a full discussion of this and other issues raised by the distinction between parenting style and practice, see Darling & Steinberg, 1993.)

The Parenting Style Inventory (PSI-I) was designed to assess the construct of parenting style independently of parenting practice. Because one purpose of the measure was to allow comparisons of the association of parenting style with child outcomes across diverse population and a relatively large age range, the measure was designed to be short, easy to understand, and reliable. Based upon previous literature (i.e. Schaeffer, 1965; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1987), three subscales, of five-items each, were developed to assess the three dimensions of maternal parenting style: demandingness, emotional responsiveness, and psychological autonomy-granting. Although initial reliability tests in samples of high school seniors and college students yielded acceptable levels of reliability (demandingness,  $\alpha = .69$ ; responsiveness,  $\alpha = .87$ ; autonomy-granting,  $\alpha = .82$ ), tests of the measure in a population of 7<sup>th</sup> graders were more problematic (demandingness,  $\alpha = .68$ ; responsiveness,  $\alpha = .62$ ; autonomy-granting,  $\alpha = .58$ ) and showed a strong, positive skew.

Because of these limitation, a revision of the measure was undertaken. The goal of the revision was to increase the internal consistency and the variability of the items while maintaining the conceptual clarity of the constructs and the short format. The PSI-pilot II represents a modification of the original PSI-I instrument. Two major changes were made. First, additional items were written that would decrease positive response bias and capture a broader range of the demandingness construct. Second, the instrument was changed from a four-response format, in which students were forced to choose between a positive and negative presentation of their parents, to a five-response format, which allowed for neutral responses. This five-response option had been used in the initial development of the PSI-I and appeared to allow more range of response, especially in the younger students. The PSI-pilot II is presented in Appendix 1.

**Method:**

**Sample:** Data for this study were collected from 318 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-graders in a public middle school in a rural/suburban, southern Pennsylvanian community. Many of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders in this school had previously participated in the testing of the PSI-I. Students were administered the PSI-pilot II as part of a larger study of parenting, leisure, and psychosocial development.

**Procedure:** Each subscale was analyzed separately. Item selection involved two stages: the identification of several possible 5-item subscales for each construct and examination of the psychometric properties of each individual subscale and the interrelationship among the subscales.

**Step One:** For both the Psychological Autonomy-Granting and Emotional Responsiveness scales, the analyses proceeded in two stages. First, individual item means and variances were examined and subscale alphas with and without each individual item were calculated. From these analyses, several possible 5-item scales were developed that represented different acceptable combinations of high internal consistency, high variability, and lack of skew. In order to reduce the number of items in the Demandingness Subscale, a series of principal component analyses were performed using a varimax rotation. Two main factors emerged: 'clear high standards' and 'consequences of misbehavior'. The 8 items loading most highly on these factors were maintained as potential scale items. As with the other two sub-scales, several possible 5-item scales were developed that represented different advantages and disadvantages.

**Step Two:** Four criteria were used to select the final set of items: (1) Cronbach's alpha; (2) variance and skewness; (3) inter-correlations among the subscales; and (4) predictive validity of outcome variables (i.e., intrinsic motivation, parental involvement, school-related variables such as GPA, attitude toward school, bonding with teachers, and value toward school).

**Results:**

The final items and subscale reliabilities are reported in Table 1. All alphas reached acceptable levels (demandingness,  $\alpha = .72$ ; responsiveness,  $\alpha = .74$ ; autonomy-granting,  $\alpha = .75$ ). There were no differences in the reliability of scales in the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade samples. Descriptive statistics for the items are reported in Table 2. Although each scale is positively skewed, the relatively well-functioning nature of the sample and the relatively higher variability showed this to be an improvement over the original instrument. Inter-correlations among the three subscales are reported in Table 3. As has been shown in other studies of parenting, the different aspect of parenting style tend to be intercorrelated. Most problematic is the correlations between psychological autonomy-granting and responsiveness ( $R = .46$ ). The two main constructs - responsiveness and demandingness - show a moderate correlation of .34. This is consistent with their interrelationship in other studies of parenting style and may reflect adolescents' interpretation of parental rule-setting as an expression of their emotional attachment. (This hypothesis is currently under investigation.)

The relationship between each subscale and adolescent outcomes, maternal monitoring and involvement in education, and legitimacy of authority are reported in Table 4. In each case, the relationship between positive parenting (high responsiveness, demandingness, and psychological

autonomy-granting) and adolescent outcomes, parenting practices, and perceived legitimacy of authority was in the expected magnitude and direction.

**Conclusion:**

The PSI-II appears to have adequate internal consistency, variability, and predictive validity and shows a marked improvement over the PSI-I in this sample of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Data collection is under way which will allow additional validation of this measure. Planned work includes a) calculating 1-year test-retest reliability on a subsample of students currently in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, b) comparisons of the reliability of measures of fathers' and mothers' parenting style, c) extending the age range of the sample to a sample of 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> graders who were oversampled for less optimal parenting, d) modification of the instrument for mother and father self-report and mother and father reports of their partners' parenting, and e) comparison of adolescent reports with parent self-reports. This work should be complete by August, 1997.

Table 1 Final Items for Parental Style Inventory-II

Responsiveness Subscale (alpha = .74;  $n = 318$ )

- \*B. My mother doesn't really like me to tell her my troubles.
- \*G. My mother hardly ever praises me for doing well.
- R. I can count on my mother to help me out if I have a problem.
- AA. My mother spends time just talking to me.
- CC. My mother and I do things that are fun together.

Autonomy-granting Subscale (alpha = .75;  $n = 318$ )

- \*D. My mother tells me that her ideas are correct and that I shouldn't question them.
- F. My mother respects my privacy.
- H. My mother gives me a lot of freedom.
- \*L. My mother makes most of the decisions about what I can do.
- P. My mother believes I have a right to my own point of view.

Demandingness Subscale (alpha = .72;  $n = 318$ )

- A. My mother really expects me to follow family rules.
- \*I. My mother really lets me get away with things.
- J. If I don't behave myself, my mother will punish me.
- T. My mother points out ways I could do better.
- \*BB. When I do something wrong, my mother does not punish me.

Note. Asterisks indicate reversed items.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of PSI Subscales

	Means (SD)		
	Boys ( $n=141$ )	Girls ( $n=177$ )	Total ( $n=318$ )
Responsiveness	3.86 (.72)	3.95 (.82)	3.91 (.77)
Autonomy-granting	3.55 (.81)	3.49 (.86)	3.52 (.84)
Demandingness	3.70 (.77)	3.64 (.69)	3.67 (.72)

Table 3 Correlation Coefficients among PSI Subscales

Responsiveness: Demandingness	.34
Responsiveness: Autonomy-Granting	.46
Demandingness: Autonomy-Granting	-.11

Table 4 Correlation Coefficients between PSI-II Subscales and Adolescent Outcomes and Parenting Measures

	Responsiveness			Demandingness			Autonomy-Granting		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Self-Esteem	.41	.28	.34	.21	.17	.19	.29	.23	.25
Intrinsic Motivation	.27	.23	.25	.09	.22	.15	.23	.19	.21
GPA	.30	.27	.28	.10	.05	.07	.17	.30	.23
Try in School	.29	.20	.24	.33	.24	.27	-.04	.11	.02
Bonding w/ Teachers	.44	.46	.44	.30	.14	.21	.23	.37	.29
Value School	.55	.45	.49	.41	.28	.33	.27	.34	.30
Problem Behavior	-.34	-.18	-.26	-.26	-.21	-.22	-.14	-.09	-.10
Substance Use	-.32	-.12	-.21	-.21	-.19	-.19	-.14	.01	-.04
Monitoring	.49	.55	.52	.38	.23	.30	.17	.25	.21
School Involvement	.45	.56	.51	.53	.51	.52	.05	.17	.12
Perceived Legitimacy of Parental Authority	.34	.24	.28	.32	.21	.26	.12	.14	.13

## Appendix 1: Parenting Style Inventory - Pilot II

How much do you agree or disagree with this sentence?

Response options: strongly disagree, disagree, I'm in between, agree, strongly agree

- A. My mother really expects me to follow family rules.
- B. My mother doesn't really like me to tell her my troubles.
- C. My mother expects me to dress and act differently in places like church or a restaurant than I do when I'm with my friends.
- D. My mother tells me that her ideas are correct and that I shouldn't question them.
- E. Hard work is very important to my mother.
- F. My mother respects my privacy.
- G. My mother hardly ever praises me for doing well.
- H. My mother gives me a lot of freedom.
- I. My mother really lets me get away with things.
- J. If I don't behave myself, my mother will punish me.
- K. My mother expects me to do what she says without having to tell me why.
- L. My mother makes most of the decisions about what I can do.
- M. It is important to my mother that I do my best.
- N. My mother encourages me to talk to her honestly.
- O. My mother doesn't ask me to change my behavior to meet the needs of other people in the family.
- P. My mother believes I have a right to my own point of view.
- Q. If I don't act according to my mother's standards, she will do things to make sure I do in the future.

- R. I can count on my mother to help me out if I have a problem.
- S. I would describe my mother as a strict parent.
- T. My mother points out ways I could do better.
- U. My mother pushes me to do my best in whatever I do.
- V. It's clear to me when my mother thinks I have done well.
- W. My mother pushes me to think for myself.
- X. My mother is strict about how I behave when I'm in stores, the library, or some place where there are mostly adults.
- Y. My mother makes it clear when I have done something she doesn't like.
- Z. I can tell when my mother thinks I could have done better.
- AA. My mother spends time just talking to me.
- BB. When I do something wrong, my mother does not punish me.
- CC. My mother and I do things that are fun together.
- DD. My mother sets high standards for me to meet.
- EE. My mother gives me chores to do around the house.
- FF. When my family does things together, my mother expects me to come.