

Parenting Style

David R. Cross, Ph.D.

January 22, 2009

Introduction

Perspectives on Parenting Style

In the lecture “Evolution of Models of Parenting Style” we surveyed progress made by developmental psychologists in terms of understanding parent-child interaction and its contribution to the socialization of the child. A major framework for conceptualizing the contributions of parents to socialization is based upon the pioneering work of Diana Baumrind, and is typically referred to as “parenting style.” As we discussed in class, psychologists’ thinking about parenting style has evolved over the past thirty years, and has become a cornerstone of developmental theory and research. There have been three major “stages” in evolution of models of parenting style:

1. *Styles of Parenting.* Baumrind identified three parenting styles in her original work: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. The major characteristic that determines these different styles is the control strategies employed by the parent (see Table 1, although other characteristics (e.g., communication and maturity demands) tend to covary with these control strategies. The importance of Baumrind’s work was firmly established by her findings showing that different parenting styles were associated with different child outcomes (see the lecture and your text for a discussion of these).
2. *Dimensions of Parenting Style.* Ten or so years after Baumrind’s pioneering work was published, Maccoby and Martin (1983) reconceptualized parenting style in terms of dimensions. Part of Maccoby and Martin’s

Table 1: Parental Control Strategies

Parenting Style	Control Strategy
Authoritative	Firm Control
Authoritarian	Firm and Restrictive Control
Permissive	Control is weak or absent

motivation was to deepen understanding of parenting style by identifying underlying dimensions for Baumrind's styles of parenting. A further benefit of Maccoby and Martin's approach is that it could serve as the basis for improved assessment of parenting style (see below).

3. *Parenting Style as Context* The recent conceptual development in the area of parenting style occurred with the publication of Darling and Steinberg's *Psychological Bulletin* article in which they reconceptualized parenting style as a *context* for specific parent-child interactions. The basic idea is this: the same parental action (e.g. modeling a desired behavior such as washing the dishes) can have different effects on children depending on the parenting style characterizing the parent. For example, modeling a desired behavior may be effective when the parenting style is authoritative, but ineffective when the parenting style is authoritarian or permissive. Part of the reason for moderating influences of this kind is that parenting style may influence the receptiveness of children to the parent's values and beliefs.

Assessing Parenting Style

The approach to assessment that we will use in this course is based on adaptations made by researchers at the University of California–Berkeley working on the *Becoming a Family Project* (Phillip Cowan and Carolyn Pape Cowan, Co-directors). Their assessment tool was further adapted in our labs here at TCU. The result is 35 items that are used to rate parents on two dimensions: control and affect. Ratings are made following observation of parent-child interactions either on videotape (preferred) or *in vivo*.

Parents can be classified into one of four categories—authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, neglectful—using the following scheme:

1. Score the videotape using the 35 item scale.
2. Compute the average rating for each set of items clustered at the end points of the two dimensions: high control, low control, positive affect, negative affect for the key); also compute the average for the the authoritative items. Refer to the Description of Parenting Style Items and Figure 1 for the scoring key¹.
3. Compare the item average along each dimension: High Control *versus* Low Control, and Positive Affect *versus* Negative Affect; also judge the strength of the Authoritative items.
4. Assign parents to the appropriate category of style based upon these comparisons (e.g. a parent would be categorized as “Authoritative” if the Positive Affect ratings were higher than the Negative Affect ratings, and

¹These parenting style items and scoring dimensions are based upon the work Philip Cowan and Carolyn Cowan at the University of California, Berkeley

the High Control ratings were relatively high, and the Authoritative ratings were relatively high).

Requirements

Steps

1. Attend lectures and do the associated readings (see below).
2. Select a partner, and together attend one of the two sessions for scoring parenting style tapes. When scoring the tapes, use the Parenting-Child Interaction Scale.
3. Get together with your partner to compute reliabilities, and plan your written report.
4. Write your report and turn it in by the announced deadline.

Notes

- Do this activity with a partner.
- There is no limit to the enrollment for this activity; the only limitation is your ability to attend one of the scoring sessions.
- Your written report should include (a) your and your partner's scoresheets, (b) computation of reliabilities (see next item), and (c) a *joint* set of answers to the questions (see below).
- You and your partner should compute a reliability (i.e. percent agreement) for your categorizations. For example, if you scored four videotapes, and you agreed on three out of the four categorizations, then your inter-observer reliability would be 75%.
- Your grade will be based on your completion of the scoring assignment, and the quality of your answers to the questions. Your grade will *not* be based on the level of agreement you and your partner achieve, as reflected in your reliability.

Materials

- Expanded description of individual parenting style items (see below).
- Parenting style score sheet (see below—four copies are needed).

Readings

- Req** Hetherington & Parke, Chapter 12 (especially the section “Family Functioning and the Family System”).
- Req** Darling, N., & Steinberg, L. (1993). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. *Psychological Bulletin*, **113**, 487-496.
- Opt** Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In E. M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Socialization, personality, and social development: Vol. 4, Handbook of Child Psychology*. New York: Wiley.

Questions

1. What type of observational method is the Parent–Child Interaction Scale? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What are the potential sources of bias? (Refer to Chapter 3—Observation—for this question.)
2. You have been exposed to the idea of types of parenting style both in lecture and in the readings. Assign each of the parents you scored in this activity to one of the four styles (the fit may not be perfect, do the best you can). Briefly justify your assignments.
3. What is the prognosis for the children of these parents? What do you predict for their future development? Do you see any problems with basing predictions based on these protocols? If so, what difficulties do you see?
4. Reflect on your own parents. What type of parenting style do you think they employed with you when you were a child? What type do you think you will be?

Parenting Style Ratings: Item and Anchor Descriptions

Description of Parenting Style Items

- PI** *Pleasure* in parental role: enjoys interaction with child; displays playfulness and humor; takes pleasure in child’s accomplishments.
- DP** *Displeasure* in parental role: displays lack of investment in, and/or unhappiness with, parental responsibilities; appears annoyed by child’s activities.
- Cn** *Confidence* in parental role: appears to feel secure and effective in parental role; acts without undue hesitation and self-doubt; self-confidence is resilient in the face of difficult child behavior.

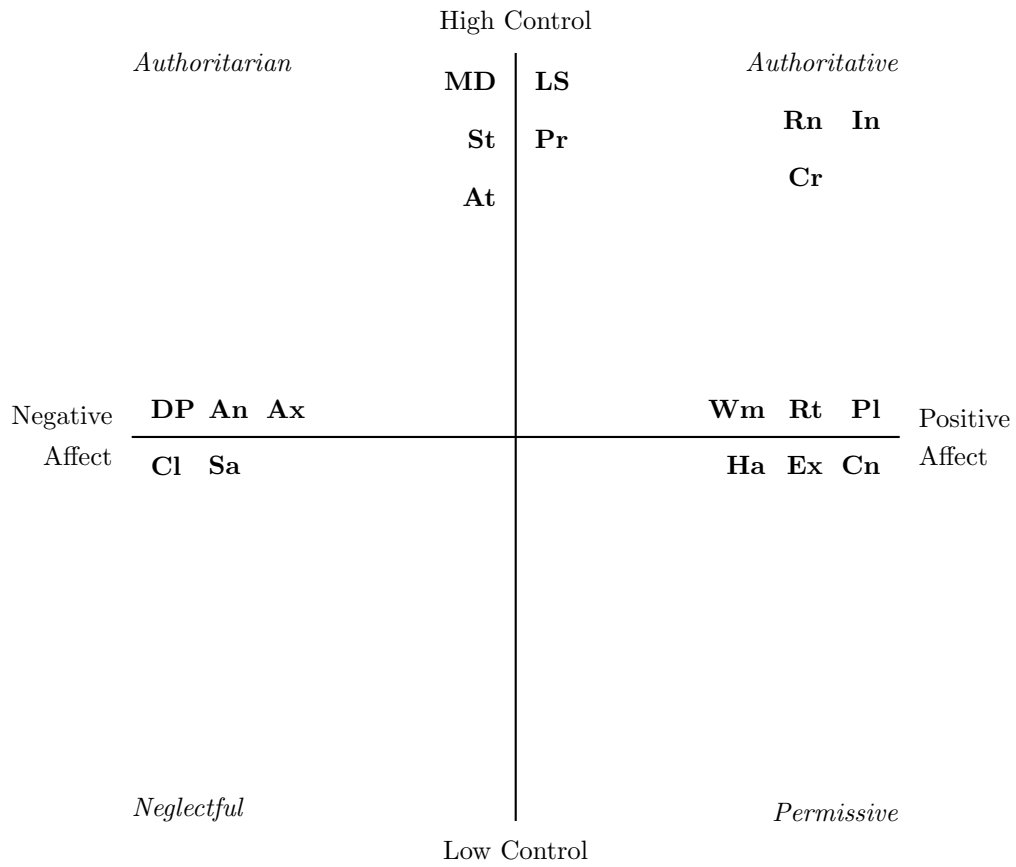


Figure 1: Two dimensions of parenting—Affect and Control—yielding for styles of parenting—Authoritative, Authoritarian, Neglectful, and Permissive (see text for explanation of codes).

- Rt** *Respect* for child's autonomy: non-intrusive; recognizes validity of child's perspective even when child is non-compliant; recognizes child's competence; negotiates with child; age-appropriate protectiveness.
- LS** *Limit Setting*: sets expectations for behavior of child; follows through consistently on limit setting; deals directly with conflict and/or non-compliance.
- Ex** *Expressiveness*: degree to which parent shows (by gesture, facial expression, or tone of voice) or talks directly about feelings, thoughts, pleasure, or pain.
- MD** *Maturity Demands*: sets standards for behavior appropriate for the child's capabilities and developmental level.
- Pr** *Precision* in parent's use of language: use language clearly; asks questions to check child's understanding; uses devices such as repetition to focus child's attention.
- St** *Structure* provided by parent: provides adequate information about what is to be done; approaches task in planful, organized way; structures situation so child understand task objectives; breaks down steps logically; flexible in maintaining focus on what is to be done.
- Wm** *Warmth* of parent's interaction with child: demonstrates positive regard and affection for child; provides emotional support when appropriate; authentic; encouraging in an ego-enhancing way.
- Cl** *Coldness* of parent's interaction with child: seems aloof and unavailable; appears disinterested in child.
- An** *Anger*: degree to which anger, dislike, or hostility is expressed by the parent toward the child, either directly or indirectly:
- *Directly expressed anger*: hostility that involves explicit blaming or rejection of the child.
 - *Indirectly Expressed Anger*: anger, dislike, or hostility is passively expressed by the parent toward the child; anger that is veiled or inhibited.
- Rn** *Responsiveness* to child: listens attentively to child's expressions; rephrases suggestions, instructions based on child's behavior; coordinates parenting with child efforts (i.e. resourceful); able to perceive needs of child and respond to those perceived needs.
- In** *Interactiveness*: degree to which parent talks to child; parent is engaged with the child, but interaction is appropriately two-sided.
- Cr** *Creativity*: degree to which parents is creative either in his or her interactions with the child (i.e. parent comes up with novel ideas or suggestions), or in problem solving when difficulties arise (i.e. parent is a creative problem solver, generating solutions that are fun and nonobvious).

At *Activity*: degree of physical activity (i.e. energy level); manipulation of objects during interaction; movement around the room.

Ha *Happiness*: the degree to which happiness is expressed, either verbally or nonverbally:

- *verbal expressions*: (look for content of what is said);
- *nonverbal*: mood (euphoric), face (especially eyes and mouth turned up), body (energized), expression (laughter).

Sa *Sadness*: the degree to which sadness is expressed, either verbally or nonverbally:

- *verbal expressions*: (look for content of what is said);
- *nonverbal*: mood (dysphoric), face (especially eyes and mouth turned down), body (sagging), expression (tears).

Ax *Anxiety*: parent seems fearful or anxious; parent seems insecure about other's approval; anxiety may be manifested by a wide range of behavior including nervousness, mannerisms, shyness, difficulty with separation, concern about what is expected from others.

Description of Parenting Style Anchors

When scoring the parents' behavior, there are two aspects of the parents' behavior to consider: intensity and frequency. Parents should receive the highest ratings when their behavior displays *both* high intensity and high frequency, and the lowest ratings when their behavior displays *neither* high intensity *nor* high frequency.

VH A *Very High* rating indicates that item is highly characteristic of the parent in terms of both frequency and intensity.

H A *High* rating indicates that the item is highly characteristic of the parent in terms of either frequency or intensity, and somewhat characteristic in terms of the other aspect (frequency or intensity).

M A *Moderate* rating indicates that the item is somewhat characteristic of the parent in terms of both frequency and intensity.

L A *Low* rating indicates that the item is somewhat characteristic of the parent in terms of either frequency or intensity, but not at all characteristic in terms of the other aspect (frequency or intensity).

VL A *Very Low* rating indicates that the item is not at all characteristic of the parent in terms of both frequency and intensity.

Parenting Style Rating Sheet

Subject _____

Date _____

Scorer _____

Pleasure	VH	H	M	L	VL
Displeasure	VH	H	M	L	VL
Confidence	VH	H	M	L	VL
Respect	VH	H	M	L	VL
Limit Setting	VH	H	M	L	VL
Expressiveness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Maturity Demands	VH	H	M	L	VL
Precision	VH	H	M	L	VL
Structure	VH	H	M	L	VL
Warmth	VH	H	M	L	VL
Coldness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Anger	VH	H	M	L	VL
Responsiveness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Interactiveness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Creativity	VH	H	M	L	VL
Happiness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Sadness	VH	H	M	L	VL
Anxiety	VH	H	M	L	VL