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John R. Buri

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Parental Authority Questionnaire

John R. Buri
University of St. Thomas

A questionnaire was developed for the purpose of measuring Baumrind's (1971) permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parental authority prototypes. It consists of 30 items per parent and yields permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scores for both the mother and the father; each of these scores is derived from the phenomenological appraisals of the parents' authority by their son or daughter. The results of several studies have supported the Parental Authority Questionnaire as a psychometrically sound and valid measure of Baumrind's parental authority prototypes, and they have suggested that this questionnaire has considerable potential as a valuable tool in the investigation of correlates of parental permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness.

The use of parental authority in children's lives is an often-debated issue (e.g., Dobson, 1973; Dorr, Zax, & Bonner, 1983; Gordon, 1975; Neill, 1977; Rubinstein & Siff, 1984). In what manner that authority should be exercised, how often it should be exercised, in what contexts it should be exercised, and whether it should even be exercised have been discussed at great length and with considerable conviction.

Numerous models have derived from empirical investigations of parental authority (e.g., see Rollins & Thomas, 1979). One particular model, however, has frequently been cited for its multidimensional character, its typological clarity, and its empirical efficacy. Within this model (proposed by Baumrind, 1971), three distinct prototypes of parental authority have been proffered—permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness. Baumrind suggested that permissive parents tend to make fewer demands on their children; that do other parents, allowing them to regulate their own activities as much as possible. Thus, permissive parents are relatively noncontrolling and tend to use a minimum of punishment with their children. Authoritarian parents, on the other hand, tend to be highly directive with their children and value unquestioning obedience in their exercise of authority over their children. Being detached and less warm than other parents, the authoritarian parents dis-

courage verbal give-and-take and favor punitive measures to control their children's behavior. Authoritative parents, however, tend to fall somewhere between these extremes. They are characterized as providing clear and firm direction for their children, but disciplinary clarity is moderated by warmth, reason, flexibility, and verbal give-and-take.

Measurements by Baumrind (1971) and Baumrind and Black (1967) of permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting have been based on interviews with parents and their children as well as observations of parents interacting with their children. More recently, Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, and Fraleigh (1987) reported the use of questionnaire data from high school students to determine which of Baumrind's authority styles was exercised by their parents. The type of indirect measure of parental prototypes employed by Dornbusch et al. has several advantages for family researchers, such as: The cost is low in terms of time required for data collection and in terms of special training required for data-gathering personnel; subject availability for participation is high; and standardization of the measurement tool is possible. However, this particular measure proposed by Dornbusch et al. may be unsatisfactory for wide-scale use for several reasons: (a) academic-related content was used frequently in the questionnaire items, (b) this tool did not allow for the separate measurement of the authority prototypes employed by mothers and fathers, and (c) the Cronbach alpha coefficients reported for the scales were only of moderate strength (i.e., .60, .70, and .66 for permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritarianism, respectively). In this article, I describe a Likert-type questionnaire designed to measure the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting provided by both mothers and fathers.

PHASE I: SCALE CONSTRUCTION

Method

Procedure. Initially, 48 questionnaire items were constructed based on the descriptions of the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative prototypes proposed by Baumrind (1971). Each of these items was stated from the point of view of an individual evaluating the patterns of authority exercised by his or her parents. Consistent with a symbolic interactionist perspective (e.g., Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934), it was reasoned that the actual parental behavior to which an individual has been exposed will largely affect that individual in the way and to the extent that he or she perceives that behavior. Therefore, rather than developing scale items to measure parents' reports of the parental prototypes employed, the items in the present instrument were designed to measure the permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritarianism of parents as phenomenologically appraised by their son or daughter.

Twenty-one professionals (11 women, 10 men) working in the fields of psychology, education, sociology, and social work were presented the 48 questionnaire items. Each of these professionals was also given verbatim descriptions of the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative prototypes (Baumrind, 1971, pp. 22–33) and was asked to judge each item according to its accuracy in characterizing each of the prototypes. Each professional was encouraged to refrain from categorizing a particular item if he or she judged that it failed to delineate clearly one of the three parental patterns. If more than 95% of the judges (i.e., at least 20 of the 21 judges) agreed that an item unequivocally represented one of the three parental prototypes, then it was included in a final pool of items.

Results

Of the initial 48 items, 36 met criterion, and there was 100% agreement among the judges on two thirds of these items. This large amount of agreement among the 21 professionals that these questionnaire items accurately reflect the constructs of permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting (as defined by Baumrind) suggest that the content validity of this questionnaire is good.

From the pool of the 36 questionnaire items that met criterion, 10 permissive, 10 authoritarian, and 10 authoritative items were retained for the final Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Two forms of this questionnaire were constructed: one to evaluate the parental authority provided by the mother and one to evaluate the authority of the father. The 30 PAQ items pertaining to the mother's parental authority are presented in Table 1. Responses to each of these items are made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Thus, the PAQ yields six separate scores for each participant: mother's permissiveness, mother's authoritarianism, mother's authoritative-ness, father's permissiveness, father's authoritarianism, and father's authoritative-ness. Scores on each of these variables can range from 10 to 50; the higher the score, the greater the appraised level of the parental authority prototype measured.

PHASE 2: RELIABILITY TESTING

Study 1: Test-Retest Reliability

Method. Students from an introductory psychology class (30 women, 32 men) completed the PAQ at the end of a class period early in the semester. Two weeks later, 61 of the original participants (29 women, 32 men) again completed the PAQ at the end of a class period. Following the completion of this latter testing session, the participants were debriefed concerning the purposes of their participation.

TABLE 1
Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) Pertaining to Mothers

Instructions: For each of the following statements, circle the number on the 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) that best describes how that statement applies to you and your mother. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your mother during your years of growing up at home. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

1. While I was growing up my mother felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.*
2. Even if her children didn't agree with her, my mother felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what she thought was right.**
3. Whenever my mother told me to do something as I was growing up, she expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions.***
4. As I was growing up, once family policy had been established, my mother discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the children in the family.***
5. My mother has always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions were unreasonable.***
6. My mother has always felt that what children need is to be free to make up their own minds and to do what they want to do, even if this does not agree with what their parents might want.*
7. As I was growing up my mother did not allow me to question any decision she had made.***
8. As I was growing up my mother directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.***
9. My mother has always felt that more force should be used by parents in order to get their children to behave the way they are supposed to.**
10. As I was growing up my mother did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations or behavior simply because someone in authority had established them.*
11. As I was growing up I knew what my mother expected of me in my family, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with my mother when I felt that they were unreasonable.***
12. My mother felt that west parents should teach their children early that you are boss in the family.**
13. As I was growing up, my mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior.*
14. Most of the time as I was growing up my mother did what the children in the family wanted when making family decisions.*
15. As the children in my family were growing up, my mother consistently gave us direction and guidance in rational and objective way.***
16. As I was growing up my mother would get very upset if I tried to disagree with her.**
17. My mother feels that most problems in society would be solved if parents would not restrict their children's activities, decisions, and desires as they are growing up.*
18. As I was growing up my mother let me know what behavior she expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations, she punished me.**
19. As I was growing up my mother allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her.*
20. As I was growing up my mother took the children's opinions into consideration when making family decisions, but she would not decide for something simply because the children wanted it.***

Continued

TABLE 1 (Continued)

-
21. My mother did not view herself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior as I was growing up.*
22. My mother had clear standards of behavior for the children in our home as I was growing up, but she was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual children in the family.***
23. My mother gave me direction for my behavior and activities as I was growing up and she expected me to follow her direction, but she was always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me.***
24. As I was growing up my mother allowed me to form my own point of view on family matters and she generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do.*
25. My mother has always felt that most problems in society would be solved if we could get parents to strictly and firmly deal with their children when they don't do what they are supposed to as they are growing up.**
26. As I was growing up my mother often told me exactly what she wanted me to do and how she expected me to do it.**
27. As I was growing up my mother gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but she was also understanding when I disagreed with her.***
28. As I was growing up my mother did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the children in the family.*
29. As I was growing up I knew what my mother expected of me in the family and she insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for her authority.**
30. As I was growing up, if my mother made a decision in the family that hurt me, she was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit if she had made a mistake.***
-

Note. The parental prototype represented by each item is denoted as follows: *permissive, **authoritarian, and ***authoritative.

Results. The testing sessions over the 2-week period yielded the following reliabilities ($N = 61$; mean age = 19.2 years): .81 for mother's permissiveness, .86 for mother's authoritarianism, .78 for mother's authoritative, .77 for father's permissiveness, .85 for father's authoritarianism, and .92 for father's authoritative.

Study 2: Internal Consistency Reliability

Method. The participants were 185 students (95 women, 90 men) who agreed to participate in the study as part of an introductory psychology course requirement. The mean age of these participants was 18.7 years. Following their participation, the subjects were told that their responses would be used to determine specific psychometric measures pertaining to the PAQ.

Results. The following Cronbach (1951) coefficient alpha values were obtained for each of the six PAQ scales: .75 for Mother's Permissiveness, .85 for Mother's Authoritarianism, .82 for Mother's Authoritativeness, .74 for Father's Permissiveness, .87 for Father's Authoritarianism, and .85 for Father's Authoritativeness. Both the test-retest reliability coefficients and the Cronbach alpha values are highly respectable, especially given the fact that there are only 10 items per scale.

PHASE 3: VALIDITY TESTING

Study 1: Discriminant-Related Validity

If the Permissive, Authoritarian, and Authoritative scales of the PAQ provide an accurate measurement of Baumrind's three parental prototypes, then one would expect divergent responses to the items from these three scales.

Method. The participants in the study were 107 college students who completed the PAQ in order to fulfill a portion of an introductory psychology course requirement. Following participation, the subjects were debriefed concerning the purposes of the study.

Results. As the results in Table 2 reveal, the responses of the 107 participants supported the hypothesized divergence in PAQ scores. Mother's authoritarianism was inversely related to mother's permissiveness ($r = -.38, p < .0005$) and to mother's authoritative-ness ($r = -.46, p < .0005$). Similarly, father's authoritarianism was inversely related to father's permissiveness ($r = -.50, p < .0005$) and to father's authoritative-ness ($r = -.32, p < .0005$). Also, mother's permissiveness was not significantly related to mother's authoritative-ness ($r = .07, p > .10$), and father's permissiveness was not significantly correlated with father's authoritative-ness ($r = .12, p > .10$).

Study 2: Criterion-Related Validity

One important dimension of Baumrind's authority prototypes that was not explicitly mentioned in the verbatim descriptions of each is parental warmth or parental nurturance. Because this particular dimension was not discussed in the verbatim descriptions, the 21 professionals who judged the appropriateness of each PAQ item for inclusion in the questionnaire were unable to take parental nurturance into consideration when making their judgments. Therefore, if the

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations of PAQ Scores for Mothers and Fathers

	1	2	3
1. Mother's permissiveness	1.00		
2. Mother's authoritarianism	-.38*	1.00	
3. Mother's authoritative-ness	.07	-.46*	1.00
	4	5	6
4. Father's permissiveness	1.00		
5. Father's authoritarianism	.50*	1.00	
6. Father's authoritative-ness	.12	-.32*	1.00

* $p < .0005$.

PAQ is a valid measure of Baumrind's prototypes, then parental authoritative-ness should be positively related to nurturance, authoritarianism should be negatively related to nurturance, and permissiveness should not be significantly related to nurturance.

Method. Bari, Misukanis, and Moeller (1988) developed a 24-item Parental Nurturance Scale. Test-retest reliabilities for this scale were .92 for mother's nurturance and .94 for father's nurturance. Cronbach's coefficient alpha values were .95 for mother's nurturance and .93 for father's nurturance. In my study, 127 college students were asked to complete the PAQ and the Parental Nurturance Scale as part of an introductory psychology course requirement. The subjects were debriefed following their participation.

Results. Consistent with Baumrind's suggestions for the relationship between parental authority and parental warmth, the following bivariate correlations between the PAQ scores and the Parental Nurturance Scale scores were obtained: the authoritative parents were found to be highest in parental nurturance for both mothers ($r = .56, p < .0005$) and fathers ($r = .68, p < .0005$); authoritarian parenting was inversely related to nurturance for both mothers ($r = -.36, p < .0005$) and for fathers ($r = -.53, p < .0005$), and parental permissiveness was unrelated to nurturance for both mothers ($r = .04, p > .10$) and fathers ($r = .13, p > .10$). These results confirm that parental warmth is a dimension of parental authority that is inherent in the PAQ measurement.

Study 3: Correlations With Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

On the face of it, the PAQ may be vulnerable to response biases. For example, agreement with the authoritative items and nonagreement with the authoritarian items may be perceived as socially desirable responses. If the PAQ is to be a useful measure of parental authority prototypes, then responses to the PAQ items should be free of such response biases.

Method. Students from an introductory psychology class ($N = 69$) completed the PAQ and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) at the end of a class period. The subjects were informed that their participation would help validate the PAQ.

Results. The following bivariate correlations between the PAQ scores and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale were obtained: $r = .23$ for mother's permissiveness, $r = -.24$ for mother's authoritarianism, $r = .10$ for mother's authoritative-ness, $r = .10$ for father's permissiveness, $r = .01$ for

father's authoritarianism, and $r = .05$ for father's authoritarianism. None of these values was statistically significant; therefore, the PAQ does not appear to be vulnerable to social desirability response biases.

PHASE 4: NORM TESTING

The determination of basic normative information for the PAQ has been completed with two separate groups: (a) high school students and (b) college students. The high school participants were 108 juniors and seniors from three different high schools (mean age = 17.4 years) who participated prior to a class discussion on parenting. The other sample consisted of 171 college students (mean age = 18.8 years) who completed the PAQ in partial fulfillment of an introductory psychology course requirement. The subjects in each of these samples were from intact families; they were debriefed concerning the purposes of their participation following the completion of the study. The means, medians, and standard deviations for the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative scores for the mothers and the fathers for both the high school and college participants are presented in Table 3.

DISCUSSION

As indicated in the studies just discussed, the PAQ continues to demonstrate respectable measures of reliability and validity. In addition to these studies,

TABLE 3
PAQ Scale Means, Medians, and Standard Deviations for High School Students and for College Students

	M	ME	SD
High school sample ^a			
Mother's permissiveness	31.92	35.00	4.57
Mother's authoritarianism	21.49	20.00	5.23
Mother's authoritative	44.69	26.00	5.30
Father's permissiveness	36.64	37.00	4.46
Father's authoritarianism	21.78	21.50	5.02
Father's authoritative	35.01	33.50	5.75
College sample ^b			
Mother's permissiveness	26.41	25.00	4.71
Mother's authoritarianism	26.47	27.00	5.12
Mother's authoritative	37.34	33.00	5.09
Father's permissiveness	26.12	25.00	5.39
Father's authoritarianism	26.74	26.00	5.49
Father's authoritative	35.36	36.00	4.97

^a $n = 108$ ^b $n = 171$.

further support for the criterion validity of the PAQ was reported by Buri, Louselle, Misukanis, and Mueller (1988). Buri et al. found a strong positive relationship between parental authoritarianism and adolescent self-esteem, a strong inverse relationship between parental permissiveness and adolescent self-esteem, and no significant relationship between parental permissiveness and adolescent self-esteem. These findings are consistent with those deriving from Baumrind's (1971, 1984) original research in which interview-based clinical judgments were used to determine the parental authority prototypes. Baumrind reported that children of authoritative parents were more independent, self-reliant, responsible, and goal-oriented than were children of permissive or authoritarian parents; furthermore, children of authoritarian parents were found to have particular deficits in these areas. Because each of these characteristics investigated by Baumrind is a correlate of self-esteem (see Clemes & Bean, 1981; Cooper-Smith, 1967, 1968; Gilmore, 1974; Linton & Graham, 1959; Purday, 1970; Rosenberg, 1965; Weinhold & Hilferty, 1983), the findings reported by Buri et al. provide further evidence that the PAQ is a valid measure of Baumrind's parental authority prototypes.

CONCLUSION

The PAQ is useful for assessing the permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritative exercised by both mothers and fathers; it is appropriate for both women and men who are older adolescents or young adults. Given the fact that parental authority has repeatedly been cited (along with parental acceptance) as one of the principal variables of importance in parent-child interactions (see Martin, 1975; Rohner, 1986; Rollins & Thomas, 1979), the potential of the PAQ as a research tool in the investigation of individual correlates of parental permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritative is noteworthy.

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John R. Buri
Department of Psychology
Mail #4026
University of St. Thomas
2115 Sorandit Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55125

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