

# Perceptions of Parents Scales (POPS)

(Scale Description; The Child Scale; The College-Student Scale)

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## Description of the Scales

The Perceptions of Parents Scales concern the degree to which parents provide what SDT considers an optimal parenting context (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). The scales are completed by children to describe their mothers and their fathers.

### The Child Scale

The child version of the POPS assesses children's perceptions of the degree to which their parents are autonomy supportive and the degree to which their parents are involved. Involvement concerns devoting resources to their children--that is, being available to them, knowledgeable about their lives, and concerned about what is going on for them. Thus, mothers and fathers each get a score on the degree to which they are perceived as autonomy supportive and involved by their children. Factor analysis of the scale has revealed a clear four-factor solution with factors labeled mother involvement, mother autonomy support, father involvement, and father autonomy support.

The child POPS was developed, by Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci (1991). It has 22 items, 11 mother items and then the same 11 items for fathers. These items form an autonomy support subscale for each parent and an involvement subscale for each parent. Because the scale is used with children as young as 8 years old, and often in classroom settings, we have the children respond right on the questionnaire by circling a letter in front of the one (out of four) description of a parent that is most like their own parent.

### The College-Student Scale

The college-student version of the POPS is intended for use with participants who are late adolescents or older. It also assesses children's perceptions of their parents' autonomy support and involvement, but in addition it assesses the degree to which the children perceive their parents to provide warmth. The scale has 42 items: 21 for mothers and 21 for fathers. From these items, 6 subscale scores are calculated: Mother Autonomy Support, Mother Involvement, and Mother Warmth, as well as Father Autonomy Support, Father Involvement, and Father Warmth.

This questionnaire was designed as part of a doctoral dissertation titled, “ An assessment of perceptions of parental autonomy support and control: Child and parent correlates,” done by Robert J. Robbins in the Department of Psychology at the University of Rochester under the supervision of Richard M. Ryan. The Robbins (1994) dissertation provided preliminary evidence for the reliability and validity of the scale. This study linked parental autonomy support to autonomy-related child outcomes, including self-esteem, self-regulation, mental health, and causality orientations. It also showed that high perceived parental autonomy support was associated with greater vitality and self-actualization, while low perceived parental autonomy support was associated with greater separation-individuation difficulty. A more recent longitudinal study by Niemiec, Ryan, and Deci (2009) adds further reliability and validity evidence for the scale.

Data collected from the parents of the college-student participants revealed that student perceptions of paternal autonomy support were positively associated with fathers' self-reported self-esteem and mental health, and that student perceptions of maternal autonomy support were positively associated with the degree of autonomous causality orientation in mothers.

## **The Perceptions of Parents Scales versus The Climate Scales**

The scales called Perceived Autonomy Support: The Climate Questionnaires, which appear in a different packet within the questionnaires section of this web site, are somewhat related to the POPS. Both sets of questionnaires involve individuals reporting their perceptions of a target other. However, there are the following differences. First, all of The Climate Questionnaires were designed for use with college students or other adults, whereas one of the POPS was designed for children. Furthermore, The Climate Questionnaires assess only perceptions of autonomy support, whereas the POPS also assesses perceived involvement in both the child and the college-student versions, and it assesses perceived warmth in the college-student version. We have never used a “Climate Questionnaire” with respect to parents, although one could potentially do so.

### References

Grolnick, W. S., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1997). Internalization within the family: The self-determination theory perspective. In J. E. Grusec & L. Kuczynski (Eds.), *Parenting and children's internalization of values: A handbook of contemporary theory* (pp. 135-161). New York: Wiley.

Grolnick, W. S., Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (1991). The inner resources for school performance: Motivational mediators of children's perceptions of their parents. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 508-517.

Robbins, R. J. (1994). *An assessment of perceptions of parental autonomy support and control: Child and parent correlates*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Psychology, University of Rochester, 1994.

Niemiec, C. P., Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2009). The path taken: Consequences of attaining intrinsic and

extrinsic aspirations in post-college life. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 43, 291-306.

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## The Child Scale

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Boy or Girl (circle one) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

### Things About My Parents

We are interested to know more about your mother and your father. First we will ask about your mother, and then we will ask about your father.

Each number is followed by four statements that describe four different types of parents. For some, there will be a description of four types of mothers, and for others there will be descriptions of four types of fathers. In either case, read the four statements about the four types of mothers or fathers, and decide which one is the best description of your own mother or father. Different people's mothers and fathers are different, and we want to know about yours.

Now please think about your mother and compare her to these descriptions of people's mothers. If you do not ever spend time with your mother but another woman lives in your household instead, please respond about that woman. So, begin with number 1, and read the four descriptions. If your mother is most like the mothers in the first statement, then circle the letter **a** in front of that statement. If she is most like the mothers in the second statement, then circle the letter **b** in front of that statement. If she is most like the mothers in the third statement, then circle the letter **c** in front of that statement. If she is most like the mothers in the fourth statement, then circle the letter **d** in front of that statement.

1. a. Some mothers **never have enough time** to talk to their children.  
b. Some mothers **usually don't have enough time** to talk to their children.

- c. Some mothers **sometimes have enough time** to talk to their children.
  - d. Some mothers **always have enough time** to talk to their children.
- 2.
- a. Some mothers **always explain** to their children about the way they should behave.
  - b. Some mothers **sometimes explain** to their children about the way they should behave.
  - c. Some mothers **sometimes make** their children behave because they're the boss.
  - d. Some mothers **always make** their children behave because they're the boss.
- 3.
- a. Some mothers **always ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - b. Some mothers **usually ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - c. Some mothers **usually don't ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - d. Some mothers **never ask** their children what they did in school that day.
- 4.
- a. Some mothers **always get very upset** if their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
  - b. Some mothers **sometimes get very upset** if their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
  - c. Some mothers **sometimes try to understand** why their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
  - d. Some mothers **always try to understand** why their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
- 5.
- a. Some mothers **always have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
  - b. Some mothers **sometimes have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
  - c. Some mothers **don't always have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
  - d. Some mothers **never have the time to talk** about their children's problem.

6. a. Some mothers **never punish** their children; they **always talk** to their children about what was wrong.
- b. Some mothers **hardly ever punish** their children; they **usually talk** to their children about what was wrong.
- c. Some mothers **usually punish** their children when they've done something wrong **without talking to them very much**.
- d. Some mothers **always punish** their children when they've done something wrong **without talking to them at all**.
7. a. Some mothers **always tell** their children what to do.
- b. Some mothers **sometimes tell** their children what to do.
- c. Some mothers **sometimes** like their children to **decide for themselves what to do**.
- d. Some mothers **always** like their children to **decide for themselves what to do**.
8. a. Some mothers **always think it's OK** if their children make mistakes.
- b. Some mothers **sometimes think it's OK** if their children make mistakes.
- c. Some mothers **always get angry** if their children make mistakes.
- d. Some mothers **sometimes get angry** if their children make mistakes.
9. a. Some mothers **never want to know** what their children are doing.
- b. Some mothers **usually don't want to know** what their children are doing.
- c. Some mothers **sometimes want to know** what their children are doing.
- d. Some mothers **always want to know** what their children are doing.
10. a. Some mothers **always get upset** when their children don't do well in school.
- b. Some mothers **sometimes get upset** when their children don't do well in school.
- c. Some mothers **hardly ever get upset** when their children don't do well in school.

- d. Some mothers **never get upset** when their children don't do well in school.
- 11.
- a. Some mothers **always like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.
  - b. Some mothers **sometimes like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.
  - c. Some mothers **usually don't like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.
  - d. Some mothers **never like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.

Now, please think about your father. If you do not see your father but some other man lives in your household, please respond about that man.

- 12.
- a. Some fathers **never have enough time** to talk to their children.
  - b. Some fathers **usually don't have enough time** to talk to their children.
  - c. Some fathers **sometimes have enough time** to talk to their children.
  - d. Some fathers **always have enough time** to talk to their children.
- 13.
- a. Some fathers **always explain** to their children about the way they should behave.
  - b. Some fathers **sometimes explain** to their children about the way they should behave.
  - c. Some fathers **sometimes make** their children behave because they're the boss.
  - d. Some fathers **always make** their children behave because they're the boss.
- 14.
- a. Some fathers **always ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - b. Some fathers **usually ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - c. Some fathers **usually don't ask** their children what they did in school that day.
  - d. Some fathers **never ask** their children what they did in school that day.

15. a. Some fathers **always get very upset** if their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
- b. Some fathers **sometimes get very upset** if their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
- c. Some fathers **sometimes try to understand** why their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
- d. Some fathers **always try to understand** why their children don't do what they're supposed to right away.
16. a. Some fathers **always have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
- b. Some fathers **sometimes have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
- c. Some fathers **don't always have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
- d. Some fathers **never have the time to talk** about their children's problem.
17. a. Some fathers **never punish** their children; they **always talk** to their children about what was wrong.
- b. Some fathers **hardly ever punish** their children; they **usually talk** to their children about what was wrong.
- c. Some fathers **usually punish** their children when they've done something wrong **without talking to them very much**.
- d. Some fathers **always punish** their children when they've done something wrong **without talking to them at all**.
18. a. Some fathers **always tell** their children what to do.
- b. Some fathers **sometimes tell** their children what to do.
- c. Some fathers **sometimes** like their children to **decide for themselves** what to do.
- d. Some fathers **always** like their children to **decide for themselves** what to do.

19. a. Some fathers **always think it's OK** if their children make mistakes.  
b. Some fathers **sometimes think it's OK** if their children make mistakes.  
c. Some fathers **always get angry** if their children make mistakes.  
d. Some fathers **sometimes get angry** if their children make mistakes.
20. a. Some fathers **never want to know** what their children are doing.  
b. Some fathers **usually don't want to know** what their children are doing.  
c. Some fathers **sometimes want to know** what their children are doing.  
d. Some fathers **always want to know** what their children are doing.
21. a. Some fathers **always get upset** when their children don't do well in school.  
b. Some fathers **sometimes get upset** when their children don't do well in school.  
c. Some fathers **hardly ever get upset** when their children don't do well in school.  
d. Some fathers **never get upset** when their children don't do well in school.
22. a. Some fathers **always like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.  
b. Some fathers **sometimes like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.  
c. Some fathers **usually don't like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.  
d. Some fathers **never like to talk to their children's teachers** about how they are doing in school.

**Scoring Information.** First score the following items on a scale from 1 to 4 (i.e., the four options are ordered from being low on the subscale to being high): 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 20, 21. Then, score the following items from 4 to 1 (i.e., the four options are ordered from being high on the subscale to being low): 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19. Next compute the following subscale scores by averaging all items within a given subscale.

Mother Involvement: 1, 3, 5, 9, 11  
Mother Autonomy Support: 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10  
Father Involvement: 12, 14, 16, 20, 22  
Father Autonomy Support: 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21

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## The College-Student Scale

### Thoughts about My Parents

Please answer the following questions about your mother and your father. If you do not have any contact with one of your parents (for example, your father), but there is another adult of the same gender living with your house (for example, a stepfather) then please answer the questions about that other adult.

If you have no contact with one of your parents, and there is not another adult of that same gender with whom you live, then leave the questions about that parent blank.

Please use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			somewhat			very
true			true			true

#### First, questions about your mother.

1. My mother seems to know how I feel about things.
2. My mother tries to tell me how to run my life.

3. My mother finds time to talk with me.
4. My mother accepts me and likes me as I am.
5. My mother, whenever possible, allows me to choose what to do.
6. My mother doesn't seem to think of me often.
7. My mother clearly conveys her love for me.
8. My mother listens to my opinion or perspective when I've got a problem.
9. My mother spends a lot of time with me.
10. My mother makes me feel very special.
11. My mother allows me to decide things for myself.
12. My mother often seems too busy to attend to me.
13. My mother is often disapproving and unaccepting of me.
14. My mother insists upon my doing things her way.
15. My mother is not very involved with my concerns.
16. My mother is typically happy to see me.
17. My mother is usually willing to consider things from my point of view.
18. My mother puts time and energy into helping me.
19. My mother helps me to choose my own direction.
20. My mother seems to be disappointed in me a lot.
21. My mother isn't very sensitive to many of my needs.

**Now questions about your father.**

22. My father seems to know how I feel about things.
23. My father tries to tell me how to run my life.

24. My father finds time to talk with me.
25. My father accepts me and likes me as I am.
26. My father, whenever possible, allows me to choose what to do.
27. My father doesn't seem to think of me often.
28. My father clearly conveys his love for me.
29. My father listens to my opinion or perspective when I've got a problem.
30. My father spends a lot of time with me.
31. My father makes me feel very special.
32. My father allows me to decide things for myself.
33. My father often seems too busy to attend to me.
34. My father is often disapproving and unaccepting of me.
35. My father insists upon my doing things his way.
36. My father is not very involved with my concerns.
37. My father is typically happy to see me.
38. My father is usually willing to consider things from my point of view.
39. My father puts time and energy into helping me.
40. My father helps me to choose my own direction.
41. My father seems to be disappointed in me a lot.
42. My father isn't very sensitive to many of my needs.

**Scoring Information.** First, scores on the following items must be reversed: 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 23, 27, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 42. To do that, subtract the response from 8 and use the result as the item score. Then form subscale scores by averaging the scores of the items on that subscale, as shown below.

Mother Involvement:            3, 6(R), 9, 12(R), 15(R), 18

Mother Autonomy Support: 1, 2(R), 5, 8, 11, 14(R), 17, 19, 21(R)

Mother Warmth: 4, 7, 10, 13(R), 16, 20(R)

Father Involvement: 24, 27(R), 30, 33(R), 36(R), 39

Father Autonomy Support: 22, 23(R), 26, 29, 32, 35(R), 38, 40, 42(R)

Father Warmth: 25, 28, 31, 34(R), 37, 41(R)

An (R) after an item number is simply a reminder that that item needs to be reverse scored before being averaged.