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# Permissive, Authoritarian, and Authoritative Instructors: Applying the Concept of Parenting Styles to the College Classroom

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**ABSTRACT** - Two studies examined whether the ways in which college teachers interact with their students in the classroom can be categorized in the same ways that developmental psychologists have typically categorized parents' interactions with their children. In Study 1 ($n$ = 191) and Study 2 ($n$ = 588), university students described the instructor for a class in which they were currently enrolled using a modified version of the 30-item Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991). Across both studies, students who expected better grades rated instructors as more authoritative and less authoritarian. Students who described instructors as higher on the authoritarian style reported low levels of interest in the course and rated the instructor unfavorably. The authoritative teaching style was associated with setting high academic standards, greater student interest, and more favorable student evaluations of instructors.

In the present study, we examined whether the ways in which college teachers interact with their students in the classroom can be categorized in the same ways that developmental psychologists have typically categorized parents' interactions with their children. Baumrind (1966, 1971) developed a classification scheme for categorizing parents' child rearing practices as permissive, authoritarian, or authoritative. In this system, the classification of parents into one of the three categories is a function of quantitative and qualitative differences in how they exert control over children's behavior. Permissive parents exert little control because they do not set or enforce rules and standards of behavior. Authoritarian and authoritative parents both exert high levels of control but in different styles. Authoritarian parents set rigid and sometimes arbitrary rules and expect children to follow them without question based on fear of punishment. Authoritative parents set developmentally appropriate expectations but focus on explaining the rationale for these rules with the goal of getting children to internalize the standards of behavior rather than adhere to them out of fear of punishment.

The results of research on parenting styles are not only descriptive but also prescriptive. In an examination of 3-5 year old children in lab and preschool settings,

those with authoritative parents exhibited more self-control, assertiveness, and sociability (Baumrind, 1967). Similarly, research on adolescents also supports the superiority of authoritative parenting. Those with authoritative parents tend to be more socially competent and have fewer behavioral problems (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

Several pedagogical researchers have suggested that there is an intuitive parallel between parenting styles and teaching styles (e.g., Barnas, 2001; Bernstein, 2001; Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002). Walker used a radio signal analogy to predict that elementary school students with authoritative teachers would show the best learning outcomes because they would be tuned in to the message and receiving a high quality signal. In contrast, Walker predicted that students with permissive teachers would show suboptimal outcomes because they would be receiving a low quality signal, and students with authoritarian teachers would show suboptimal outcomes because they would not be tuned in to the message. As predicted, fifth grade students in the class with the authoritative teacher had the best outcomes in that they were engaged and showed high levels of achievement. In contrast, students in the class with the authoritarian teacher showed high levels of achievement but were not engaged, and students in the class with the permissive teacher were engaged but showed less improvement on achievement measures.

A larger scale study also found support for the roles of teaching style in influencing students' academic interest and performance (Wentzel, 2002). Among sixth graders, those with teachers who set high expectations tended to show more interest in school, exhibit fewer irresponsible behaviors, and make better grades; whereas, those with teachers who were more critical and gave more negative feedback tended to show less interest in school, exhibit more irresponsible behaviors, and make lower grades.

The analogy between parenting styles and teaching has also been applied to higher education. Barnas (2001) offered a theoretical account, in which an instructor who has no attendance policy and does not enforce assignment deadlines could be seen as analogous to a permissive parent. An instructor could be seen as analogous to an authoritarian parent if she/he expected unquestioned obedience to stringent classroom rules and policies or analogous to an authoritative parent if she/he showed flexibility and responsiveness to student concerns and tried to explain the rationale for class rules and policies.

Despite the intuitive appeal of the analogy between parenting and teaching, no previous research known to the investigators has empirically applied Baumrind's classification system to university instructors. In the present study, the authors directly measured students' perceptions of teaching styles using a modified version of an instrument designed to measure children's perceptions of their parents on the three parenting styles identified by Baumrind.

## Study 1

The goal of Study 1 was to examine whether permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative teaching styles would be predictive of student's grades, interest in the class, and evaluations of the course instructor. Given the previous research findings that authoritative parenting style is associated with better outcomes in children and

adolescents than permissive or authoritative parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967; Lamborn et al., 1991), we reasoned by analogy that university students who perceived their instructor to have an authoritative style would report better grades, be more interested in the course, and evaluate the instructor more favorably than would students who perceived their instructor to have an authoritarian or permissive style.

## *Method*

### *Participants*

Participants were 191 students (54 men, 135 women, 2 did not specify gender) enrolled in psychology classes at Lander University, a small state sponsored school in upstate South Carolina. Participants ranged in age from 18-30 years ($M$ = 19.75, $SD$ = 2.13). Of the participants, 67 were Freshmen, 72 were Sophomores, 33 were Juniors, and 19 were Seniors. None of the participants expected to get a grade of F from the instructor they were evaluating, 66 expected a grade of A, 78 a grade of B, 42 a grade of C, and 5 a grade of D. Data collection began after the midpoint of the fall semester and continued up until the next to last week of that semester. Consequently, the lack of students expecting a failing grade is not likely a product of insufficient feedback about their class performance. Participants received extra credit towards their course grade. All participants were treated according to the ethical principles and guidelines of the American Psychological Association (2002).

### *Materials and Procedure*

Data were collected in group settings at the beginning of regularly scheduled class meeting times. After announcing the opportunity to participate in the research, the researchers distributed consent forms and questionnaire packets to all interested persons. Following a procedure described by Creasey, Jarvis, and Knapcik (2009), participants listed and numbered all the courses for which they were enrolled. Next, participants referred to a randomly generated number at the top of their questionnaire. They used this number to select the course instructor whom they evaluated. We employed this procedure to protect against any kind of selection bias in which participants might choose to rate the instructor they felt most or least strongly about. This technique allowed participants to be randomly assigned to evaluate different instructors while protecting the anonymity of the instructors.

Teaching styles were measured using a modified version of the 30-item Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991). The PAQ requires respondents to rate their agreement, on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), with 30 statements about a parent's behavior. An equal number of these statements reflect permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles and separate scores can be calculated for each of the parenting styles. Buri (1991) reported that the PAQ had good internal consistencies, with coefficient alphas for the three parenting style subscores ranging from .74 to .85, and good temporal stability with two week test-retest correlations ranging from .77 to .92. As a measure of parenting styles, the PAQ seems to have good psychometric properties. In the present study, a measure of teaching styles was created by slightly modifying the wording of the 30-item PAQ, such that all references to parents were replaced with the word "instructor" and all references to children were replaced with the

word "students." Participants described the teaching style of the instructor using the modified PAQ. Participants then rated their agreement with the statement that the instructor had high achievement standards, displayed an interest in students, and stimulated interest in learning, on a 5-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*). Participants also rated the overall quality of the instructor on a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 (*very poor*) and 5 (*very good*) and rated the clarity, helpfulness, and easiness of the instructor, on 5-point Likert-type scales anchored at 1 (*not clear/ helpful/ easy*) and 5 (*very clear/ helpful/ easy*). Finally, participants indicated what letter grade they expected to earn in the class and provided demographic information about themselves such as age, gender, and race.

***Results***

The descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the three teaching style scores are presented in Table 1, where it can be seen that all three measures had adequate internal consistency, as evidenced by reliability coefficients greater than .70 (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). A one way within-subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine if students perceived instructors as being better characterized by some teaching styles than by others. This analysis yielded a statistically significant effect for type of teaching style, $F(2, 380) = 92.3$, $p < .001$, suggesting that students viewed some teaching styles as more applicable to their instructors than other styles. As can be seen in Table 1, the instructors in the current sample were described as higher on the authoritative style than on the authoritarian or permissive styles and the authoritarian and permissive scores did not differ significantly from each other. The averages for the permissive and authoritarian styles were near the scale midpoint, whereas the average for the authoritative style was well above the scale midpoint. At a descriptive level, the participants in the current sample perceived the average instructor as having more of an authoritative than authoritarian or permissive style.[1]

**Table 1**

***Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistencies of the Teaching Style Scores***

| | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | $\alpha$ | *M* | *SD* | $\alpha$ |
| Permissive | $2.60_a$ | 0.63 | .72 | $2.78_a$ | 0.48 | .66 |
| Authoritarian | $2.61_a$ | 0.66 | .74 | $2.64_b$ | 0.58 | .78 |
| Authoritative | $3.42_b$ | 0.78 | .84 | $3.62_c$ | 0.57 | .79 |

*Note.* Reading down columns, means with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

The next analysis examined whether participants described the instructors differently in terms of teaching style based on their expected grade in the class. A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted with participant's expected grade as the independent variable and the three teaching style scores as the dependent variables. The means and standard deviations for the three teaching styles as a function of expected grade are presented in Table 2. There was no effect of expected grade on the permissive measure, $F(3, 187) =$

1.28, $p = .284$. There was a statistically significant effect of grade on the authoritarian measure, $F$ (3, 187) = 4.36, $p = .005$. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test revealed that participants who expected a grade of D described the instructor as more authoritarian than did participants who expected a grade of A or B. There was also a statistically significant effect of grade on the authoritative measure, $F$ (3, 187) = 10.36, $p < .001$. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test revealed that participants who expected a grade of A described the instructor as more authoritative than did participants who expected a grade of D or C.

**Table 2**

***Teaching Style Scores [M (SD)] as a Function of Expected Grade***

| | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Permissive | Authoritarian | Authoritative | Permissive | Authoritarian | Authoritative |
| A | $2.68_a$ (0.63) | $2.43_a$ (0.62) | $3.76_a$ (0.66) | $2.81_a$ (0.48) | $2.59_a$ (0.58) | $3.71_a$ (0.53) |
| B | $2.62_a$ (0.67) | $2.62_a$ (0.66) | $3.39_{ab}$ (0.78) | $2.74_a$ (0.50) | $2.66_a$ (0.54) | $3.57_a$ (0.56) |
| C | $2.44_a$ (0.56) | $2.81_{ab}$ (0.65) | $3.01_b$ (0.74) | $2.83_a$ (0.43) | $2.77_a$ (0.63) | $3.49_a$ (0.55) |
| D/F | $2.70_a$ (0.44) | $3.18_b$ (0.53) | $2.86_b$ (0.18) | $2.39_b$ (0.32) | $3.44_b$ (0.86) | $2.46_b$ (0.73) |

*Note*. Reading down columns, means with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

The correspondence between the three teaching styles and the evaluations of the instructor was examined using correlation analysis (see Table 3). A more permissive teaching style was associated with higher perceptions of the instructor's helpfulness, clarity, and easiness. A more authoritarian teaching style was associated with less student interest and lower perceptions of the instructor's quality, helpfulness, clarity, and easiness. A more authoritative teaching style was associated with more student interest and higher perceptions of the instructor's quality, helpfulness, clarity, and easiness.

**Table 3**

***Correlations Between Teaching Style Scores and Evaluations of Instructor***

| | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Permissive | Authoritarian | Authoritative | Permissive | Authoritarian | Authoritative |
| High achievement standards | $-.01$ | $.11$ | $.38^{**}$ | $-.11^{*}$ | $.12^{**}$ | $.32^{***}$ |
| Personal interest in students | $.11$ | $-.14^{\dagger}$ | $.63^{**}$ | $.13^{**}$ | $-.27^{***}$ | $.57^{***}$ |
| Stimulated interest in learning | $.10$ | $-.19^{**}$ | $.59^{**}$ | $.18^{***}$ | $-.27^{***}$ | $.58^{***}$ |
| Overall quality | $.05$ | $-.26^{**}$ | $.57^{**}$ | $.14^{**}$ | $-.26^{***}$ | $.55^{***}$ |
| Overall helpfulness | $.14^{*}$ | $-.17^{*}$ | $.66^{**}$ | $.16^{***}$ | $-.29^{***}$ | $.60^{***}$ |
| Overall clarity | $.14^{\dagger}$ | $-.19^{*}$ | $.62^{**}$ | $.10^{*}$ | $-.24^{***}$ | $.52^{***}$ |
| Overall easiness | $.25^{**}$ | $-.17^{*}$ | $.36^{**}$ | $.24^{***}$ | $-.17^{***}$ | $.26^{***}$ |

*Note*. $\dagger\ p < .10$, $*\ p < .05$, $**\ p < .01$, $***\ p < .001$

## Study 2

The goal of Study 2 was to replicate the association between the three teaching style scores and students' reported grades, interest in the course, and evaluation of instructors. In addition, a larger sample was recruited in order to examine whether the factor structure of the modified teaching style scale would match the three factors the original parenting scale was designed to measure. Further, the validity of the teaching style scale was assessed by examining whether students' ratings of their instructor on the teaching style scale would correspond to their categorizations of their instructor's teaching style.

## *Method*

### *Participants*

Participants were 588 students (104 men, 476 women, 8 did not specify gender) enrolled in psychology classes at Kennesaw State University, a large state sponsored school just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Participants ranged in age from 18-60 years ($M$ = 22.02, $SD$ = 6.65). Of the participants, 267 were Freshmen, 170 were Sophomores, 98 were Juniors, and 45 were Seniors. Three of the participants expected to get a grade of F from the instructor they were evaluating, 313 expected a grade of A, 223 a grade of B, 38 a grade of C, and 4 a grade of D. Participants received extra credit towards their course grade. All participants were treated according to the ethical principles and guidelines of the American Psychological Association (2002).

### *Materials and Procedure*

Data were collected via an online survey that was made available to participants in psychology courses through an online research participation system. Following consent, participants selected the instructor for the first class that they attended during each regular week. This method was chosen for the online survey to reduce potential biases in allowing participants to select from among their instructors for rating. This technique allowed participants to be randomly assigned to evaluate different instructors while protecting the anonymity of the instructors.

Participants made the same ratings described in Study 1, including completion of the modified PAQ, ratings of instructor characteristics, course grade expectations, and demographics. New to Study 2, participants read three paragraphs, or prototypes, describing each of the teaching styles. These prototypes were adapted from Baumrind's (1966) original parenting styles prototypes and were only identified by number. Participants then indicated which of the three prototypes best described their instructor.

## *Results*

### *Teaching Style Scores*

The descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for the three teaching style scores are presented in Table 1, where it can be seen that the internal consistency was acceptable for the authoritarian and authoritative style items, as evidenced by reliability coefficients greater than .70) but in the questionable range for the permissive style items, as evidenced by a reliability coefficient less than .70 (Robinson et al., 1991). A one way within-subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine if students perceived instructors as being better characterized by some teaching styles that by others. This analysis yielded a statistically significant effect for type of teaching style, $F$ (2, 1164) = 506.04, $p < .001$, suggesting that students viewed some teaching styles as more applicable to their instructors than other styles. As in Study 1, participants in the current sample rated the instructors higher on the authoritative style than on the authoritarian or permissive styles. Unlike in Study 1, participants rated the instructors higher on the permissive style than on the authoritarian style. As in Study 1, the averages for the permissive and authoritarian style scores were near the midpoint, whereas the average for the authoritative style was well above the midpoint. This suggests that as in Study 1, the average instructor in the

current sample was perceived as having more of an authoritative than authoritarian or permissive style.

The next analysis examined whether participants described the instructors differently in terms of teaching style scores based on their expected grade in the class. Because of the small number of participants who expected a grade of D or F, and given the absence of expected grades of F in Study 1, participants who expected a grade of D or F were collapsed into a single group. A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted with participants' expected grade as the independent variable and the three teaching style scores as the dependent variables. The means and standard deviations for the three teaching style scores as a function of expected grade are presented in Table 2. The effect of expected grade on the permissive style score approached significance, $F$ (3, 577) = 2.57, $p$ = .053. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test revealed that participants who expected a grade of D or F rated the instructor as less permissive than did participants who expected a grade of A, B, or C. There was a statistically significant effect of grade on the authoritarian style score, $F$ (3, 577) = 6.09, $p$ < .001. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test revealed that participants who expected a grade of D or F rated the instructor as more authoritarian than did participants who expected a grade of A, B, or C. There was also a statistically significant effect of grade on the authoritative style score, $F$ (3, 577) = 14.87, $p$ < .001. A Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc test revealed that participants who expected a grade of D or F rated the instructor as less authoritative than did participants who expected a grade of A, B, or C.

We examined the relation between the three teaching style scores and the evaluations of the instructor using correlational analysis. The results are presented in Table 3 where it can be seen that although generally consistent with the results from Study 1 there were some differences. For example, the correlations between the authoritarian score and evaluations of the instructor were generally stronger in Study 2 and more statistically significant correlations were observed between the permissive score and evaluations of the instructor in Study 2 than in Study 1.

*Factor Analysis*

We analyzed the factor structure of the modified version of the PAQ used to measure teaching styles for correspondence with the original PAQ. We used two statistical tests to determine the adequacy of the sample data for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2$ (435, $N$ = 588) = 3859.93, $p$ < .001. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test of sampling adequacy was .87, which is within Kaiser's (1974) "meritorious" range for factorial simplicity. Principal components analysis with oblique (Promax) rotation was used to examine the factor structure of the 30 teaching style items. The number of factors retained was determined by identifying an upper and lower bound. The upper bound was defined by factors whose eigenvalues > 1, which yielded seven factors. The lower bound was determined using a parallel analysis (O'Connor, 2000), which indicated an interpretable four factor solution for both the mean and 95th percentile eigenvalues. A scree test also confirmed a four factor solution. Based on these findings, we selected a four-factor solution for the 30 teaching style items that accounted for 41.15% of the variance. Factor 1 accounted for 19.97% of the variance, followed by Factor 2 (9.00%), Factor 3 (7.74%), and Factor 4 (4.44%).

Table 4 illustrates the relationship between the teaching style items and the four factors that emerged in the analysis. The permissive items divided into two factors with one item loading on a different factor. The authoritarian items formed a single factor with one item cross-loading on a different factor. The authoritative items formed a single factor with two items cross-loading on a different factor.

**Table 4**
***Item Properties from the Exploratory Factor Analysis***

| | Subscales / Items | Factor | $\lambda$ | $h^2$ | ITC | $M^a$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Permissive | | | | | |
| 14 | The instructor (T.I.) did what the students in the class wanted when making decisions. | 3 | .63 | .41 | .58 | 2.54 |
| 1 | T.I. felt that in a well-run classroom the students should have their way as often as the instructor did. | 3 | .59 | .40 | .54 | 2.87 |
| 17 | T.I. felt that most problems at the university would be solved if instructors would not restrict their students' activities, decisions, and desires. | 3 | .58 | .32 | .39 | 2.78 |
| 6 | T.I. felt that what students 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 the instructor might want. | 3 | .54 | .36 | .59 | 2.69 |
| 10 | T.I. did not feel that I needed to obey rules and regulations of behavior simply because someone in authority had established them. | 3 | .53 | .35 | .49 | 2.13 |
| 19 | T.I. allowed me to decide most things for myself without a lot of direction from her/him. | 3 | .34 | .30 | .55 | 3.29 |
| 28 | T.I. did not direct the behaviors, activities, and desires of the students in the class. | 4 | .73 | .54 | .42 | 2.53 |
| 21 | T.I. did not view herself/himself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior. | 4 | .66 | .43 | .44 | 2.86 |
| 13 | T.I. seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior. | 4 | .44 | .37 | .45 | 2.53 |
| 24 | T.I. allowed me to form my own point of view on class matters and she/he generally allowed me to decide for myself what I was going to do. | 1 | .56 | .46 | .45 | 3.67 |
| | Authoritarian | | | | | |
| 25 | T.I. felt that most problems in the university could be solved if we could get teachers to strictly and forcibly deal with their students when they don't do what they are supposed to do. | 2 | .72 | .49 | .65 | 2.49 |
| 9 | T.I. felt that more force should be used by instructors in order to get students to behave the way they are supposed to. | 2 | .67 | .57 | .67 | 2.20 |
| 12 | T.I. felt that wise teachers should teach their students early on just who is boss in the classroom. | 2 | .63 | .45 | .63 | 2.49 |
| 2 | Even if the students didn't agree with T.I., she/he felt that it was for our own good if we were forced to conform to what she/he thought was right. | 2 | .62 | .42 | .64 | 2.52 |
| 18 | T.I. let me know what behavior she/he expected of me, and if I didn't meet those expectations she/he punished me. | 2 | .62 | .39 | .59 | 2.82 |
| 3 | Whenever T.I. told me to do something, she/he expected me to do it immediately without asking any questions. | 2 | .61 | .39 | .61 | 2.95 |
| 29 | I knew what T.I. expected of me in the class and she/he insisted that I conform to those expectations simply out of respect for her/his authority. | 2 | .48 | .45 | .45 | 3.44 |
| 7 | T.I. did not allow me to question decisions that she/he had made. | 2 | .47 | .41 | .67 | 2.10 |
| 16 | T.I. would get very upset if I tried to disagree with her/him. | 2 | .44 | .57 | .61 | 1.98 |
| 26 | T.I. often told me exactly what she/he wanted me to do and how she/he expected me to do it. | 1/2 | .51/.39 | .36 | .30 | 3.49 |
| | Authoritative | | | | | |
| 23 | T.I. gave me direction for my behavior and activities and she/he expected me to follow her/his direction, but she/he was always willing to listen to my concerns and to discuss that direction with me. | 1 | .71 | .59 | .72 | 3.89 |
| 15 | T.I. consistently gave the students in the class directions and guidance in rational and objective ways. | 1 | .66 | .44 | .61 | 3.95 |
| 11 | I knew what T.I. expected of me in the class, but I also felt free to discuss those expectations with her/him when I felt that they were unreasonable. | 1 | .63 | .46 | .68 | 3.78 |
| 27 | T.I. gave me clear direction for my behavior and activities, but she/he was also understanding when I disagreed with her/him. | 1 | .62 | .50 | .69 | 3.55 |
| 30 | If T.I. made a decision in the class that hurt me, she/he was willing to discuss that decision with me and to admit it if she/he had made a mistake. | 1 | .60 | .37 | .60 | 3.47 |
| 4 | Once classroom policy had been established, T.I. discussed the reasoning behind the policy with the students. | 1 | .58 | .34 | .59 | 3.87 |
| 20 | T.I. took the students' opinions into consideration when making class decisions, but she/he would not decide on something simply because the students wanted it. | 1 | .51 | .29 | .51 | 3.80 |
| 8 | T.I. directed the activities and decisions of the students in the class through reasoning and discipline. | 1 | .43 | .23 | .41 | 3.58 |
| 5 | T.I. encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever students felt that class rules and restrictions were unreasonable. | 1/3 | .38/.38 | .36 | .55 | 3.36 |
| 22 | T.I. had clear standards of behavior for the students in the class, but she/he was willing to adjust those standards to the needs of each of the individual students in the class. | 1/3 | .36/.41 | .33 | −.03 | 3.33 |

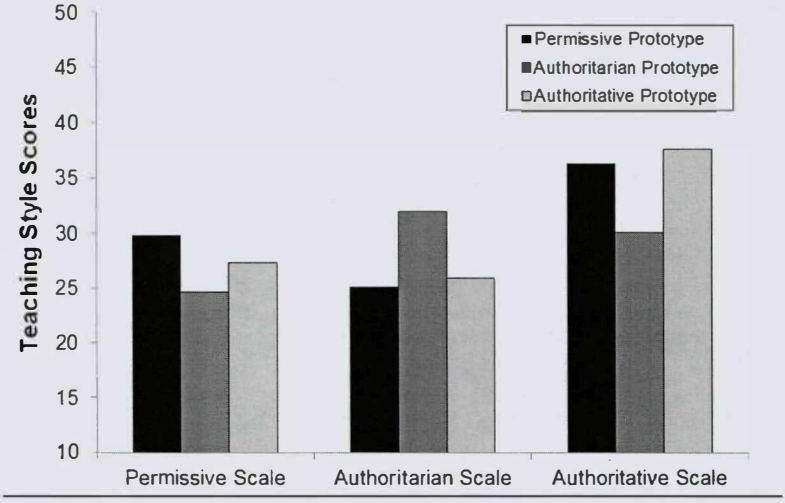
*Note.* T.I. = the instructor; $\lambda$ = factor loadings; $h^2$ = communalities; ITC = corrected item-subscale total correlations.

### *Validity*

As an index of the validity of the teaching style scores, we examined the extent to which students rated their instructor as permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative on the scale items as a function of which of the three prototype descriptions they selected as most descriptive of their instructor. The teaching style prototype students selected as the best match for their instructor served as the independent variable in a series of one-way

ANOVAs with the three teaching style scores as the dependent variables (see Figure 1). The permissiveness [$F$ (2, 577) = 35.85, $p < .001$], authoritarian [$F$ (2, 577) = 42.26, $p < .001$], and authoritative style scores [$F$ (2, 577) = 60.62, $p < .001$] each differed as a function of identified teaching style. Bonferroni post hoc tests indicated that the highest scores for each of the three styles were for instructors identified as having the corresponding prototype.

**Figure 1**
***Differences in Teaching Style Scores as a Function of Identified Teaching Style***




## Discussion

The findings of the present studies offer preliminary evidence for the utility of applying the parenting styles construct to college instructors. Support for the validity of the modified version of the PAQ as a measure of perceived permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative teaching styles emerged from the correlational and factor analyses and from the fact that the way students labeled their instructor using the three discrete categories was congruent with their ratings of the instructor. Consequently, it appears that Baumrind's (1966, 1971) scheme for classifying parenting styles can be meaningfully applied to individual difference in the teaching styles of university instructors.

Further, the results of the present studies extend the value of an authoritative style to the higher education classroom. Previous research has demonstrated that the authoritative parenting style is associated with better social, behavioral, and academic outcomes among preschoolers and adolescents (Baumrind, 1967; Lamborn et al., 1991) and that an authoritative teaching style might be associated with better academic outcomes among elementary and middle school students (Walker, 2009; Wentzel, 2002). Similarly, across the two studies reported here, authoritative teaching style was associated with better

outcomes among university students at least as measured by participants' self-reported grades, interest, and perceptions of instructors.

Students who expected to get better grades described their instructors as more authoritative, more permissive, and less authoritarian than students who expected to get poor grades. Authoritarian instructors were perceived in an overall negative way. They were seen essentially as uncaring and doing little to motivate students or enhance the learning environment. Both authoritative and permissive teaching styles were associated with more favorable student evaluations of instructors. However, the strength of the relationship between teaching style and student evaluations was greater for the authoritative scale than for the permissive scale. Further, the authoritative style, and not the permissive style, was associated with the perception of setting high academic standards.

The current findings offer an initial step in demonstrating the utility of the teaching styles concept at the descriptive level and the superiority of the authoritative style at the prescriptive level. However, there are several limitations to the present studies that should be addressed in future research. Our studies relied on participants' perceptions of the instructor and their anticipated grade in the course. It might be interesting to look at participants' actual performance in the class (i.e., their real grade at the end of the semester). Other studies could focus on instructors' perceptions of their own teaching styles. In addition, future replications are needed using additional measures of teaching effectiveness such as course evaluations and in-class observations. Another fruitful research avenue would be to explore the factors that might moderate students' preference for different teaching styles. For example, it seems plausible that students might rate instructors more favorably and do better in a class in which there is congruence between the parenting style the student is accustomed to and the instructor's teaching style.

## Author Note

Jonathan F. Bassett, Department of Psychological Science, Lander University; Timothy L. Snyder, Department of Psychological Science, Lander University; Daniel T. Rogers, Department of Psychology, Kennesaw State University; Courtney L. Collins, Kennesaw State University.

There were no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and or/publication of this article.

## Footnote

1. Because the teaching style scores reflect students' perceptions and because student evaluations of instructors are positively correlated with grading leniency, it is possible that the relation between teaching style scores and evaluations of instructors reported here is influenced by students' expected grade. To examine this possibility we conducted partial correlations between the teaching style scores and the evaluations of instructors controlling for the influence of student's expected grades. All of the correlations between the authoritative score and the evaluations of instructor remained statistically significant even when controlling for the influence of expected grade. The correlations between the authoritarian score and ratings of instructor quality and stimulated interest remained

statistically significant, whereas the correlations with helpfulness, clarity, and easiness were no longer statistically significant when controlling for the influence of expected grade. For the permissive score, the correlation with easiness remained statistically significant but the correlation with helpfulness did not when controlling for the influence of expected grade.

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