



**University of New Hampshire**

# Parenting for Identity Exploration: Development of a New Measure

Erin Hiley Sharp

*University of New Hampshire*

Lori-Ann Palen

*RTI International*

J. Douglas Coatsworth

*Colorado State University*

# Background

- Identity formation is conceptualized as the process of exploring, reflecting on, and integrating one's internal qualities, interests, and values with the opportunities in one's context (Erikson, 1968; Seaman, Sharp, & Coppens, 2017).
- Activity involvement is a unique context for facilitating adolescent identity work (Coatsworth & Sharp, 2013; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).



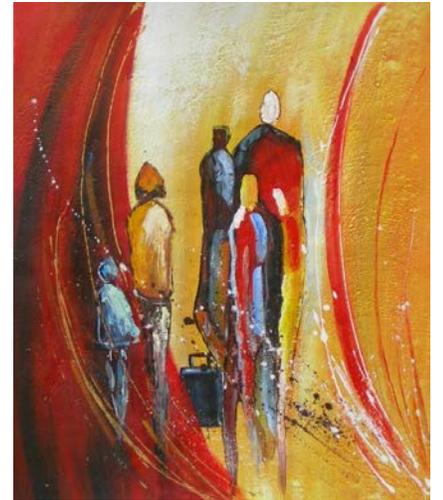
# Background

- Our work is guided by the Eudaimonic identity framework (Waterman, 2004).
- The role of activity participation in identity exploration depends on the opportunity for adolescents to explore a range of activities with a focus on person-activity fit (Waterman, 2013).



# Background

- Parents have been described as co-creators of their child's identity and critical for expanding identity capital (Schachter & Venture, 2008).
- Greater attention needs to be given to the influence of contextual factors like family and parenting on adolescents' identity exploration and formation process (Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Koepke & Denissen, 2012)



# Current Study

- Developed a new measure of the degree to which parents support their adolescents' activity-based exploration
- Items based on Eudaimonic Identity and the mindfulness parenting perspective (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009).

# Current Study

Aim 1: Explore the factorial structure and internal validity of a newly developed measure: Parental Support for Identity Exploration (PSIE)

Aim 2: Examine the correlates and predictive properties of the scales derived from Aim 1.

# Research Participants: Three Distinct Samples

- College student sample: 407 participants (88% female, M age = 19.4)
- High school sample: 70 participants (63% female, M age = 16.8)
- Middle school sample: 126 participants (57% female, M age = 14.1)

# Research Methodology

- Completed by all 3 samples: Parental Support for Identity Exploration (PSIE)
- Completed by high school sample only:
  - Parental Instrumental and Emotional Support of Activities (Furstenberg et al., 1999)
  - Parental Encouragement of Thinking about the Future (Eccles & Barber, 1993)
  - Psychological Control (Barber, 1996)
  - Positive Parenting (Jacob et al., 2000)
  - Personally Expressive Activities Questionnaire (Waterman, 1993)

# Aim 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis

- Principal Component Factoring
- Varimax Rotation
- Separate for Mother and Father items

**My mother / My father:**

Accepts me the way I am; doesn't try to "make me over" into someone else.

Encourages me to explore and try out different activities and interests.

Trusts that I will make good decisions about my activities and interests.

Only supports me in my activities and interests that he/she approves of.

**My mother / My father:**

Thinks it is important for me to try different kinds of activities so that I can learn about myself

Respects my decisions about my activities and interests, even if he/she disagrees.

Pressures me to participate in an activity or interest even if it is something I don't enjoy.

Understands that my activities and interests are an important part of who I am.

My mother / My father:	Factor 1	Factor 2
Accepts me the way I am; doesn't try to "make me over" into someone else.	.57	-.52
Encourages me to explore and try out different activities and interests.	<b>.78</b>	-.08
Trusts that I will make good decisions about my activities and interests.	<b>.67</b>	-.29
Only supports me in my activities and interests that he/she approves of.	<b>.82</b>	.08
Thinks it is important for me to try different kinds of activities so that I can learn about myself	<b>.67</b>	-.35
Understands that my activities and interests are an important part of who I am.	<b>.76</b>	-.22

My mother / My father:	Factor 1	Factor 2
Only supports me in my activities and interests that he/she approves of.	-.23	<b>.73</b>
Pressures me to participate in an activity or interest even if it is something I don't enjoy.	.01	<b>.86</b>

# Confirm the factorial structure and internal validity of a newly developed measure: Parental Support for Identity Exploration (PSIE)

Sample	Mother		Father	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
College sample	.82	.59	.83	.59
High school sample	.86	.59	.88	.60
Middle school sample	.85	.70	.98	.83

Factor 1 = Autonomous Exploration (5 items)

Factor 2 = Control and Intrusion (2 items)

# Correlates and Predictive Properties of the PSIE: Expressive Identity

Mother Scales	Step 1 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$
1. Sex	-.20		
Age	-.08		
Family income	.06		
2. Psychological Control		.20	
Encouragement of Future Orientation		<b>.28*</b>	
Positive Parenting		-.10	
Encouragement of Activity Participation		-.13	
3. Autonomous Exploration			<b>.39*</b>
Control and Intrusion			<b>-.25*</b>
	$\Delta R^2$	--	.18*
	Total $R^2$		<b>.33***</b>

# Correlates and Predictive Properties of the PSIE: Expressive Identity

Father	Step 1 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$	Step 2 $\beta$
1. Sex	-.10		
Age	.09		
Family income	.05		
2. Psychological Control		<b>-.25*</b>	
Encouragement of Future Orientation		-.02	
Positive Parenting		-.14	
Encouragement of Activity Participation		<b>.44***</b>	
3. Autonomous Exploration			<b>.32*</b>
Control and Intrusion			-.19
	$\Delta R^2$	--	.34***
	Total R <sup>2</sup>		.46***

# Summary of Findings

- PSIE provides a brief and psychometrically sound way to assess adolescent-reported parenting practices specific to the context of identity exploration within activities.
- PSIE provides two factors: autonomous exploration and intrusion and control.
- PSIE scales accounted for unique variance in adolescents' expressive identity.

# Future Work

- Examine structure invariance across groups
- Explore predictive value in more representative samples

# Application

- Teach parents to acknowledge and support their adolescents' *individual* interests and activities
- Encourage careful, nurturing and more mindful approach to parenting adolescents
- Help parents see what is the best within their child – their child's interests, talents, and aptitudes – and construct opportunities to nurture those

# Thank you!

Erin Hiley Sharp

[erin.sharp@unh.edu](mailto:erin.sharp@unh.edu)