Piers-Harris 2

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale,
SECOND EDITION

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INTRODUCTION

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (Piers, 1963) was originally developed in the early 1960s to provide a brief, self-report instrument for the assessment of self-concept in children and adolescents. As defined by the scale's original authors, *self-concept* is a relatively stable set of attitudes reflecting both description and evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes. Since its introduction, the Piers-Harris has enjoyed widespread acceptance among clinicians and researchers, as well as praise from reviewers. The instrument's stature is reflected in more than 500 citations in professional journals and books in psychology, education, and the health sciences. These numerous references highlight the Piers-Harris's vital role in the expansion of knowledge about self-concept and its relationship to behavior.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, Second Edition (Piers-Harris 2) represents the culmination of a careful revision process. The general goals of this process were to enhance the ease of use and psychometric foundation of the test, while preserving the many characteristics of the instrument that have contributed to its success. These goals have been realized in a set of specific improvements, including new nationwide normative data, an updated item set, enhanced interpretive guidelines, and modernized computer assessment tools. Nevertheless, the Piers-Harris 2 retains the familiar response format, self-concept scales, and excellent psychometric properties of the original edition. Thus, the revised test should be easily integrated into research projects and clinical assessments that used the original Piers-Harris.

General Description

The Piers-Harris 2 is a 60-item self-report questionnaire, subtitled *The Way I Feel About Myself.* It is designed for administration to children who are at least 7 years old and have at least a second-grade reading ability. The measure can be used with adolescents up to 18 years of age.

The Piers-Harris 2 items are statements that express how people may feel about themselves. Respondents are asked to indicate whether each statement applies to them by choosing *yes* or *no*. Several methods of administration are available: the Piers-Harris 2 AutoScore™ Form (WPS

Product No. W-388A), which is completed by the child and scored manually by the test administrator; mail-in and fax-in forms (WPS Product Nos. W-388C and W-388Z), which are completed by the child and submitted to WPS for computer scoring and report generation; a PC program (WPS Product No. W-388Y), which can generate a report based on either online administration or offline data entry; and the Spanish Answer Sheet (WPS Product No. W-388E), which is completed by the child, whose answers are then transcribed onto an AutoScore™ Form by the examiner. Using any of these methods of administration, most respondents can complete the Piers-Harris 2 in 10 to 15 minutes.

The Piers-Harris 2 includes the same Self-Concept and Validity scales as the original Piers-Harris. The Self-Concept scales comprise the Piers-Harris 2 Total (TOT) score, which is a general measure of the respondent's overall self-concept, and the six domain scales, which assess specific components of self-concept. The domain scales include Behavioral Adjustment (BEH), Intellectual and School Status (INT), Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY), Freedom From Anxiety (FRE), Popularity (POP), and Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP). (On the original Piers-Harris, the Freedom From Anxiety scale was labeled *Anxiety* and the Behavioral Adjustment scale was labeled *Behavior.* All other scale names are unchanged from the original instrument.) The Self-Concept scales are scored so that a higher score indicates a more positive self-evaluation in the domain being measured. The Piers-Harris 2 Validity scales include the Inconsistent Responding (INC) index, which is designed to identify random response patterns, and the Response Bias (RES) index, which measures a child's tendency to respond yes or no irrespective of item content.

Piers-Harris 2 Improvements

The most important feature of the Piers-Harris 2 is its incorporation of new, nationally representative normative data. The new norms are based on a sample of 1,387 students, aged 7 to 18 years, who were recruited from school districts all across the United States. The sample closely approximates the ethnic composition of the U.S. population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001a). The new standardization sample is a

significant improvement over the sample used to norm the original Piers-Harris. That sample was recruited in the early 1960s from a single public school system in rural Pennsylvania, and was relatively homogenous in terms of ethnicity and several other key demographic variables. In addition, whereas the original Piers-Harris sample consisted of 4th through 12th graders, the Piers-Harris 2 sample included 2nd and 3rd graders as well.

The second major enhancement in the Piers-Harris 2 is the reduction of the scale from 80 to 60 items. This item reduction shortens administration time significantly, while retaining all of the Self-Concept and Validity scales from the original Piers-Harris. The deleted items included those of relatively less psychometric value, as well as those written in outdated language that was difficult for many children to understand. The revised scales are psychometrically equivalent to their counterparts in the original measure. Table 1 summarizes the changes in item composition and labeling between the original and revised Self-Concept scales.

A third substantial change in the Piers-Harris 2 involves the microcomputer administration and scoring program. WPS offers a variety of computer services for many of its products. The "Computerized Services for the Piers-Harris 2" section at the back of this manual provides information about the options available for the Piers-Harris 2. The software has been updated for the latest version of the Microsoft Windows operating system, with an attractive new graphical user interface. In addition, the computer report has been streamlined and updated to reflect the new normative data.

This manual includes several new enhancements, including a revised section on interpreting the test that incorporates three new case studies. Furthermore, the manual now includes a topic-by-topic inventory of existing Piers-Harris studies (see Appendix A), to facilitate further research on the scale.

Principles of Use

The Piers-Harris 2 is appropriate for use in any research, educational, or clinical setting that requires efficient quantitative assessment of children's reported self-concept. The original Piers-Harris gained widespread acceptance among researchers, as reflected in an extensive scholarly literature that has accumulated over the past four decades. The instrument has been used to evaluate psychological and educational interventions, to investigate the relationship between self-concept and other traits and behaviors (e.g., empathy, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol use), and to monitor changes in self-concept over time, among many other research projects.

Because it is easily administered to groups, the Piers-Harris 2 can be employed as a screening device in classrooms to identify children who might benefit from further psychological evaluation. The Piers-Harris 2 can also be used in individual clinical assessments of children and adolescents. The Self-Concept scales can be used to generate hypotheses for clinical exploration, as well as to guide clinicians in choosing among possible interventions and formulating referral questions for further psychological testing.

The Piers-Harris 2 can be administered and scored by teachers and other trained paraprofessionals. However, ultimate responsibility for its use and interpretation should be assumed by a professional with appropriate training in psychological assessment. Before administering the Piers-Harris 2, potential users should read this manual to become familiar with the theoretical rationale, development, standardization, and psychometric properties of the measure.

As with many self-report measures, users should keep in mind that the intent of the Piers-Harris 2 is readily apparent to most children and adolescents. For this reason, the responses may be subject to conscious and unconscious distortion, usually in the direction of greater social desirability. The issue of response validity is addressed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this manual.

Although the Piers-Harris 2 is a useful instrument, it cannot by itself provide a comprehensive evaluation of a child's self-concept. Such an evaluation is a complex task requiring clinical sensitivity and familiarity with the applicable research literature. In making clinical judgments concerning Piers-Harris 2 results, users should be prepared to integrate other sources of data, which may include clinical

Table 1
Self-Concept Scales of the Original Piers-Harris and the Piers-Harris 2

Original Piers-Harris		Piers-Harris 2	
Scale name	**No. of items**	**Scale name**	**No. of items**
Total	80	Total (TOT)	60
Cluster scales		**Domain scales**	
Behavior (BEH)	16	Behavioral Adjustment (BEH)	14
Intellectual and School Status (INT)	17	Intellectual and School Status (INT)	16
Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY)	13	Physical Appearance and Attributes (PHY)	11
Anxiety (ANX)	14	Freedom From Anxiety (FRE)	14
Popularity (POP)	12	Popularity (POP)	12
Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP)	10	Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP)	10

Note. Some items are assigned to more than one scale. See Appendix E for a list of original items that were deleted in developing the Piers-Harris 2.

interviews with the child and other informants, prior history, school records, classroom observations, and results from other psychological tests. Users should also be prepared to confer with outside consultants and referral sources as needed.

Contents of This Manual

Chapter 2 of this manual contains instructions for administering and scoring the Piers-Harris 2, and includes a completed sample of an AutoScore™ Form. Chapter 3 presents guidelines for interpreting the test results. Technical aspects of the test are presented in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 reviews the development of the original Piers-Harris and describes the new standardization sample and item revisions for the Piers-Harris 2. Chapter 5 discusses the reliability and validity of the Piers-Harris 2 and presents an overview of research on the technical properties of the original test. This manual also includes several appendixes that support specialized applications of the test: Appendix A presents a list of research studies employing the Piers-Harris, organized by topic; Appendix B reviews the use of the Piers-Harris with exceptional children; and Appendixes C and D contain instructions and tables for comparing raw scores from the Piers-Harris 2 with those from the original version of the test. Appendix E lists the items from the original Piers-Harris that were omitted from the Piers-Harris 2. Finally, in the back of the manual is a chapter that provides instructions for using the Piers-Harris 2 computer-scoring products.