

# O'Leary Porter Scale (OPS)

10-item self-report measure

The O'Leary Porter Scale (OPS) is a 10-item measure designed to assess overt hostility in intact couples. This original version of the measure includes items aimed at assessing the frequency of overt hostility (such as quarrels, sarcasm, physical abuse) observed by the child.

	Internal consistency	Test-retest reliability	Validity	Sensitivity to change
Psychometric features	✓	?	?	✓
	Brevity	Availability	Ease of Scoring	Used in the UK
Implementation features	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*Please note that our assessment of this measure is based solely on the English version of the OPS. Translated versions of this measure were not assessed and therefore it should not be assumed that they would receive the same rating.

## What is this document?

This assessment of the O'Leary Porter Scale (OPS) has been produced by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) as part of guidance on selecting measures relating to parental conflict and its impact on children. To read the full guidance report and download assessments of other measures, visit: <https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/measuring-parental-conflict-and-its-impact-on-child-outcomes>



- The OPS includes two items assessing the frequency of physical and verbal hostility displayed by parents in front of the child. If an individual raises issues around interparental violence, the appropriate safeguarding procedures should be put in place.
- We found insufficient evidence to establish that the OPS is a valid measure with good test-retest reliability over short periods of time.

## About the measure

 <p><b>Author(s)/ developer(s)</b></p> <p>O’Leary, K. D., &amp; Porter, B.</p>	 <p><b>Publication year for the original version of the measure</b></p> <p>1980</p>	 <p><b>Type of measure</b></p> <p>Self-report.</p>
---	--	---

---

<b>Outcome(s) assessed</b>	This measure has been designed to assess the frequency of overt hostility witnessed by a child.
--------------------------------	---

---

<b>Subscales</b>	N/A
------------------	-----

---

<b>Mode of administration</b>	This measure can be completed in person.
-----------------------------------	--

---

<b>Example item</b>	‘In every normal marriage there are arguments. What percentage of the arguments between you and your spouse would you say take place in front of this child?’
---------------------	---

---

<b>Target population</b>	This measure was originally developed for married couples with children; it is now also used with cohabiting and divorced couples (Cummings et al., 2006; Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Shifflett & Cummings, 1999).
--------------------------	--

---

<b>Response format</b>	A 6-point ordinal scale (from 1 = ‘Never’ to 6 = ‘Very Often’).
------------------------	---

---

<b>Strengths &amp; limitations</b>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OPS has good internal consistency and is sensitive to change in short interventions.</li> <li>• It is a short (10-item) measure, which is free to access and easy to score.</li> </ul> <p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We found insufficient evidence to establish that the OPS is a valid measure with good test-retest reliability over short periods of time.</li> </ul>
--	---

---

<b>Link</b>	N/A
-------------	-----

---

<b>Contact details</b>	Daniel O’Leary: <a href="mailto:Daniel.Oleary@stonybrook.edu">Daniel.Oleary@stonybrook.edu</a>
------------------------	--

---

---

**Copyright**

Based on our review of the evidence, it appears that the developers did not provide information on copyright. The key reference (included below) should be cited when using the measure.

---

**Key reference(s)**

Porter, B., & O’Leary, K. D. (1980). Marital discord and childhood behavior problems. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 8(3), 287–295.

---

## Psychometric features in detail

---

**Internal consistency**

We found a number of papers (Gryczkowski et al., 2010; Phares et al., 2009; Sturge-Apple et al., 2004) reporting good internal consistency for the OPS, with Cronbach’s alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.85.

Phares et al. (2009) reported that the OPS had a mean Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.85. This study was conducted in the US with a sample of 272 families with adolescents (74.6% Caucasian, 12.9% African American, 10.7% Hispanic/Latino/Latina, and 1.8% Other). Mothers reported a mean age of 40.13 (SD = 5.06) and fathers’ mean age was 42.77 (SD = 6.43). Both mothers and fathers had an average education level and the majority of parents were still married to each other (84.3%).

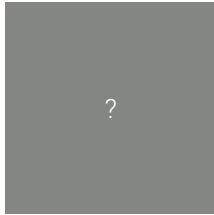
Gryczkowski et al. (2010) reported that the OPS had a mean Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.83 for mothers and 0.82 for fathers. This study was conducted in the US with a sample of 135 cohabiting couples with a child between the ages of 6–12 years. The mean age was 37.33 years for mothers (SD = 6.84) and 39.70 years for fathers (SD = 7.58).

Sturge-Apple et al. (2004) reported that the OPS had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient between 0.78 and 0.81 in their study. The study was conducted in the US with a sample of 226 mothers, 226 fathers, 125 girls and 101 boys (77.3% European American, 15.9% African American, 4% Latin American (4.0%), 1.1% Asian). The median family income was between \$40,000 and \$54,000.

Cummings et al. (2006) reported that the OPS had a mean Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.85 for mothers and 0.80 for fathers. This study was conducted in the US with a sample of 226 primarily middle-class children (113 boys, 113 girls) and their cohabiting parent (average length of cohabitation = 13.44 years (SD = 6.26), mean age for mothers = 37.61 years (SD 5 6.02), mean age for fathers = 40.03 years (SD 5 6.90)).

---

---

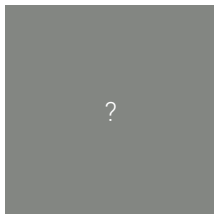
**Test-retest reliability**

From our review of the evidence, we found only two studies based on small samples (< 30 participants) reporting a test-retest reliability. This evidence is not sufficient for us to conclude that the OPS has a good test-retest reliability over a short time interval.

Porter and O'Leary (1980) examined the preliminary 20-item version of the measure (still under development) and reported that test-retest stability, measured over a two-week interval, was 0.96. This study was conducted with a clinical sample of 14 two-parent families who applied to the Psychological Center of the State University of New York at Stony Brook between 1977 and 1979.

Shifflett & Cummings (1999) reported that test-retest stability, measured over a two-week interval, was 0.96. This study was conducted with a sample of 29 divorced parents participating in a programme aimed at improving communication and divorce adjustment in the US (69% custodial parents and 18% non-custodial parents, mean age = 35 years, mean length of marriage = 10 years).

---

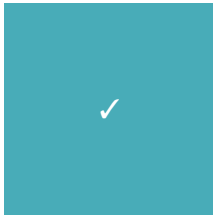
**Validity**

From our review of the evidence, we found only one study based on a small sample (64 participants) reporting the validity of a preliminary 20-item version of the measure. This evidence is not sufficient for us to conclude that the OPS is a valid measure.

The preliminary 20-item version of the measure (still under development) has been evaluated by Porter & O'Leary (1980) against the Marital Adjustment Scale (MAT, 15 items). The authors reported that the correlation coefficient between OPS and MAT was 0.63. This study was conducted with a sample of 64 two-parent families who applied to the Psychological Center of the State University of New York at Stony Brook between 1977 and 1979.

---

---

**Sensitivity to change**

There is evidence that the OPS can detect changes in short couple interventions.

Shifflett & Cummings (1999) reported that the OPS detected changes from pre-test to follow-up ( $p < 0.001$ ). This study was an RCT conducted with a sample of 29 divorced parents participating in a programme aimed at improving communication and divorce adjustment in the US (69% custodial parents and 18% non-custodial parents, mean age = 35 years, mean length of marriage = 10 years).

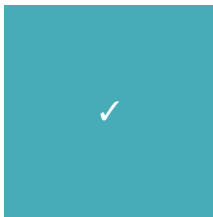
Owen and Rhoades (2012) conducted an RCT and reported that the OPS detected changes from pre-test to post-test and follow-up. The authors observed a decrease in overt hostility from pre- to post-assessment ( $p = 0.03$ ) in the treatment group that was maintained at follow-up. The treatment group consisted of 17 parents participating in the Working Together Program, a group-based intervention targeting conflictual co-parenting.

Faircloth (2008) conducted an RCT with 55 couples in the US to assess the effect of a 2–3-hour education programme. In the treatment group, that the OPS detected statistically significant changes from pre-test to follow-up in fathers ( $p = 0.04$ ) but not in mothers ( $p = 0.22$ ). All couples lived in Northwest Indiana and Southwest Michigan, 60% were Anglo-American, 17.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6.4% Hispanic American, and 3.6% African American.

---

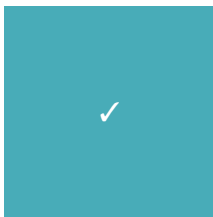
## Implementation features in detail

---

**Brevity**

This measure has 10 items.

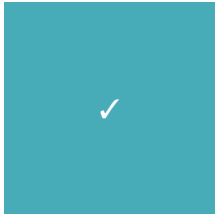
---

**Availability**

From the papers we have assessed it appears that this measure is free to use and does not require a clinical licence.

---

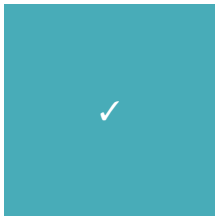
---

**Ease of scoring**

The OPS has simple scoring instructions involving basic calculations. It does not need to be scored by someone with specific training or qualifications and can be scored by hand.

The first nine questions are scored positively (never = 4; very often = 0) while the final question is scored negatively (never = 0; very often = 4). Once all questions have been scored, the individual scores are summed together. This total overt hostility score therefore ranges from 0 to 40, with lower scores indicating a greater frequency of overt hostility witnessed by the child.

---

**Used in the UK**

From our review, it appears that this measure has been used in at least three academic studies conducted in the UK (Cummings et al., 2010; Grych et al., 2003; Harold et al., 2007).

---

**Language(s)**

The OPS is available in English but as far as we are aware, the developers did not translate the OPS into other languages. The measure has, however, been translated by people other than the developers into other languages including Spanish (Kaczynski et al., 2006).

---

## References

- Cummings, E.M., Merrilees, C.E., Schermerhorn, A.C., Goeke-Morey, M.C., Shirlow, P., & Cairns, E. (2010). Testing a social ecological model for relations between political violence and child adjustment in Northern Ireland. *Development and Psychopathology*, 22(2), 405–418/
- Cummings, E.M., Schermerhorn, A.C., Davies, P.T., Goeke-Morey, M.C., & Cummings, J.S. (2006). Interparental discord and child adjustment: Prospective investigations of emotional security as an explanatory mechanism. *Child Development*, 77(1), 132–152.
- Faircloth, W.B., & Cummings, E.M. (2008). Evaluating a parent education program for preventing the negative effects of marital conflict. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(2), 141–156.
- Grych, J.H., Harold, G.T., & Miles, C.J. (2003). A prospective investigation of appraisals as mediators of the link between interparental conflict and child adjustment. *Child Development*, 74(4), 1176–1193.
- Gryczkowski, M.R., Jordan, S.S., & Mercer, S.H. (2010). Differential relations between mothers' and fathers' parenting practices and child externalizing behavior. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(5), 539–546.
- Harold, G.T., Aitken, J.J., & Shelton, K.H. (2007). Inter-parental conflict and children's academic attainment: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48(12), 1223–1232.
- Kaczynski, K.J., Lindahl, K.M., Malik, N.M., & Laurenceau, J.P. (2006). Marital conflict, maternal and paternal parenting, and child adjustment: A test of mediation and moderation. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(2), 199.
- Owen, J., & Rhoades, G.K. (2012). Reducing interparental conflict among parents in contentious child custody disputes: An initial investigation of the Working Together Program. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38(3), 542–555.
- Phares, V., Fields, S., & Kamboukos, D. (2009). Fathers' and mothers' involvement with their adolescents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 18(1), 1–9.
- Porter, B., & O'Leary, K.D. (1980). Marital discord and childhood behavior problems. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 8(3), 287–295.
- Shifflett, K., & Cummings, E.M. (1999). A program for educating parents about the effects of divorce and conflict on children: An initial evaluation. *Family Relations*, 48(1), 79–89.
- Sturge-Apple, M.L., Davies, P.T., Boker, S.M., & Cummings, E.M. (2004). Interparental discord and parenting: Testing the moderating roles of child and parent gender. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 4(4), 361–380.

