

Patterns of Parent Perception Differentiating Clinic from Nonclinic Children

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The responses of 393 parents of clinic-referred and well-adjusted children to the Children's Behavior Checklist were analyzed. Of 154 items, 66 proved to discriminate between clinic and nonclinic groups. Many of these items were reflective of the general dimensions of Competence and Impulsivity yielded by an overall factor analysis. More specific patterns of factors emerged for subgroups of parents. Interparent agreement in perception was found to be a complex function of a child's age, sex, and adjustment level. The implications of the results for clinical assessment of children and families and for studies of parent-child relations are discussed.

A child is usually initially identified as deviant, maladjusted, or "having problems" by the significant others in his life: parents, teachers, peers, etc. This perception may later be confirmed by "experts," but it is generally parental concern which provides the motivation for evaluation and treatment in child-guidance settings. Thus it is important to assess parental perceptions in order to understand the referral and diagnostic process.

Parents typically have more information about their children's behavior than anyone else. Their judgments of their children's adjustment may not be "valid," however, for a number of reasons.

Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957), for instance, found such factors as high child-rearing anxiety, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with current situation, low value for the mother role, low esteem for husband, and high disagreement with husband about child-training matters to be related to a mother's perception of

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