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ABSTRACT

A starting model consisting of nine latent factors referring to parental discipline reactions, child-rearing values, family climate, and social class was developed and tested by means of a LISREL approach. Data were obtained from 300 families, including 245 two-parent and 55 one-parent families. In the main outline of this model, the following order of latent factors was hypothesized: social class would influence child-rearing values and family climate, which would in turn influence parental feelings and cognitions in discipline situations; and these parental feelings and cognitions would in turn affect power assertion and induction. After four steps of LISREL-analysis, a fitting LISREL-model, which included correlated errors of measurement between pairs of variables, was obtained. The resulting LISREL-model shows that parents with higher social status focused more on self-direction than conformity as a child-rearing value. A second major finding was that parents who focused on conformity tended to base their discipline reactions on behavioral norms and not on a positive understanding of the child's transgression. Norm orientation had a positive influence on power assertion. Also found was a direct influence of conformity as a child-rearing value on power assertion. (Author/RH)

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Towards an empirical model of parental discipline reactions,  
family climate, child-rearing values and social class

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In this study a starting model consisting of nine latent factors referring to parental discipline reactions, child-rearing values, family climate and social class, is developed and tested by means of a LISREL-approach.

Data were obtained from 300 families (245 two-parent and 55 one-parent families). In the case of a two-parent family the respective measures were administered to both parents. In the main outline of this model the following order of latent factors was hypothesized: (1) social class having an influence on child-rearing values and family climate, (2) these latter factors having an influence on parental feelings and cognitions in discipline situations, (3) and these parental feelings and cognitions finally affecting the behavioral factors of power assertion and induction.

On basis of the modification indices correlated errors of measurement had to be admitted in the model. After four steps a fitting Lisrel-model was obtained. The resulting Lisrel-model shows that parents with higher social status are more focused on the child-rearing value of self-direction and less on conformity. A second major finding is that parents who are focused upon the child-rearing value of conformity tend to base their discipline reactions on the behavioral norm and not on a positive understanding for the child's transgression. This latter factor of norm orientation has a positive influence on the behavioral factor of power assertion. Besides the above indirect effect of the child-rearing value of conformity on power assertion via the situation specific norm orientation, a direct influence of conformity on power assertion was also found.

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## Summary

Towards an empirical model of parental discipline reactions, family climate, child-rearing values and social class

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### Introduction

From the literature on parental child-rearing behaviors and socialization techniques a simple linear model was inferred in which social class was assumed to affect both parental child-rearing value orientations and family climate, these latter variables affecting parental feelings and cognitions in specific situations, and these latter variables finally influencing parental discipline behavior.

### Method

Data were obtained from 300 families, from both parents.

Data collection consisted of:

- (1) Social-demographic information: year born, marital status, spouse's age, number and age of child(ren), education of caregiver and spouse, occupation level and occupational conditions of (ex-)spouse and caregiver, religious and political affiliation.
- (2) Behaviors, feelings and cognitions of parents in discipline situations: Parents were confronted with 16 hypothetical situations in random order. Three questions were put: a) What/how do you feel in such a situation? b) What do you do or say in such a situation? c) Why do you do or say that?  
Parental discipline reactions were coded by means of the CDE-system (Category-system for Discipline reactions of Educators) (80% interrater agreement). Parental feelings were coded in four categories: accepting, angry, fearful, distressed (95% interrater agreement). Parental cognitions were coded by means of the C-MPED-system (Category-system for Motives and Perceptions of Educators in Discipline situations) (78% interrater agreement).
- (3) Family structure and climate: From a modified version of the Family Environment Scale three subscales were found to be sufficiently reliable: Order ( $\alpha = .75$ ), intellectual-Cultural orientation ( $\alpha = .71$ ), Climate ( $\alpha = .71$ ).
- (4) The Parental Child-rearing Value Orientation Scale consisted of three subscales: Conformity ( $\alpha = .80$ ), Personal Involvement ( $\alpha = .83$ ), Child-rearing as a burden ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

### Results

The starting model consisting of nine latent factors was constructed and tested by means of the LISREL-program version VI, allowing to test causal models via the maximum-likelihood method.

In table 1 can be seen that the Lisrel-analysis was performed in four steps. In figure 1 the final Lisrel-model is represented. The obtained causal direction between factors is indicated by arrows, whereas the strength of the respective relationships is indicated by standardized beta-coefficients (figure 1). The model shows that parents with higher social status are more focused on the child-rearing value of self-direction and less on conformity. A second major finding is that parents who are focused upon conformity tend to base their discipline reactions on the behavioral norm. This latter factor of norm orientation has a positive influence on the behavioral factor of power assertion. Besides the above indirect effect of the child-rearing value of conformity on power assertion via the situation specific norm orientation, a direct influence of conformity on power assertion was also found.

A less articulated path starts with a rather weak but statistically significant connection between social class and family climate and between the latter variable and an instructional-learning orientation. The relationship of the latter variable with inductive discipline behavior appears very strong (see figure 1).

The discussion of these above results is focused upon the relative strength of situation specific cognitions and overall value orientations in explaining the parental discipline behaviors of power assertion and induction.

Table 1: Results of Lisrel-analysis (four steps) on nine latent factors referring to social class, parental child-rearing value orientations, family climate, and parental reactions in discipline situations

	Chi-square	df	p
<u>Step 1.</u>			
Linear starting model (see text)	975.75	179	0.000
<u>Step 2.</u>			
Introduction of correlated errors of measurement between pairs of variables (adjustement of the theta-epsilon matrix)	391.50	147	0.000
<u>Step 3.</u>			
Introduction of five loadings of variables on factors in the starting model (adjustement of the lambda-matrix)	189.99	142	0.004
<u>Step 4.</u>			
Elimination of relationships between factors (adjustement of the beta-matrix)	189.92	151	0.017

Figure 1: Resulting Lisrel-model representing the causal direction and strength of the relationships between social class, child-rearing value orientation, family climate, parental feelings and cognitions, and parental discipline behaviors

