

ED 401 022

PS 024 745

AUTHOR Palacio-Quintin, Ercilia; Couture, Germain  
 TITLE Children's Representation of Parental Figures in Young Physically Abused and Non-Maltreated Children.  
 PUB DATE Aug 96  
 NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (14th, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, August 12-16, 1996).  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Aggression; \*Child Abuse; Childhood Attitudes; \*Child Neglect; Comparative Analysis; Family Environment; Family Violence; Fathers; Mothers; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Role; \*Parents; \*Young Children

## ABSTRACT

This study examined differences between maltreated and non-maltreated children in their perception of parental figures and explored differential perceptions of maternal and paternal figures. Using the Test for Detection of Parental Violence (TDPV), 22 maltreated 4- to 7-year-olds referred by Youth Protection Services were compared to 22 non-maltreated children recruited from preschools and kindergartens. The two groups were matched on age, gender, family income, employment status of parents, and family structure. The TDPV used six maternal pictures and four paternal pictures to elicit stories from the child interpreting situations in which the parental figure and a child interact. Children's stories were audiotaped, transcribed, and blind-scored, yielding scores for Parental Positive Behaviors and Parental Negative Behaviors for both mothers and fathers. Results indicated that maltreated children had a more negative perception of their parents than did non-maltreated children. Both groups showed different perceptions of maternal and paternal figures. Mother figure cards elicited more answers than father figure cards. The maltreated group perceived their parents as more aggressive, punitive, neglecting, and controlling than did non-maltreated children. Maltreated children saw their mother as more neglecting than their father. Non-maltreated children viewed their parents as having more positive affects and providing more explanations and saw their fathers as providing more caregiving than did maltreated children. (KDFB)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

# Children's representation of parental figures in young physically abused and non-maltreated children.

Ercilia Palacio-Quintin & Germain Couture

Groupe de recherche en développement de l'enfant et de la famille  
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Paper presented at the XXIVth biennial meetings of the ISSBD,  
Québec City, August 1996

## Résumé

Quelques études ont été effectuées sur la perception que les parents maltraitants ont de leur enfant (Bugental et al, 1989; Reid et al, 1987) mais peu de recherches concernent la perception que les enfants maltraités ont de leurs parents. Cette recherche vise à vérifier si la perception des enfants maltraités à l'égard de leurs parents diffère de celle des enfants non-maltraités et à explorer les différences entre les perceptions des figures maternelle et paternelle chez ces enfants. A l'aide du Test de dépistage de la violence parentale (TDVP, Palacio-Quintin, 1991, 1992) un échantillon de 44 enfants (22 maltraités et 22 non-maltraités) a été étudié. Les résultats indiquent que les enfants maltraités ont une perception plus négative des figures parentales et qu'il existe des différences entre les perceptions des figures maternelle et paternelle chez les maltraités et non-maltraités.

## Summary

Several studies have been conducted on parent's perceptions of their child in maltreating families (Bugental et al, 1989; Reid et al, 1987) but few studies have adressed the question of children's perception of their maltreating parents. The goals of this study are: 1) to verify if there are differences between maltreated and non-maltreated children in their perception of parental figures; 2) to explore differential perceptions of maternal and paternal figures. Using the Test for Detection of Parental Violence (TDPV, Palacio-Quintin, 1991, 1992), 22 maltreated children were compared to 22 non-maltreated children. Results show that maltreated children have a more negative perception of their parents and that both maltreated and non-maltreated show different perceptions of maternal and paternal figures.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL  
IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY  
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ercilia Palacio-  
Quintin

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## **THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND PROBLEM**

Knowledge about child maltreatment has grown up greatly in the last years. Large descriptions of the phenomena from the medical, psychological and psycho-social points of view are now available. All this knowledge is issued from the observer's point of view.

Some studies have described parent's perceptions of their child in maltreating families (Bugental *et al.*, 1989; Lacharité, 1992, Palacio-Quintin *et al.*, 1995; Reid *et al.*, 1987) and have shown that maltreating mothers see their children as having more behavioral problems than non-maltreating mothers do.

But investigators in the area of child abuse have neglected to study the child's perceptions of parental behavior. Two studies have explored some aspects. Herberger, Potts & Dillon (1981) have made structured interviews with 24 children aged 8 to 14 years living in a group home. They found that those that had been maltreated described their mother and father in more negative terms, as being more emotionally neglecting and frightening, than those that have not been maltreated. But maltreatment was not objectively documented in this research, it was derived from the children's reports. Caufriez & Fryman (1986) analyzing CAT from 20 maltreated children observed that these children perceived parental figures as aggressive and felt fear of lost.

So, we know little about how the maltreating situation is experienced by the child and how the child perceives the parental behavior and feelings. As children often interpret events differently than adults, direct knowledge of children's perception of parental behavior is essential.

## **GOALS**

The goals of this study are:

- 1) To verify if there are differences between physically abused and non-maltreated preschool children in their perception of parental figures regarding parental behavior and feelings when interacting with the child.
- 2) To explore differential perceptions of mothers and fathers figures of those children
- 3) To gain knowledge about the abusing situation through children's indirect expression

## METHOD

Subjects were 44, 4 to 7 years old children. Physically abused children (n=22) have been referred by our local Youth Protection Services. Non-Maltreated (N-M) children (n=22) have been recruited in preschools and kindergarten of the same area and were matched with abused children on age, gender, family income, employment status of parents and family structure. Demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Children perception of parental behavior and feelings was evaluated with the Test for Detection of Parental Violence (TDPV) (Palacio-Quintin; 1992). Using a story-telling technique, the TDPV leads the child to interpret situations in which a parental figure and a child interact. The test is composed of 10 cards representing scenes of daily home life. Six of these cards illustrates a maternal figure and four a paternal figure.

Child's stories were audio-taped and transcribed. The answers to each card were blind-scored using a criteria based strategy. Categories of answer concerning Parental behaviors and feelings are reported in Table 2. The scoring procedure yields scores for Parental Positive Behaviors (P+) and Parental Negative Behaviors (P-). Given that they are 6 Mother and 4 Father figure cards, averaged scores by card were used in the analyses comparing the responses to these two sets of cards.

**Table 1. Demographic information**

		Abused	Non-maltreated
		N= 22	N=22
Child's age ( in months)		63,5	60,7
Child's gender	male	12	13
	female	10	9
Occupational status <sup>1</sup>	unemployed	14	10
	.39 and less	4	6
	.40 à .49	4	6
Family annual income (\$ CAN)			
	less than 15 000\$	15	16
	15 000\$ to 24 000 \$	6	5
	more than 24 000\$	1	1

1 Blishen and McRoberts (1976) index for the Canadian population. Index under .39 correspond to general definition of low class.

**Table 2. Classification of behavior and feelings of parental figures**

**Parental negative behavior (P-)**

---

- <b>Aggression</b>	mild verbal aggression , acute verbal aggression, acting-out, mild physical aggression, acute physical aggression.
- <b>Punitive techniques</b>	the parent withholds privileges, withholds food, isolates, slaps, beats.
- <b>Negative feelings</b>	the parent scolds, gets angry, threatens, damages child's self-esteem, rejects child.
- <b>Avoidance and neglect</b>	the parent gives up on child, ignores child's conversation or request, does not accept expression of child's feelings, ignores its basic needs.
- <b>Control techniques</b>	the parent gives unexplained orders, forbids, gives unjustified orders, behaves in arbitrary or incoherent fashion, behaves strangely.
- <b>Other negative feelings or behaviors</b>	

---

**Parental positive behavior (P+)**

---

- <b>Positive affects</b>	the parent approves, praises, shows affection, comforts, rewards, gets interested in child's behavior or feelings, gives emotional support
- <b>Explanation</b>	the parent makes demands, explains the orders, explains displeasure
- <b>Care giving</b>	the parent takes care, feeds, tells a story, protects
- <b>Other positive</b>	is glad or happy, accepts

---

## RESULTS

Abused children obtained higher scores on the P- scale ( $F=7,72$ ;  $p<01$ ) and lower scores on the P+ scale ( $F=8,53$ ;  $p<01$ ) (See Table 3). Furthermore, Mother figure cards elicited more answers than the Father's one in both groups, differences between sets of cards appearing on P+ ( $F=8,03$ ;  $p<01$ ) and P- ( $F=6,16$ ;  $p<05$ ) as well.

Analyses of the P- sub-categories (see Table 4) indicate that the Abused group obtained significant higher scores on "Aggression" ( $U=176$ ;  $p<05$ ), "Punitive techniques" ( $U=173$ ;  $p<05$ ), "Avoidance & neglect" ( $U=97,5$ ;  $p<001$ ) and "Control techniques" ( $U=166$ ;  $p<01$ ). For these first three sub-categories, differences came mainly from the answers given to the Mother figure cards while the difference on "Control Techniques" seems to be mainly due to the responses given to the Father figure cards. In addition, Abused children produced more answers to Mother than to Father figure cards on the "Avoidance & neglect" sub-category ( $Z=2,63$ ;  $p<01$ ), while this difference is not observed in the N-M group. Conversely, N-M children proportionally gave more answers of "Control techniques" sub-category on Mother than on Father figure cards sets ( $Z=2,1$ ;  $p<05$ ).

Concerning P+ behaviors, N-M children produced more responses of "Positive affect" ( $U=135$ ;  $p<01$ ) and "Explanation" ( $U=121$ ;  $p<01$ ) sub-categories. For "Positive affect", groups differ on both Mother and Father figures cards. In addition, Mother figure cards elicited more responses of this type in both groups than did the Father figure cards (Ab.  $Z=2,02$ ;  $p<05$  / N-M.  $Z= 2,60$ ;  $p<01$ ). Finally, we observe that N-M children gave more responses of "Care giving" on Father figure cards than did the Abused children ( $U=171$ ;  $p<05$ ).

**Table 3- Results obtained by Abused and Non-Maltreated children on TDPV's Parental Behavior scales and averaged scores by card for paternal and maternal figures sets.**

	Abused	Non-Maltreated	Effects		
	(n=22) m (s)	(n=22) m (s)	Group F	Figure F	Group by Figure F
<b>Parental negative behavior (P-)</b>					
Total scale score	36,77 (22,8)	21,27 (12,7)	7,72**		
Father figure cards	3,18 (2,3)	1,80 (1,2)	6,15*		
Mother figure cards	3,80 (2,4)	2,34 (1,5)	5,62*	6,16*	0,04
<b>Parental positive behavior (P+)</b>					
Total scale score	3,18 (3,1)	6,50 (4,3)	8,53**		
Father figure cards	0,22 (0,2)	0,53 (0,5)	8,01**		
Mother figure cards	0,38 (0,4)	0,71 (0,5)	5,62*	8,03**	0,0

\* p<.05 \*\*p<.01



**Table 4- Mean scores obtained for sub-categories of Parental Negative Behavior scale and averaged scores by card for paternal and maternal figures sets.**

		Abused (n=22) m	Non-Maltreated (n=22) m	Group U	Effects Figure Abused Non-Malt. Z Z	
<b>Parental negative behavior (P-)</b>						
1- Aggression	Total	3,13	0,91	176*		
	Father	0,32	0,16	211		
	Mother	0,30	0,04	165**	0,35	1,21
2- Punitive techniques	Total	10,23	6,32	173*		
	Father	0,98	0,66	203		
	Mother	0,99	0,61	176*	0,20	0,00
3- Negative feelings	Total	6,90	6,90	222		
	Father	0,82	0,45	237		
	Mother	0,84	0,57	210	0,30	1,49
4 - Avoidance & neglect	Total	5,09	0,82	97,5***		
	Father	0,25	0,04	204		
	Mother	0,68	0,10	106***	2,63**	1,09
5- Control techniques	Total	11,00	5,82	166*		
	Father	0,77	0,43	160*		
	Mother	1,21	0,68	194	1,33	2,1*
6- Other negative behavior/feelings	Total	0,41	0,50	229		
	Father	0,03	0,05	229		
	Mother	0,04	0,04	234	0,28	0,52

\* p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

U=Mann-Whitney

Z= Wilcoxon signed ranks test

**Table 5- Mean scores obtained for sub-categories of Parental Positive Behavior scale and averaged scores by card for paternal and maternal figures sets.**

		Abused (n=22) m	Non-Maltreated (n=22) m	Group U	Effects Figure Abused Non-Malt. Z Z	
<b>Parental Positive behavior (P+)</b>						
7-Positive affect	Total	0,32	1,09	135**		
	Father	0,00	0,05	198*		
	Mother	0,05	0,15	149**	2,02*	2,60**
8- Explanation	Total	1,54	2,81	121**		
	Father	0,12	0,25	181		
	Mother	0,18	0,30	159*	0,72	0,50
9- Care giving	Total	0,77	1,45	188		
	Father	0,06	0,15	171*		
	Mother	0,09	0,13	220	0,77	0,52
10-Other positive behavior/feelings	Total	0,55	1,13	187		
	Father	0,04	0,09	227		
	Mother	0,06	0,13	187	0,49	0,78

\* p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

U=Mann-Whitney

Z= Wilcoxon signed ranks test

## DISCUSSION

Abused children show more negative and less positive perception of their parent's behavior and feelings than non-maltreated children do. They describe their parents in more negative terms, see them as more aggressive, punitive, controlling and neglectful. They also see their parents as showing fewer positive affects and care giving. Both mothers and fathers are seen this way. But abused children perceive the Mother figure as more neglecting than the Father's one, while Father figure is seen as expressing less positive affects. Both abused and non-maltreated children perceive the Mother's figure as interacting more with them than the Father's figure.

All these perceptions that have been *expressed indirectly* are well related with reality. We can conclude that descriptions of parents' interactions with their child made by children through projective techniques can allow us to know better abusing situations.



U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)  
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Children's representation of parental figures in young physically abused and non-maltreated children	
Author(s): Ercilia Palacio-Quintin & Germain Couture	
Corporate Source: Groupe de recherche en développement de l'enfant et de la famille	Publication Date: Août 1996

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 1** documents

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 2** documents



Check here  
**For Level 1 Release:**  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *Sample* \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *Sample* \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Check here  
**For Level 2 Release:**  
Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but *not* in paper copy.

Level 1

Level 2

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here → please

Signature: 	Printed Name/Position/Title: Ercilia Palacio-Quintin, Ph.D.	
Organization/Address: Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières C.P. 500 Trois-Rivières (Québec) G9A 5H7	Telephone: (819) 376-5156	FAX: (819) 376-5195
	E-Mail Address: Ercilia_P_Quintin@uqtr.quebec.ca	Date: 17 octobre 1996

XIVth Biennial Meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development (Quebec City, Quebec, August 12-16, 1996).

PS 024745



University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign



Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education

805 West Pennsylvania Avenue  
Urbana, IL 61801-4897

217 333-1386  
217 333-3767 fax  
800-583-4135  
ericeece@uiuc.edu e-mail

August 16, 1996

Dear Colleague:

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education is increasing its efforts to collect and disseminate information relating to all aspects of children's development, care, and education. Your presentation at the **XIVth Biennial Meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development** held in Quebec City, Quebec, on August 12-16, 1996, is eligible to be considered for inclusion in the ERIC database and microfiche collection, **IF**:

- \* it is at least 8 pages long;
- \* it has not been published elsewhere; and,
- \* you will give us your permission to include it in ERIC.

ERIC, the world's largest database on education, is built from the contributions of its users. We hope you will consider submitting to ERIC/EECE your presentation or any other papers you may have completed within the last two years related to this educational level.

Documents are reviewed for contribution to education, timeliness, relevance, methodology, and reproduction quality. We will let you know within six weeks if your paper has been accepted. Please complete the reproduction release on the back of this letter and return it to ERIC/EECE with your paper by July 31, 1997. If you have any questions, please contact me by fax 217-333-3767, or by e-mail <ksmith5@uiuc.edu>.

Sincerely,

Karen E. Smith  
Acquisitions Coordinator