

Parent Child Interaction (PCI)

Parent child interaction (PCI) is recorded to allow researchers to code qualitative aspects of the observed interaction between parent and child based on explicitly defined behaviors. The PCI consists of age appropriate structured tasks that include a common mildly stressful event (discussing a difficult topic), and a pleasant event (discussing a pleasant topic). The PCI tasks take about 15 minutes to complete.

Broad rationale for including PCI

There is wide recognition that the development of social competence and behavioral control, and the fundamental underlying capacity for self-regulation, are shaped in the context of interactions with the social environment, especially the parents (e.g., Kopp, 1982; Karreman, van Tuijl, van Aken, & Dekovic, 2006). To assess the quality of parent-child interactions, observational data are widely considered to be a gold standard (e.g., Scott, Briskman, Woolgar, Humayun, & O'Connor, 2011). Observing parent-child interactions provides researchers with an objective window on real processes and outcomes of interest. It allows researchers to code observed interaction patterns based on explicitly defined behaviors, and subsequently verify the consistency and reliability of those codes. This is a valuable addition to parent- and self-reports, which are based on definitions likely to be specific to that individual, and are more easily influenced by systematic biases related to mood or expectations (Aspland & Gardner, 2003). Parent-child interactions were recorded during brief structured observational tasks. While such tasks are more artificial than naturalistic observations, they

offer more consistency of sampling between participants across time, and increase the likelihood of certain behaviors to arise within time limits that are feasible in the current large scale longitudinal study (Lytton, 1971; Aspland & Gardner, 2003).

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General procedure

The PCI was conducted in a sparsely furnished room lined with curtains to optimize sound. The parent and child were seated in two chairs that were positioned at angle to each other. The interaction was filmed using 2 Dome cameras that could be controlled by the test-assistant in order to optimize the video image, and one fixed camera that provided an overview of the situation. The cameras were positioned in such a way that one camera focused primarily on the child including the face, and one camera focused primarily on the parent including the face, and one camera to capture the entire scene. The camera positions were explained to the parents and children in advance and they were

asked to sit in a position that would not block one of the camera's. The desk with the computer where the TA was seated during the PCI positioned behind a screen so as not to distract the parent or the child.

Each assessment started with a general instruction that was read out by the test-assistant. The instruction included a brief explanation of the upcoming tasks. The TA explained that (s)he would sit behind the laptop to control the camera's, and to provide instructions on when to start with the next task. Parents and children were asked to interact with each other as they would at home, try to ignore the camera's and imagine that the TA was not present.

The procedure was the same for each wave.

During the first task (the conflict task) the parent and child were asked discuss a topic about which they had a conflict in the recent past. To assist them in finding a suitable topic to discuss they were presented with a list containing topics that might cause conflict, like screen time, grades, doing homework, help with household chores, at what time the child should be back home et cetera. After agreeing on a topic, they were asked to shortly explain the topic to the TA (in order to double check whether it really was a conflict topic), and were then asked to discuss their opinions, feelings, and possible solutions together for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes the TA returned. If the discussion was not finished yet, the dyad was given another 2 minutes to complete their discussion.

During the second task (the vacation task) the parent and child received instructions on paper to plan a family trip to a destination of their choice. The reading of the instructions was part of the observation. When they finished

reading the TA took away the instructions and the dyad was given 5 minutes, with a possible additional 2 minutes, to complete their discussion.

References:

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