

## Worried about your Children? Parent Reporter Bias on Children's Internalizing Behaviors

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Parent reporter bias is a significant issue in assessing clinical symptoms of psychopathology. In children, parent- versus child-reported internalizing problems are of particular concern, as these are expressed less overtly and may be missed by parents. The current study examined both parent personality and household factors (family conflict, SES, life stressors) which were predicted to influence discrepancies between parent and child reports of internalizing problems (i.e., parent-rater bias). Measures of parent personality, family climate, and household demographics (socioeconomic status; SES) were collected via parent-report at age 5. At follow-up (ages 7-13), parents reported major life stressors that had occurred in the past year and children's internalizing was measured via both parent- and child-report; a difference score (parent – child) was created to assess parent-rater bias. Results supported the moderated mediation model tested. Specifically, age 5 family conflict and concurrent life stressors mediated the negative relationship between parental emotional stability and parent-rater bias at follow-up, with SES moderating the influence of life stressors on parent-rater bias. In other words, parental emotional stability is indirectly related to parent-rater bias through its relationship to family conflict, life stressors, and SES. These findings suggest that parents who report less emotional stability and/or greater conflict and stress, also over-rate children's internalizing problems. Given difficulties with assessing internalizing, and a greater reporter bias for these behaviors, intervention efforts targeting families at-risk (e.g., due to conflict, stressors, or SES) may be most fruitful.