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Retrospective Assessments of Childhood Psychopathology by Adults and Their Parents

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ABSTRACT

The present study compared retrospective personality and psychopathological assessments of adults about their childhood and adolescence with concurrent assessments by one of their parents. One-hundred three college students ($M^{age} = 23.1$ years) and one of their parents ($M^{age} = 51.2$ years) completed a retrospective version of the 200-item, parent-as-respondent, Coolidge Personality and Neuropsychological Inventory (R-CPNI). The median internal scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α) for all 46 scales of the R-CPNI were substantial for the adult retrospective ($\alpha = 0.78$) and the parent retrospective versions ($\alpha = 0.79$), and there was a strong correlation between the adult and parent retrospective scale reliabilities ($r = 0.88$). To evaluate group differences, t tests revealed that the parent means were significantly lower than the adult means on 45 of the 46 scales with mostly large effect sizes. Principal components analyses of the scales for both adult and parent retrospective versions were strongly and positively correlated ($r = 0.88$) for the total number of components extracted. These findings appear to support the contention that retrospective assessments tend to be reliable and valid and that parents' retrospective recollections of their children's psychopathology tend to be more positive than the retrospective reports by the adults. Based on these preliminary findings, it appears that the R-CPNI may provide a unique and interesting tool for the retrospective measurement of psychopathology.

KEYWORDS

Coolidge Personality and Neuropsychological Inventory, R-CPNI, CPNI, Retrospective Assessment, Psychopathology

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