

# How Annoying Is It? Defining Parental Tolerance for Child Misbehavior

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**ABSTRACT.** Defines parental tolerance for misbehavior and provides reliability and validity data for two newly developed parent report measures of tolerance, the Child Rearing Inventory (CRI) and the Annoying Behavior Inventory (ABI). Data were collected from 262 primary care-

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takers of children between the ages of 3 and 10 years, of whom one-third were African American. Examination of the internal consistency and test-retest data for the CRI and the ABI provided evidence of adequate reliability. Scores on the CRI and ABI were unrelated to social desirability, socioeconomic status, and race. Parental tolerance for misbehavior is associated with parental perceptions of their child's behavior as problematic and child treatment status. Results of this study provide preliminary evidence of good reliability and present initial validity of the CRI and the ABI. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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Parental tolerance for misbehavior can be defined as the extent to which a parent tends to be annoyed by child misbehavior. This attitude can reflect a discrepancy in what is normative, and this tendency to be annoyed by child misbehavior can vary from neutral levels of tolerance, to levels of extreme tolerance or intolerance for child misbehavior. Although it has been hypothesized that parental tolerance for misbehavior can be inferred from an interaction between the frequency of a child's behavior problems and how much the behavior actually bothers the parent (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999), little research has been conducted on tolerance, and there is no measure to address this construct directly. We believe that once a measure of tolerance is developed, research can then address the role of parental tolerance in the development of negative parent-child interactions, the development of disruptive behavior among children, referral biases for the treatment of child behavior problems, and factors related to the process of parent training.

Almost all young children display a large number of negative behaviors. It is developmentally appropriate for toddlers to display "annoying" behaviors such as noncompliance and temper tantrums in response to not having their way, as one major task for this developmental stage is to assert independence and autonomy within the parent-child relationship (Campbell, 1995; Erikson, 1963). It is likely that the length of time a child exhibits negative behaviors and the way the parent inter-

prets and responds to them is greatly influenced by the parent's tolerance for these annoying behaviors. If a child has difficulty learning to establish impulse control in the face of frustrating events and the parent is not sensitive to this difficulty, the parent runs the risk of not being able to cue the child to use more appropriate self-control methods and becoming intolerant of the child's negative behavior. In such a scenario, children would likely not receive adequate reinforcement of their burgeoning attempts at self-control, they could receive inadequate modeling of self-control methods from their parent, and they would be at risk for continuing to display behavioral difficulties.

Parents enforce a wide range of rules for appropriate behavior with their children, and there is great variation in the behaviors labeled as negative by parents (O'Leary, 1995). Several factors have been identified that can influence whether parents identify child behavior as negative, including child age (Dix, Ruble, Grusec, & Nixon, 1986; Johnston & Patenaude, 1994), clinic referral status (Baden & Howe, 1992; Dix & Lochman, 1990; Gretarsson & Gelfand, 1988), cultural variables (Hackett & Hackett, 1993; Weisz et al., 1988), socioeconomic status (Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1994; Susman, Trickett, Iannotti, Hollenbeck, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985), and parental depression and stress (Abidin, 1990; Wahler, 1980; Querido, Eyberg, & Boggs, in press). Parental tolerance is a likely candidate for this list, because the intolerant parent may not recognize episodes during which his or her child is behaving appropriately. At its extreme, parents who become highly annoyed by child behavior may believe that their child exhibits more negative behaviors than the child actually exhibits (Lobitz & Johnson, 1975). If the parent attends only to the child's negative behavior, this will serve to reinforce the negative behavior and decrease the likelihood that the child will behave in an appropriate manner. Over time, the parent-child dyad will have fewer positive interactions, and the parent and child may become caught in a coercive interactional cycle (Patterson, 1976; Patterson, 1982) that will last throughout childhood. Further, intolerant parents may not recognize the implications of their parenting style (e.g., the detrimental effects of offering little positive attention in response to appropriate child behavior) and mistakenly attribute the child's misbehavior exclusively to the child (Kendziora & O'Leary, 1993).

Despite its intuitive appeal, there is currently no measure of parental tolerance. A measure of parental tolerance for child misbehavior is critically important to clinical practice, particularly when parent report is discrepant from other sources of data. Some parents perceive their child's behavior to be "deviant" even when the child's behavior has

considerable overlap with nonreferred children (Lobitz & Johnson, 1975) or falls completely within the average range (Glascoe & Dworkin, 1995; Glascoe, MacLean, & Stone, 1991). Another subset of parents seem not to recognize as problematic the behaviors that interfere with the child's academic or social functioning (Glascoe & Dworkin, 1995; Glascoe, MacLean, & Stone, 1991). An objective index of parental tolerance would be useful not only for the pretreatment assessment of parent-child relational problems, but also for treatment planning. Parents who accurately label clinically significant child behavior problems as "deviant" would benefit from traditional parent training whereas parents with extreme levels of low or high tolerance for misbehavior who present for treatment would require a treatment protocol that deals with parental perceptions of child behavior in addition to parent training techniques (Lobitz & Johnson, 1975). A measure of tolerance could also be used to track attitudinal changes over time once the family was engaged in therapy.

This study is a preliminary step in the exploration of the parental tolerance construct. The purpose of this study is to develop two parent measures of tolerance and address their psychometric properties. Because no measure of parental tolerance currently exists, the Child Rearing Inventory (CRI) and the Annoying Behavior Inventory (ABI), two brief measures of parent tolerance for child misbehavior, were constructed to assess different aspects of the tolerance construct and to provide evidence of concurrent validity for the construct. These measures were designed to assess parental tolerance for an individual child's misbehavior (CRI) and parental tolerance for child misbehavior in general (ABI), two different but complementary aspects of tolerance.

We expected that item analyses, estimates of internal consistency, and estimates of stability for the tolerance measures would reveal adequate reliability. We further expected that hierarchical multiple regression would support the validity of the CRI and the ABI. Specifically, we examined the utility of race, SES, and social desirability in the prediction of scores on the CRI and the ABI. We also examined whether the CRI and the ABI would be useful in predicting parent ratings of child behavior problems and child treatment status.

We included race as a variable because one goal of this study is to provide initial normative data regarding parental tolerance for child behavior among both minority and majority racial/ethnic groups. Racial/ethnic variation in family process plays an important role in the socialization of children and the definition of appropriate child behavior (Baumrind, 1996; Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1996; Forehand & Kotchick,

1996; Hackett & Hackett, 1993; Weisz et al., 1988), and we wanted to address potential variations in parenting behavior. Additionally, it has been suggested that there is a wide range of child rearing practices used in African American and Caucasian parenting (Garcia-Coll, 1990; Garcia-Coll, 1995; Lassiter, 1995), and that harsh disciplinary practices may be accounted for by SES rather than race (Dodge, Petit, & Bates, 1994). Because many previous studies of the relation between race and parenting have confounded SES with race we included SES as a variable in addressing this methodological concern.

## **METHOD**

### ***Participants***

Among 575 women approached, 302 (53%) agreed to participate. Most (93%) were mothers; the remainder were other female relatives serving as primary caretaker of the child (e.g., grandmother, aunt). Of the 302 participants, 234 (78%) completed all measures, 28 (9%) completed at least one measure, and 40 (13%) did not complete any measure. A total of 89 participants volunteered for the test-retest phase of the study and 55 (62%) returned the retest questionnaires. Table 1 describes the sample of 262 participants who completed one or more measures. Compared to African American participants, Caucasian participants were more educated, more likely to be married, more likely to be the child's mother, and had significantly higher Hollingshead (1975) SES scores than African American participants.

### ***Measures***

*Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI)*. The ECBI (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999) is a 36-item parent report measure of disruptive child behavior that contains two scales: the Intensity Scale, which assesses the frequency of each child behavior problem item from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*) and the Problem Scale, which assesses the number of child behavior problems that parents describe as a problem for themselves (yes/no). It has been hypothesized that the ECBI Problem Scale is an indirect measure of parental tolerance for the child's behavior if it differs significantly from the ECBI Intensity score (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999). Studies have demonstrated the construct validity (Boggs, Eyberg, & Reynolds, 1990; Webster-Stratton & Eyberg, 1982) and sensitivity to

TABLE 1. Demographic Data

| (n = 262)                                       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
|   | M     | SD    |
| Participant age <sup>a</sup>                    | 33.80 | 8.58  |
| Participant education (years)*                  | 13.24 | 2.18  |
| Hollingshead SES*                               | 37.16 | 13.56 |
| Identified child's age                          | 5.76  | 2.07  |
|   | n     | %     |
| Participant Marital Status <sup>b</sup>         |       |       |
| Married   | 153   | 58.8  |
| Single <sup>c</sup>                             | 107   | 41.2  |
| Participant relationship to child <sup>a</sup>  |       |       |
| Mother  | 240   | 92.0  |
| Other <sup>d</sup>                              | 21    | 8.0   |
| Child Information                               |       |       |
| Child's gender (Male)                           | 140   | 54.0  |
| Enrolled in special class <sup>f</sup> (Yes)    | 22    | 8.5   |
| Referred for treatment <sup>g</sup> (Yes)       | 31    | 12.0  |
| Needs treatment <sup>h</sup> (Yes)              | 36    | 14.0  |
| Treated for behavior problem <sup>e</sup> (Yes) | 31    | 12.1  |
| Has a medical illness <sup>e</sup> (Yes)*       | 53    | 20.5  |
| Has a behavior problem <sup>e</sup> (Yes)       | 36    | 13.9  |

<sup>a</sup>Data unavailable for 1 participant. <sup>b</sup>Data unavailable for 2 participants. <sup>c</sup>Includes women who were never married, separated, divorced, or widowed. <sup>d</sup>Includes 17 grandmothers, 1 stepmother, 1 aunt, 1 sister, and 1 "unspecified" female. <sup>e</sup>Data unavailable for 3 children. <sup>f</sup>Data unavailable for 4 children. <sup>g</sup>Data unavailable for 6 children. <sup>h</sup>Data unavailable for 5 children. \*Significant difference between African American and Caucasian groups at  $p < .05$ .

change during treatment (Schuhmann, Foote, Eyberg, Boggs, & Algina, 1998; Webster-Stratton, 1984) of the ECBI. In this study, internal consistency estimates for the ECBI were excellent for both the Intensity Scale (coefficient alpha = .93) and the Problem Scale (coefficient alpha = .91).

*Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS).* The M-C SDS (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) is a 33-item measure of social desirability (i.e., an individual's propensity to provide socially acceptable responses) with well-established psychometric properties. In this study, coefficient alpha for the M-C SDS was .80.

### ***Procedure***

African American and Caucasian women were approached at several pediatricians' offices in Northcentral Florida. Those who were the primary caretaker of a child between the ages of 3 and 10 years and willing to participate in the study were asked to complete the study measures either in the waiting room or, if incomplete, to finish them at home and mail them back to the researchers. If participants had more than one child between the ages of 3 and 10, they were asked to choose one child arbitrarily and to complete the measures with the one child in mind. During the initial contact, participants were asked if they would be willing to complete the CRI and the ABI again two weeks later. Those who indicated willingness were mailed a retest packet two weeks later.

## ***RESULTS***

### ***Development of the Scales***

*Child Rearing Inventory (CRI)*. The CRI was developed to measure parental tolerance for child misbehavior. Initial items thought to reflect the construct of parental tolerance were rationally derived by the first author, and a panel of five psychologists selected and refined items thought to best represent the range of behaviors reflecting the tolerance construct. The format of the measure was based on Harter's Self-Perception Profile for Children to reduce the likelihood of a socially acceptable response set (Harter, 1982).

For each of the CRI items, parents were asked to indicate which statement is true for them (e.g., "When my child does something annoying, it bothers me *more* than it would bother other parents" or "When my child does something annoying it bothers me *less* than it would bother other parents") and then to indicate whether the statement is "Sort of True" or "Really True" for them. Each item was scored on a 1-4 Likert-type scale, yielding a Total Tolerance score ranging from 11 to 44.

Item analyses were conducted on the 14-item CRI to assess internal consistency. Three items with poor item-to-total correlations were dropped from the original 14-item CRI to create an 11-item CRI. As shown in Table 2, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients for the 11-item CRI ranged from .19 to .47. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the 11-item CRI was .72.

TABLE 2. Item Content, Item Mean, Item Standard Deviation, Item-Total Correlation for the Child Rearing Inventory

| Item Content                                   | Mean | SD   | Item-Total <sup>a</sup> |
|--|------|------|-------------------------|
| 1. Bothered by annoying child behavior         | 2.44 | 1.02 | .47                     |
| 2. Bothered by noncompliance                   | 3.30 | .89  | .46                     |
| 3. Bothered by child who interrupts            | 2.96 | .91  | .40                     |
| 4. Severity of response to misbehavior         | 2.17 | .87  | .28                     |
| 5. Bothered by child who talks back            | 3.47 | .76  | .42                     |
| 6. Bothered by yelling child                   | 2.64 | .94  | .34                     |
| 7. Severity of punishment used                 | 1.96 | .67  | .19                     |
| 8. Bothered by phone interruptions             | 2.91 | .95  | .40                     |
| 9. Annoyed by yelling child who bothers others | 3.31 | .75  | .34                     |
| 10. Bothered by whining                        | 3.10 | .90  | .41                     |
| 11. Severity of discipline style               | 2.52 | .97  | .29                     |

<sup>a</sup>Corrected item-total correlation coefficient ( $n = 246$ ).

Participants had a mean CRI total score of 30.78 ( $SD = 4.95$ ) out of 44 possible points, where higher scores reflected lower tolerance for misbehavior. No difference was found between scores for African American and Caucasian parents regardless of whether SES was controlled,  $F(1, 243) = .780, p = .46$ , or not,  $F(1, 244) = .594, p = .44$ .

*Annoying Behavior Inventory (ABI)*. The ABI is a 36-item list of disruptive child behavior designed to measure parental tolerance for disruptive child behavior in general. The ABI was developed to provide evidence of concurrent validity for the tolerance construct. Initial items thought to represent behaviors that parents find annoying were generated and a panel of five psychologists selected 36 items by consensus from the original pool. Participants were asked to indicate "how annoying the behavior would be for you if a child acted this way." Each item was scored on a 0-3 point Likert-type scale, yielding a Total Annoyance score ranging from 0 to 108, with higher scores reflecting greater annoyance. Participants were then asked to indicate for which behaviors they believed should be punished or reprimanded. The responses for this second part of the measure yielded a Total Punish score ranging from 0 to 36, with higher scores reflecting a greater propensity to use punishment. The ABI was designed to have a scale reflecting tolerance for child misbehavior (Annoyance Scale) and a scale reflecting whether or not the

parent would discipline a child exhibiting these behaviors (Punish Scale) to examine the relation between parental tolerance for misbehavior and punishment.

The corrected item-total correlation coefficients for the ABI Annoyance Scale ranged from .27 to .62 and the corrected item-total correlation coefficients for the ABI Punish Scale ranged from .26 to .63 (see Table 3). Cronbach's alpha for the ABI Annoyance Scale was .93 and, for the ABI Punish Scale, .93. The mean ABI Annoyance score was 71.51 (out of 108 possible points) with higher scores reflecting lower tolerance for misbehavior. The participants had a mean ABI Punish score of 16.51 (out of a possible 36 points) with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of using punishment in response to child misbehavior. There were no group differences between African American and Caucasian parents for total ABI Annoyance score, with or without SES statistically controlled,  $F(1, 239) = 1.91, p = .168$ ,  $F(1, 240) = 1.81, p = .180$ . Additionally, there was no race effect for the ABI Punish score, regardless of whether SES was statistically controlled,  $F(1, 234) = .145, p = .704$ , or not,  $F(1, 235) = .388, p = .534$ .

### ***Stability***

The two-week test-retest reliability coefficient (Pearson) was .69 for the CRI Total Score, .68 for the ABI Annoyance Scale, and .62 for the ABI Punish Scale.

### ***Validity***

As expected, the two tolerance scores, the CRI Total score and the ABI Annoyance score, were significantly correlated with one another (Table 4). However, the correlation was moderate ( $r = .39$ ), suggesting that each measured a different but related aspect of the tolerance construct. Neither of the measures were significantly correlated with SES or social desirability as measured by the M-C SDS (see Table 4). High CRI total scores (indicating lower tolerance for misbehavior) were related to a higher number of behaviors perceived as problematic on the ECBI Problem Scale ( $r = .23, p < .0001$ ) and a greater propensity to use punishment on the ABI Punish Scale ( $r = .18, p < .01$ ).

Hierarchical multiple-regression analyses were conducted to test the relation between parents' tolerance and their reports of child behavior problems as measured by the ECBI Intensity and Problem Scales. Race was entered first followed by SES and social desirability.

TABLE 3. Item Content, Item Mean, Item Standard Deviation, Item-Total Correlation for the Annoying Behavior Inventory

| Item Content                    | Mean | SD  | Item-Total <sup>a</sup> | Item-Total <sup>b</sup> |
|---------------------------------|------|-----|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Wanting own way              | 1.69 | .88 | .42                     | .52                     |
| 2. Arguing with friends         | 1.31 | .86 | .42                     | .58                     |
| 3. Arguing with siblings        | 1.62 | .90 | .38                     | .60                     |
| 4. Biting others                | 2.62 | .79 | .39                     | .32                     |
| 5. Crying for no reason         | 1.71 | .96 | .46                     | .51                     |
| 6. Dawdling                     | 1.33 | .88 | .36                     | .58                     |
| 7. Defiance                     | 2.34 | .78 | .57                     | .52                     |
| 8. Destructiveness              | 2.56 | .79 | .51                     | .37                     |
| 9. Fighting with friends        | 1.93 | .96 | .47                     | .51                     |
| 10. Fighting with siblings      | 2.04 | .90 | .50                     | .52                     |
| 11. Fire-setting                | 2.80 | .66 | .35                     | .26                     |
| 12. Hitting others              | 2.56 | .72 | .51                     | .39                     |
| 13. Hurting pets or animals     | 2.59 | .79 | .51                     | .41                     |
| 14. Irritability                | 1.19 | .76 | .56                     | .51                     |
| 15. Jumping on furniture        | 1.50 | .91 | .54                     | .58                     |
| 16. Kicking others              | 2.47 | .76 | .62                     | .50                     |
| 17. Lying                       | 2.52 | .73 | .52                     | .46                     |
| 18. Nagging                     | 1.57 | .87 | .60                     | .62                     |
| 19. Namecalling                 | 1.75 | .87 | .50                     | .60                     |
| 20. Noisiness                   | 1.30 | .85 | .52                     | .57                     |
| 21. Noncompliance               | 2.23 | .76 | .61                     | .55                     |
| 22. Not eating at meal time     | 1.03 | .84 | .27                     | .52                     |
| 23. Pushing others              | 2.02 | .82 | .53                     | .58                     |
| 24. Pouting                     | 1.23 | .86 | .46                     | .42                     |
| 25. Rough play                  | 1.36 | .86 | .35                     | .49                     |
| 26. Running away                | 2.54 | .79 | .44                     | .45                     |
| 27. Slamming doors              | 1.86 | .91 | .61                     | .60                     |
| 28. Stealing                    | 2.80 | .61 | .48                     | .28                     |
| 29. Talking back to adults      | 2.61 | .72 | .50                     | .40                     |
| 30. Talking mean to others      | 2.43 | .74 | .62                     | .58                     |
| 31. Teasing                     | 1.74 | .88 | .47                     | .57                     |
| 32. Temper tantrums             | 2.13 | .87 | .56                     | .49                     |
| 33. Verbally threatening others | 2.41 | .82 | .55                     | .51                     |
| 34. Cursing                     | 2.55 | .79 | .53                     | .43                     |
| 35. Whining                     | 1.68 | .85 | .59                     | .55                     |
| 36. Yelling                     | 1.70 | .87 | .58                     | .63                     |

<sup>a</sup>Corrected item-total correlation coefficient for Annoyance Scale ( $n = 235$ ).

<sup>b</sup>Corrected item-total correlation coefficient for Punish Scale ( $n = 230$ ).

TABLE 4. Correlation Matrix of Variables with Means and Standard Deviations

| Variable                   | 1                 | 2                 | 3                 |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Child Rearing Inventory | –                 |                   |                   |
| 2. ABI Annoyance           | .39***            | –                 |                   |
| 3. ABI Punish              | .18**             | .14*              | –                 |
| 4. ECBI Intensity          | .10               | –.02              | .01               |
| 5. ECBI Problem            | .23***            | .09               | .01               |
| 6. Socioeconomic Status    | –.07              | –.00              | .06               |
| 7. Social Desirability     | –.04              | –.08              | –.04              |
|                            | ( <i>n</i> = 246) | ( <i>n</i> = 242) | ( <i>n</i> = 137) |
| <i>M</i>                   | 30.78             | 71.52             | 16.51             |
| <i>SD</i>                  | 4.95              | 15.77             | 8.00              |

ABI Annoyance = Annoying Behavior Inventory Annoyance Scale; ABI Punish = Annoying Behavior Inventory Punish Scale; ECBI Intensity = Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory Intensity Scale.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .0001$

For the ECBI Intensity scores, only social desirability proved to be a significant predictor,  $F(1, 227) = 31.65, p < .000$ , and it was retained; higher scores on the M-C SDS were associated with lower scores on the ECBI Intensity Scale. No tolerance measure contributed additional predictive power on the ECBI Intensity scores. However, on the ECBI Problem Scores, CRI scores proved to be a significant predictor,  $F(2, 215) = 9.46, p < .001$ , above and beyond that of social desirability. Higher CRI scores, indicating less tolerance, were associated with higher ECBI Problem scores.

We used hierarchical logistic regression to predict child treatment status as reported by participants on the demographic questionnaire (i.e., whether or not the parent indicated that the child had received treatment for behavior problems). This regression yielded a significant model chi-square,  $\chi^2(7) = 66.08, p < .000$ . Child age, Beta = .62,  $p = .000$ , gender, Beta = 2.34,  $p = .001$ , ECBI Intensity Scale scores, Beta = .04,  $p = .002$ , and ABI Annoyance Scale scores, Beta = .05,  $p = .028$ , were all significant predictors for child treatment of behavior problems.

## DISCUSSION

This study centered on the development of two scales to assess tolerance. Prior to the development of the Child Rearing Inventory (CRI)

and the Annoying Behavior Inventory (ABI), it was difficult to know the extent to which a parent was annoyed with his or her child's behavior except by inferring their attitude from other clinical information, such as direct observation of parent-child interactions. The format of these scales allows for brief administration, and results support the initial reliability of the CRI and ABI, which both yielded good internal consistency and adequate test-retest reliability. CRI and ABI scores were also unrelated to social desirability as measured by the M-C SDS. Concurrent validity of the tolerance construct was demonstrated by the significant intercorrelations between the CRI and the ECBI Problem scores, and the CRI and ABI scores.

In contrast to our expectation that parent tolerance would predict behavior problem frequency, we found no association between the CRI or ABI and the ECBI Intensity Scale. In contrast, the ECBI Problem Scale, which asks parents for each item, "Is this behavior a problem for you?" was found to correlate with both the CRI and ABI, yet it is typically strongly correlated with the ECBI Intensity Scale (Eyberg & Pincus, 1999). For this reason, when specific conduct problems are occurring at high rates, it is "normal" to find them problematic; that is, it would not reflect "intolerance." Conversely, for behavior problems that occur infrequently, it is normal, rather than overly tolerant, not to find them problematic. The construct of tolerance reflects a discrepancy in response from what is normative. The findings in the present study, showing that while the CRI did not predict parent-reported behavior problem frequency, it was the single best predictor of the parent's perceived problems with the child's behavior. This provides construct validity for the CRI and also suggests that tolerance can be directly and more efficiently obtained using a single score from the CRI.

It was hypothesized that the CRI and the ABI would predict child treatment status. Child gender, child age, ECBI Intensity scores, and ABI Annoyance Scale scores all predicted child treatment status in our sample. Boys, older children, children with higher ECBI Intensity scores, and children whose parents had higher ABI Annoyance scores were more likely to have received mental health services for behavior problems. Parents must use some personal standard to decide when a child needs treatment for behavior problems, and although the variables in this study account for a small amount of variance, it appears that being annoyed by misbehavior is related to obtaining treatment. Further study with clinic-referred children and their parents should explore the developmental trajectory and interaction between extreme tolerance or intolerance and child behavior problems as well as the role that addi-

tional variables (such as school suspensions, parental stress regarding child related events, or parent motivation for treatment) play in the progression from merely thinking that treatment may be warranted to actively seeking behavior change in a child through treatment.

Currently, there is a lack of information regarding tolerance for child misbehavior among parents from all racial/ethnic backgrounds (Forehand & Kotchick, 1996). This lack of information has implications for the acceptance of behavioral parent training and the goals of such treatment by parents from diverse racial/ethnic groups. This study included both Caucasian and African American mothers to explore whether these groups would differ in self-report of tolerance for child misbehavior. With the exception of the social desirability scale (African Americans had higher scores than Caucasians), there were no significant race differences on any of the measures used in this study. Additionally, we found no relation between SES and tolerance for misbehavior.

The use of only one method of measurement is a limitation to this study. An observational study of parenting style may be the best way to address the relation between tolerance, the parent's perception of behavior problems, and the child's actual behavior problems. However, asking parents directly seems the most efficient way to determine parental attitudes towards child behavior, and the range of scores obtained by the CRI and the ABI plus their lack of a relationship to social desirability suggest that parents were willing to endorse their true attitudes on the CRI and the ABI. Future studies will also need to address whether tolerance is modifiable, changing over time or subsequent to treatment.

In summary, the CRI and ABI show preliminary evidence of psychometric strength and appear to be tapping different but related aspects of the tolerance construct. Neither measure appears markedly influenced by SES or social desirability, suggesting that they may be appropriate with both minority and majority cultures (although African Americans were the only minority racial/ethnic group assessed in this particular investigation). As predicted, parental tolerance was associated with parental perceptions of their child's behavior as problematic (as measured by the ECBI Problem score) and with the parent's decision to seek mental health services for the child.

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