The Dominic-R: A Pictorial Interview for 6- to 11-Year-Old Children

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To review the Dominic-R and the Terry questionnaires, respectively, for white and African-American children, both DSM-III-R-based, and more recent DSM-IV-based computerized versions. Method: Five papers describing the development, content, validation studies, and establishment of the diagnostic cutoffs of these instruments are reviewed. The instruments are pictorial, fully structured, and designed to assess mental disorders in children 6 to 11 years of age. Symptom descriptions complement the visual stimulus, providing better information-processing than visual or auditory stimuli alone. Cognitive immaturity of young children bars frequency, duration, and age-of-onset measurements, restricting correspondence with DSM criteria. DSM-IV (computerized versions) and DSM-III-R (paper versions) disorders being assessed include specific (simple) phobias, separation anxiety, generalized anxiety (overanxious), depression/dysthymia, attention-deficit hyperactivity, oppositional defiant, and conduct disorder. Results: Test-retest reliability of symptoms and symptom scores and criterion validity against clinical judgment support the visual-auditory combination of stimuli to assess child mental health. Conclusion: Intended for clinical, epidemiological, and screening purposes, these instruments are short and simple. Although it only approximates DSM-III-R and DSM-IV criteria, the pictorial format permits young children to be reliable informants about their mental health. J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry, 2000, 39(1):85–93. Key Words: child interview, pictorial, young children, diagnosis, mental health assessment.

The Dominic-R (Valla et al., 1997a) is a pictorial, fully structured, DSM-III-R-based questionnaire to assess mental disorders in children 6 to 11 years of age, designed with the cognitive immaturity of young children in mind. The Dominic-R depicts a child named Dominic, either alone or with peers or adults, facing situations in the daily life of children. The pictures illustrate the abstract emotional and behavioral content of DSM-III-R criteria. Dominic's situation is often presented in a single picture, but to adequately describe certain criteria several drawings on different pages, short stories presenting 2 or 3 drawings on the same page, and bubbles expressing inner thoughts or feelings are sometimes necessary (Fig. 1; Table 1).

Sentences are printed at the top and bottom of the pictures so that an interviewer seated in front of the child can read them aloud while looking at the upside-down pictures. The child who hears the sentence can also read it at the bottom of the picture. These sentences offer an auditory symptom description complementing the visual stimulus provided by the pictures. Thus, DSM-III-R symptoms are conveyed through both visual and auditory channels. Cognitive theory suggests that a combination of visual and auditory stimuli provides better information-processing and better understanding of verbal concepts than visual or auditory stimuli alone (Frostig and Maslow, 1979). The pictorial format helps by improving comprehension, stimulating the attention of children, and focusing their interest. In addition, the use of pictures avoids having to rely only on the vocabulary of the child. Because the cognitive immaturity of 6- to 11-year-old children limits their comprehension of abstract concepts (Yates, 1990), no attempt was made to incorporate frequency, duration, or age-of-onset measurement (Valla et al., 1994a).

The Dominic-R is divided into 2 booklets, the first having 49 pages and the second 47 pages. The first booklet also includes 4 pages of instructions. Instead of being organized in diagnostic modules, the pictures have been randomly mixed, with 8 normal situations intermixed with DSM-III-R abnormal behaviors. Drawings showing happy children in normal situations make the instrument more acceptable and give rise to fewer pathological...
Fig. 1 Four pictures from the Dominic-R.
DOMINIC DEPRESSION QUESTIONS

23- DO YOU OFTEN lose your temper?

31- ARE YOU OFTEN touchy, or EASILY annoyed by others?

41- DO YOU FIND IT REALLY difficult to make up your mind, most of the time?

43- DO YOU ALWAYS feel like crying?

47- DO YOU FEEL that most of the time things are boring, even when others are having fun?

48- DO YOU OFTEN fidget in your seat?

50- DO YOU FEEL tired nearly everyday?

51- IS IT HARD for you to keep your mind on your work?

54- DO YOU OFTEN fall asleep?

58- HAVE YOU lost interest in playing and games?

61- HAVE YOU gained weight?

62- DO YOU OFTEN fail to finish your schoolwork?

64- IS IT hard for you to ENJOY YOURSELF, like Dominic?

68- DO YOU FIND it DIFFICULT to sleep?

72- HAVE YOU lost your appetite, or have you lost weight?

75- DO YOU OFTEN think about death or about killing yourself, like Dominic?

78- DO YOU OFTEN feel worthless or guilty?

81- DO YOU OFTEN think about death or dying, like Dominic?

82- ARE YOU OFTEN on the go?

83- DO YOU FEEL sad and depressed most of the time?