ABSTRACT: This article is concerned with two recent studies of the Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS), Gavin and Wamboldt (1992) and Ryan, Kawash, Fine, and Powel (1994). The external validity analyses conducted for the FOS in these studies assumed the scale to be a unidimensional measure. The present discussion centers on methodological decisions and interpretive strategies that may have prevented a more complete understanding of the scale's dimensional structure and theoretical meaning. It is concluded that a unidimensional view of the FOS is an oversimplification that is inconsistent with the available data. A case is made for a more comprehensive and technically adequate evaluation of the FOS. Specific suggestions are offered.

KEY WORDS: family-of-origin scale; validity; family assessment.
The development of family assessments has not always been
guided by theoretical understandings of how families function or how
the family influences the adjustment of individual family members.
The development of the FOS, however, specifically reflects psychody-
amic views regarding the role of family variables in determining
psychological health. The FOS consists of 40-items which, according
to the test authors (Hovestadt et al., 1985) tap 10 relational charac-
teristics that are thought to influence an individual's capacity for au-
tonomy and intimacy: Clarity of Expression, Responsibility, Respect
for Others, Openness to Others, Acceptance of Separation and Loss,
Range of Feelings, Mood and Tone, Conflict Resolution, Empathy, and
Trust. The results of factor analytic research have been inconsistent
with the scale's theoretical structure (Ryan, Kawash, Fine, & Powel,
1994).

Despite the ambiguities that exist as to what the FOS is measur-
ing, strong construct validity claims were recently made in the
studies reported by Gavin and Wamboldt (1992) and Ryan and associa-
tes (1994). The present paper is concerned with these two studies,
which were concerned with scale's internal structure and its external
validity. As will be seen, both studies are marked by a number of
methodological and conceptual flaws and, in effect, could encourage a
misunderstanding and misuse of the FOS.

General discussions of bias have emphasized a failure to consider
contrary evidence (Walton, 1991). In a scientific field, bias can be par-
ticularly damaging due to its potential to lead the field astray. Discus-
sions of experimenter bias in family science in particular have fo-
cused on how researchers use “their data to support their personal
opinions through post hoc arguments” (Filsinger & Roosa, 1987, p.
41). It is suggested here that bias need not be limited to the conclu-
sions drawn from a given set of results. Indeed, bias may be built into
the study design or data analysis, so that a hypothesis cannot be dis-
confirmed. This can be accomplished by using research methods that
fail to examine the counterhypothesis. A biased approach is unscien-
tific because a truly adequate test of a hypothesis is “an attempt to
falsify it, or to refute it. Testability is falsifiability” (Popper, 1959; see
also Chow, 1990). From a “conjecture and refutation” perspective, it is
of some concern that researchers have discovered what they expected
to find with regard to the FOS even if it meant ignoring the research
evidence. The immediacy and urgency of this concern relates to the
possibility that once a view acquires the status of an accepted truth,
alternative explanations are less likely to be considered. The “ac-