FIRST-TIME PARENTHOOD: ATTACHMENT, FAMILY VARIABLES, EMOTIONAL REACTIONS, AND TASK RESPONSIBILITIES AS PREDICTORS OF STRESS

DISSERTATION

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by

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The purpose of this study was to explore factors which are predictive of parenting stress for first-time parents. Based on attachment theory and empirical research, the factors investigated were the responsibility for child care and housework, the current and retrospective relationship with the family of origin, the change in emotions related to parenthood, the marital relationship, and attachment and individuation.

Subjects were 100 first-time parents of children aged birth to 24 months. Of major importance was the finding that average levels of parenting stress were obtained. Parenthood had positive as well as negative aspects to it. There was an indication that multiple roles were not related to increased parenting stress. Also, no difference was found between working and nonworking mothers. Men and women shared the responsibility for child care and housework. However, women perceived they had more responsibility for these two areas than men. It was found that men and women experience the transition to parenthood
differently. That is, different factors related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

The data suggest that there are two main dimensions which predict parenting stress. One relates to interpersonal distress and subsumes the current and retrospective family of origin experiences, and attachment and individuation. The other dimension relates to how spouses negotiate the division of responsibility for tasks. An unexpected finding was that attachment status was not related to parenting stress for women, but was for men. Conceptually, these results are similar to what attachment theory would predict. However, empirically, these results were not obtained. Problems exist in the measurement of attachment status, and future researchers may want to focus on specific aspects of attachment.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to examine factors which affect the stress experienced by many first-time parents. To date, studies have found that the transition to parenthood is accompanied by varying amounts of stress. Additionally, the amount of stress has been found to range from high levels for some new parents to low levels for others. Several areas thought to be related to parenting stress have been investigated. Among these are individual differences (Cowan et al., 1985; Feldman & Nash, 1984; Shereshefsky & Yarrow, 1973), role strain (Gladieux, 1978; Goldberg, Michaels, & Lamb, 1985), infant temperament (Sirignano & Lachman, 1985), the family of origin (Belsky & Isabella, 1985; Cox et al., 1985; Frommer & O'Shea, 1973a, 1973b; Hall & Pawlby, 1981), the marital relationship (Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983; Cox et al., 1985; Goldberg et al., 1985), and attachment styles of the parents (DeLozier, cited in Hansburg, 1986; Mitchell, cited in Hansburg, 1986). Belsky (1984, 1988) has suggested a model for parental functioning. He asserts that parenting ability is multidetermined and states that developmental history, personality, marital relationship, employment, and
characteristics of the child all influence parental functioning.

A great deal of the early literature centered on the stress produced by role strain. Role strain refers to the added role of parent with its attendant increase in tasks such as child care and housekeeping. Later researchers explored other factors which might be associated with parenting stress.

Two areas which have been the focus of several researchers are the marital relationship and the experiences in the family of origin (i.e., the family we grow up in). Researchers in these areas assume that one's past and current intimate interpersonal relationships (the family of origin and marital relationship, respectively) are related to how one responds to the transition to parenthood. Parental attachment style and parenting ability have also been investigated. Theory suggests that attachment style influences how persons respond to life transitions (Bowlby, 1982b, 1988). Attachment style has been shown to be related to parenting style (DeLozier, cited in Hansburg, 1986).

The present study examined factors related to the stresses associated with the transition to parenthood. Several factors which have not been explored in one study will be included in the present investigation. The family of origin, attachment-individuation balance of the parents, the marital relationship, the change in the relationship...
with one's parents, the change in emotions since parenthood, and the perceived responsibility for child care and housework will be considered as possible contributors to the stress experienced by first-time parents.

First a review of the transition to parenthood literature will be presented, including studies which provide evidence that this is a stressful time for most new parents. Then, a review of the factors which are thought to contribute to this stress will be presented.

Parenthood

Parenthood is a major life transition for over 80% of all adults (Feldman & Nash, 1984). Despite a growing tendency to postpone parenthood, there has been no increase in the proportion of young people expecting to remain childless (White & Booth, 1985). Yet, it is only recently that parenthood as a turning point in the life cycle is being studied (Bowlby, 1988; Gutmann, 1975). The transition to parenthood is now being viewed as a life event (McHale & Huston, 1985), and according to Hultsch and Plemons (1979) life events can be seen as stressful and disruptive. Parenthood is generally viewed as a normative event, yet one that is accompanied by some amount of stress for the new parents.

Various disciplines have studied different questions within the parenthood domain (Belsky, 1981; Cox et al., 1985). For example, sociologists have examined the amount
of upheaval experienced by the new parents, and how the addition of a child affects the marital relationship. Developmental psychologists have tended to look at the relationship between the transition and its effect on the parent and the child.

Initially, the literature on parenthood focused on the effect of parenting on the child. The child's emotional, social, and psychological development has been found to be hampered if the parent is unable to allow the child to attach and separate properly (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Estrada, Arsenio, Hess, & Holloway, 1987; Hall & Pawlby, 1981; Sameroff, Seifer, & Elias, 1982). If a parent is emotionally or psychologically unprepared for a child, then the experience may be quite stressful. Under these circumstances the parent and the child are both at risk.

Research related to the effect of parenthood on the parent is fairly new. Early writers provided descriptive studies which set the stage for empirical research. Cowan and her associates (Cowan, Cowan, Coie, & Coie, 1978; Cowan et al., 1985) have been involved in a research project which investigates several variables related to the transition to parenthood. Among these are how the parent's personality affects and mediates the transition process. The role related aspects of the transition have also been researched (Belsky, Lang, & Huston, 1986; Gladieux, 1978; Goldberg et al., 1985; Ruble, Fleming, Hackel, & Stangor, 1988; Ventura,
Role related stress refers to the practical demands of caring for a small child. It has been found that it is stressful for new parents (mothers especially) to have the added role of parent.

Two other areas related to parenting stress have been investigated. These are the experiences parents had in their families of origin, and the marital relationship. Studies which have examined the relationship between the family of origin and the transition to parenthood have found that positive family of origin experiences are related to better parenting and less stress (Belsky & Isabella, 1985; Cowan et al., 1985; Cox et al., 1985; Frommer & O’Shea, 1973a, 1973b). The association between the marital relationship and parenthood has also been a focus of study. It has been found that a good marital relationship is associated with lower levels of parenting stress (Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965, 1968; Russell, 1974).

Many areas within the parenthood literature have been investigated. Belsky (1984, 1988) writes that a conceptual framework for considering factors that might mediate the quality of the transition to parenthood is needed. He believes a model can be useful because the information on parenthood often comes from different disciplines and is unintegrated and underutilized (Belsky, 1984). Although his model is designed to provide determinants which influence the parent-child relationship, it is useful for thinking
about factors which may affect the transition experience for the parent. His model presumes that parenting is directly influenced by the developmental history of the parent (family of origin experiences), personality of the parent, marital relations, employment, and social network. A reciprocal relationship is posited between parenting and child characteristics, whereby each affects the other. While Belsky and Isabella (1988) write about the attachment of the child, they do not specifically mention the attachment style of the parent. However, it is indirectly implied by their reference to the parent's family of origin (which is thought to determine, in part, attachment style) and personality characteristics of the parent.

In the present study, several components of Belsky and Isabella's (1988) model will be investigated. These are the marital relationship, family of origin, and personality (in the form of attachment-individuation balance). The attachment-individuation balance of the parent is included because a theoretical link has been suggested between attachment and parenting experiences. Theory posits that the attachment-individuation balance of the parent is related to how he or she experiences the transition (Bowlby, 1977). Also, attachment status of the mother has been found to be related to her parenting style (Hansburg, 1986).

Thus far the focus of this discussion has been on factors related to the transition experience without saying
much about the experience itself. There is a large body of literature which suggests that the transition to parenthood is accompanied by varying degrees of stress for the new parents (Cox et al., 1985; McHale & Huston, 1985). Prior to examining factors related to parenting stress, the literature on the stress associated with parenthood will be reviewed.

Parenthood and Stress

Edward, Ruskin, and Turrini (1981) state, "under the most favorable circumstances, parenting is a long and demanding task" (p. 113). Indeed most new parents find the experience somewhat harrowing, yet also report that it is gratifying (Russell, 1974). Early researchers noticed that some parents seemed to have a relatively easy adaptation to the transition to parenthood, while others had a harder time.

LeMasters (1957) was one of the first researchers to explore the transition to parenthood. He viewed the transition to parenthood from the perspective of Hill (1949) who suggested that adding a new member to an existing dyad would be unsettling for the dyad. Therefore, LeMasters hypothesized that adding a new baby to a two-parent dyad would be distressing for the new parents. Using an unstructured interviewing technique Lemasters questioned middle-class parents approximately five years postpartum. He defined crisis as "any sharp or decisive change in which
old coping patterns are inadequate" (p. 353). He asked parents how much change they experienced in different areas of their life with the birth of the baby. Thus, his definition of crisis was behavioral. Using a scale with categories of none, slight, moderate, extensive, and severe, he found that 83% of the couples interviewed described extensive or severe crisis with the birth of their first child. Additionally, he found that the quality of the marital relationship did not have an effect upon the results he obtained.

His study can be faulted on several grounds. Of major importance is that he interpreted amount of change as crisis. Another is that he was involved in helping the couples decide how much crisis they were experiencing. Therefore, it is likely that experimenter bias enters into the results he obtained. Last, he provided a "couple" score rather than scores for men and women. It cannot be ascertained if there was a gender difference in the amount of crisis experienced.

Assessing 32 middle-class couples, Dyer (1963) obtained results similar to LeMasters (1957). Using a behavioral definition of crisis, he assessed what effect the arrival of the first child has upon the family roles and relationships. Dyer used a Likert scale of items from areas of marriage and family life which he thought were disrupted by the birth of a first child. He interviewed parents two years after the
arrival of the baby. Results indicated that 53% of the new parents rated the transition as an extensive or severe crisis. However, unlike LeMasters, he found that marital quality mediated the perceived stress. Specifically, couples with a self-rated strong marriage experienced less stress with the birth of their child.

Like LeMasters (1957), Dyer (1963) interpreted life change or disruption as crisis. He did not provide scores for men and women separately. He combined their scores. Hence information on gender differences cannot be determined. Although he included a question about the marital relationship, he did not provide a reliable measure of marital quality.

In a series of studies, Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976) attempted to replicate the studies by LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963) using a random selection from public birth records for his studies. He used a scale which was similar to the scales used by LeMasters and Dyer, but rather than asking parents how much change they experienced he asked how bothered they were by the changes. His scale focused more on attitudes toward the changes which occurred. Parents completed questionnaires in the first study (1965) between three and 18 weeks postpartum. In the later studies (1968, 1976), parents were surveyed between three and 52 weeks postpartum. No difference between crisis scores and the age of the baby was found.
He obtained results that differed from the LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963) studies. All subjects in his three studies reported either slight to moderate crisis. Hobbs also provided scores for males and females and found that women reported significantly more amounts of crisis than men (1965, 1968).

In his three studies, Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976) attempted to find variables which were associated with stress. In the first study (1965) he found four variables which related to the amount of perceived stress. For fathers, as family income increased the amount of stress decreased, and as the health of the baby worsened stress increased. For mothers, he found that as family income and outside help with the baby increased so did their perceived stress. In his replication study (1968), the only variable found to be related to parenting stress was a good marriage. A good marital relationship was associated with less stress. The study by Hobbs and Cole (1976) found four variables which were related to stress. One was the health of the baby, prebirth and postbirth ratings of the marriage and the number of children desired.

Hobbs' studies differed from the LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963) studies in two ways. One is he obtained measurements three to 52 weeks postpartum instead of surveying the couples several years after the birth as in the two earlier studies. LeMasters and Dyer obtained
measurements as late as five years postpartum. Also, Hobbs used more random samples of subjects and had different levels of socioeconomic status than did LeMasters or Dyer.

Russell (1974) attempted to extend the parenthood research by including positive as well as negative outcomes of becoming a parent. Her definition of crisis is similar to that used by Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976). She defined crisis as a "change in self, spouse, or relationships with significant others which the respondent finds bothersome" (p. 295). She used the checklist devised by Hobbs (1965). She also focused on feelings and attitudes of the new parents, rather than just behavioral changes. In addition, Russell devised a checklist which allowed parents to assess what they enjoyed about parenthood. Using a random sample of working-class and middle-class couples, she assessed subjects when their child was under one year of age.

Results obtained by Russell were similar to those found by Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976). She found that first-time parents experienced moderate or slight amounts of crisis. Women experienced significantly more stress than men. However, subjects also checked a high proportion of items they found gratifying about being a parent. Russell reported that most of these items were personal (e.g., feeling fulfilled, having a purpose for living), rather than related to the marital relationship. Russell, like Hobbs, attempted to find variables associated with the levels of
crisis experienced. Among those found to be related to levels of crisis were months married, planned versus unplanned pregnancy, marital adjustment, health of the child, and ease of delivery. Russell found that subjects with high levels of marital adjustment were less likely to experience a high degree of crisis. Interestingly, Russell did a follow-up on nonrespondents and found that overall they were likely to be pregnant prior to marriage and younger than respondents. She purports that nonrespondents likely experienced high levels of crisis which may have kept them from participating in the study.

The above researchers all found evidence that the transition to parenthood is slightly to extremely stressful for new parents. When defined as the degree of change experienced, authors found the effects of the transition to parenthood to be of crisis proportions for the new parents (Dyer, 1963; LeMasters, 1957). When defined as how bothersome the change was, only slight to moderate amounts of stress or crisis were obtained (Hobbs, 1965, 1968, 1976; Russell, 1974). It should be noted that all researchers found some amount of stress associated with the transition to parenthood. The amount of stress experienced was found to be significantly greater for women than for men.

The term crisis which was used by early researchers has been criticized because the transition to parenthood is usually considered to be a normal event (Rossi, 1968), and
the use of the word crisis has declined. Yet comparisons with the earlier studies continue to be made. Although becoming a parent is considered to be a normal life event there is still general agreement that some amount of stress is associated with the event. Rather than trying to determine how much crisis is experienced by new parents, later researchers have investigated variables which help account for the stress experienced by new parents.

Miller and Sollie (1980) were among the first researchers to drop the use of the term crisis and investigate factors associated with the stress of first-time parenthood. They assessed 109 couples at three points in time: a) when the wife was in midpregnancy; b) when the baby was five to six weeks old; and c) when the baby was between six and eight months old. The authors obtained measures on personal well-being, personal stress, and marital stress. The measures of personal well-being and personal stress came from a survey of the quality of American life (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976). The men and women rated how they felt about their present life on nine adjective pairs such as boring-interesting, enjoyable-miserable, easy-hard, tied down-free, and so on. Using factor analysis, seven of these pairs were found to be strongly associated with each other and were used to measure personal well-being. Two other items were highly intercorrelated, but less related to the other seven items.
These were easy-hard, and tied down-free and were used to create a scale of personal stress.

The authors do not provide information regarding how they decided to name the groupings that formed from their analysis. It appears that personal well-being refers to satisfaction with one's life, while personal stress refers to a feeling that life is difficult and constricted. Marital stress was measured using a scale developed by Pearlin (1975). It appears that they were attempting to point out that the stress involved with the transition has different components. One of these components relates to the added role of parent, and the other relates to the emotional stress of parenthood.

Results indicated that both new mothers and new fathers reported higher scores on personal stress items after they had become parents. New mothers experienced significantly more stress than new fathers. Also the personal well-being scores of men and women decreased from pregnancy to postpartum. New mothers experienced increased marital stress after parenthood. Marital stress remained the same for the new fathers. The authors concluded that a new parent experiences a slight to modest decline in well-being, and an increase in personal and marital stress over the first year of parenthood. New mothers experience these changes more keenly than new fathers.
Harriman (1983) attempted to expand on the work of Miller and Sollie (1980) by examining variables within the personal and marital realms which affect the amount of stress associated with parenthood. A random sample of 115 wives and 90 husbands who were first-time parents completed and returned mailed questionnaires. The majority of the couples were middle-class. The respondents were asked to rate the amount of change which occurred in two areas (marital and personal life) on a scale of "no change, less now, or more now". Items for her questionnaire were formed chiefly from the checklist used by Hobbs and Cole (1976). Personal life variables included items such as: time for self, having to adjust goals, and having confidence in your ability as a parent. Marital variables included: time for your spouse, wanting spouse to help with housekeeping, and wanting spouse to help with care of baby. Presumably, Harriman was suggesting that the stress involved with parenthood comes from more than one area of life.

Results indicated that wives perceived significantly more overall change in their personal lives than did husbands. Negative changes were reported in two areas. One area is that both husbands and wives reported changes in their normal routines and plans. Second, husbands and wives experienced a decrease in the wife's sexual responsiveness negatively. All other marital changes were of a positive nature.
One critique of this study is offered. That is, the author did not use a well normed or reliable measure for personal stress. She designed her own questionnaire based on variables which seemed to have face validity. However, the variables were screened by a panel of specialists, and the split-half reliability of the checklist was fairly high (.64).

Feldman and Nash (1984) assessed men and women at two times, once during the last trimester of pregnancy, and again when the infant was six months old. They measured several areas: mood, social change (i.e., roles), the anticipation and experience of parenthood, and overall satisfaction. Subjects for their study were 31, white, middle-class couples. Subjects rated 15 statements concerning mood on 5-point scales, ranging from 1 = never or hardly ever felt that way in recent weeks, to 5 = very often felt that way. Based on factor analysis, four summary scores were obtained consisting of the 15 component items. The four summary scores were: a) contentment; b) emotionally and physically drained; c) family oriented; and d) estranged. An overall mood summary score was also calculated. Like Miller and Sollie (1980) and Harriman (1983), Feldman and Nash suggest that the stress experienced by first-time parents has an emotional component to it.

Social change ratings were determined by having respondents check whether changes had occurred in sleeping,
eating, health, illness of family members, family get
togethers, in-law troubles, relations with parents, or
change in residence. Additionally, subjects rated on a 3
point scale whether the changes bothered or pleased them.
The anticipation and experience of parenthood was measured
by having subjects rate themselves using a 3-point scale on
five adjective phrases: a) openly affectionate; b) patient;
c) playful; d) arrange my life around child; and e)
puzzled/worried about child. Satisfaction was measured by a
scale adapted from Bem (1976).

The authors found that mood scores for both men and
women show pregnancy is marked by contentment, and a sense
of well-being. But, it is moderately draining, especially
for women. Parent’s postpartum mood was found to be highly
positive, particularly for women. However, women reported
feeling excessive fatigue and a desire to be alone. Men
felt tense and, like the women, wanted to be alone. On the
Satisfaction scale, greater satisfaction was reported in
relationship to the baby than with any other aspect of life.
On the negative side, many social changes were found, with
women reporting more social changes than men. Over one
third of the parents reported adverse changes in sleeping,
recreational time, sexual difficulties, and time with
friends.

Overall, the authors conclude that pregnancy and
parenthood is a time of considerable stress, yet this time
of life is also seen as rewarding. Although the authors looked at several variables in their study, they did not include a measure of marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction has been found in other studies to be related to the amount of stress experienced by new parents. Also, it is unclear whether they were actually measuring mood. Some of the items comprising the checklist seem more related to social or marital change (e.g., concerned about baby, concerned about spouse, spouse does not understand me).

Weinberg and Richardson (1981) investigated the dimensions of stress associated with parenthood. They surveyed men and women who had at least one child younger than 29 months. Half of their respondents had two children. They compiled a list of experiences associated with parenthood considered to be stressful and negative. They ended with 14 experiences such as lack of sleep, difficulty in calming a crying child, added financial burden, and lack of time with spouse. They had subjects rate each of the 14 experiences on an 8-point scale using a set of eight bipolar adjectives (e.g., frustrating, worrisome, stressful, challenging, and meaningful). Four dimensions of stress were obtained: a) major versus minor child problems; b) child welfare versus self welfare; c) restriction of self and other adult activities; and d) immediate versus long range problem experiences.
In general, it was found that the parents reacted to the four dimensions of stress with emotions considered unpleasant and aversive. However, the authors found that the dimension of major versus minor child problems was the most problematic for parents. Also, different reactions were obtained for different dimensions. Feelings of anger were most closely associated with problems of self-welfare. The terms frustrating and infuriating were negatively correlated with aspects of child welfare. The only significant gender difference was obtained for the dimension of major versus minor child problems. The authors found fathers are more affected by major child problems than are mothers. Differences were also obtained for working versus nonworking parents. Immediate problems were better tolerated by nonworking mothers than working mothers, and for parents of more than one child. Working parents felt more restriction of self than did nonworking parents. Also, it was found that couples did not experience the dimensions of stress similarly. Stated another way, each individual in the couple experienced the stress differently.

Although the results of this study are based on a sample of older, well-educated parents it suggests that there are different dimensions of stress and that they affect parents differentially. The authors assert that rather than continuing to assess the degree of stress associated with the transition to parenthood, research
should focus instead on the factors associated with the stress. This study also provides evidence to suggest that stress is multidimensional rather than a product of one factor.

Studies have been presented which looked at the amount of stress experienced by first-time parents. Conflicting results have been found. Some studies found high levels of stress, while others found moderate to slight amounts of stress. It seems that many life-style changes occur in conjunction with parenthood, but when parents are asked to rate how bothered they are by the changes they experience, lesser amounts of stress are found. However, some level of parenting stress was found in every study. Several studies also provided evidence which suggests that the stress experienced by new parents is multidimensional and multidetermined. Now that it is fairly evident that stress is associated with parenthood, it makes sense to assess the variables which account for the stress, rather than trying to determine whether or not parenthood is stressful (Rossi, 1968; Weinberg & Richardson, 1981).

Several studies were presented which attempted to determine some of the variables associated with the stress that accompanies the transition. Mood, changes in social roles, the marital relationship, emotional changes, and aspects of caring for the child have been suggested as possible determinants of the stress. A great deal of the
literature has focused on the stress associated with the practical demands of parenting. This refers to the day-to-day demands of caring for a helpless infant and the attendant loss of time for oneself and spouse. This is often referred to as role strain. Research has found that part of the stress experienced by new parents is the additional burden of caring for a small child.

LeMasters (1957) laid the groundwork for investigating role strain. The mothers he interviewed related that the greatest adjustments they made to the new baby included: loss of sleep, feelings of chronic tiredness, confinement to the home, giving up the satisfactions of outside employment, additional washing and ironing, the feeling of never being "off duty" as a parent, and a decline in their housekeeping standards (p. 353). Fathers reported similar strains with new parenthood. The studies by Dyer (1963), Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976), and Russell (1974), which were reviewed earlier, also focused on role strain as a cause of parenting stress.

Research also suggests that a gender difference exists with respect to role strain. It has been found that women experience role strain more keenly than men (Cowan, et al., 1985; Goldberg et al., 1985; Miller & Sollie, 1980; Ruble et al., 1988). This finding is likely due to the fact that women are traditionally expected to be the primary care takers of children and home. There is evidence that role
strain is at least partially responsible for the stress experienced by new parents. Most studies investigating the stress of new parenthood include role strain as a variable. However, intuitively it would be expected that this factor is not the only one responsible for parenting stress. Theory corroborates this supposition. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1977) suggests that strong emotions are associated with the formation of new relationships, such as in parenthood. An emotional link is suggested in the theoretical literature.

**Emotional Impact of New Parenthood**

Theory regarding parenthood purports that there are psychological and emotional issues associated with the transition (Benedek, 1959; Valentine, 1982), and these issues can contribute to some of the stress experienced by new parents. From theory and previous research, it appears that the emotional response to parenthood has two components. One is the current emotional relationship with one's parents. The second part is how the transition to parenthood affects the new parent emotionally. Each will be discussed separately.

Several theorists writing about the transition to parenthood refer to the idea that becoming a parent allows parents to reexperience and renegotiate old conflicts with their own parents (Benedek, 1959; Edward et al., 1981; Fein, 1978; Hammer, 1975; Sternshein, 1973; Valentine, 1982).
Valentine (1982) writes that new mothers and fathers have several tasks to complete in order for a good adaptation to parenthood to occur. Two of these tasks are to accept and resolve the relationship with their own mothers, and to resolve dependency issues with both parents. Edward et al. (1981) state that earlier conflicts may be reworked, but that earlier fixations and vulnerabilities may overburden the new parent and interfere with the ability to parent (p. 111).

Shereshefsky and Yarrow (1973) studied 64 women during and after their first pregnancy. Their study was undertaken to explore the psychological aspects of adjustment in women experiencing their first pregnancy. The mothers were assessed three months prenatally, and again six months postnatally. The husbands of these women participated in a one-time interview.

Six variables were examined which included the personality characteristics of the woman, her current life situation, such as her marriage, the pregnancy experience itself, her adaptation to parenthood, characteristics of the infant, and her relationship with her parents. The latter variable is the most pertinent for the current discussion. Relying on theory which suggested that the woman's relationship with her mother would be an important influence on her current adaptation to parenthood, Shereshefsky and
Yarrow (1973) investigated the woman’s childhood and current experience of her mother.

Results of their study suggested that women who saw their mothers as close, empathic, happy in their maternal role, and supportive were less likely to be anxious about their pregnancy, and were more confident in their maternal role than women who did not see their relationships with their mothers in a positive light. They also found that some parents began to relate to their daughters as peers which produced an emotional strain for some of the women. The authors suggested that the women were responding to many conflicting feelings arising from a changed relationship with their childhood families, especially their relationship with their mothers.

Based on their research, Shereshefsky and Yarrow (1973) delineate two conflicts for new parents. One is to be able to see oneself as separate from one’s family of origin. The authors also concluded that the pregnancy experience for men and women produces feelings of regression and anxiety which may activate old parent-child conflicts which need to be resolved for a smooth and effective transition to occur.

Sachs (1984) also explored how the transition to parenthood affects the relationship with one’s parents. He used Erikson’s epigenetic theory of lifespan psychosocial development to explore how the transition to parenthood impacts on a father’s resolution of the Generativity crisis.
At two points in time he interviewed 15 first-time fathers and administered a semi-structured test, and a sentence completion test. Additionally, he had a control group of married men not expecting a child complete the same tests. He hypothesized that becoming a first-time father would "press" fathers into a resolution of the Generativity crisis as evidenced by changes in the relationship with their own fathers over time.

His hypothesis that new fathers would change with respect to their Generative identity via their relationship with their own fathers was not found. He did find that the two groups of men differed on some of the measures. While changes associated with one's parents was not found in the way Sachs (1984) predicted, changes for new fathers were obtained. Sachs found that new fathers experienced changes with respect to their families of origin. This study is important for the present investigation because Sachs was one of the few researchers who examined the correlation between the current relationship with one's parents and the transition to parenthood. His study provides partial support for the present theoretical tenet that the transition to parenthood may be accompanied by psychological and emotional factors associated to the relationship with one's parents.

Cowan et al. (1978) theorized that from the early stages of pregnancy on the couple begins to focus on and
prepare for parenthood. Each of the prospective parents begins to act in accordance to expectations about parenthood derived from their families of origin. In addition to affecting the new parents and their marital relationship, the authors theorized that the birth of a child also affects the relationship parents have with their own parents.

The Cowan et al. (1978) study followed eight couples for one year, from early in the pregnancy until approximately six months postpartum. The authors collected data from three areas: a) the psychological sense of self; b) social role behavior; and c) communication patterns. In general, it was found that the transition produces significant amounts of disequilibrium for each parent in several areas of their life. The pertinent finding for the present discussion is that the parents in this study began to develop a more sympathetic identification or attitude toward their own parents. Several of the subjects attempted to reconnect with parents with whom there had been little contact.

In sum, there is much theoretical support for the idea that the transition to parenthood involves a redefinition of how a new parent feels and thinks about the current relationship with his or her parents. Theory suggests that the relationship with one’s mother and father must be reworked and resolved for a healthy adaptation to parenthood to occur. If new parents continue to have unresolved
conflicts associated with their parents, then the transition to parenthood will be difficult. Even though theory suggests this area is important, it has received little empirical support. What support there is suggests that there are psychological and emotional factors associated with the transition, and it is often related to the current view of the relationship with one's parents.

Theory and research also suggest that parents experience changes in their emotions associated with first time parenthood. Bowlby (1977) maintains that strong emotions accompany the transition to parenthood. Benedek (1959) and Edward et al. (1981) espouse similar views. All write about the emotional changes which can occur with first-time parenthood.

In addition to theory there is empirical evidence to suggest that the transition to parenthood is met by a change in emotions. Miller and Sollie (1980) found that the personal well-being of men and women decreased from when the woman was pregnant to after the birth of the child. Personal well-being was assessed by having subjects rate themselves on adjectives such as bored, enjoying life, and feeling miserable. Women experienced this decrease in well being more strongly than men.

Feldman and Nash (1984) also assessed men and women before and after the birth of their child. Among the variables they measured were mood, and overall satisfaction
with their lives. Contrary to the findings obtained by Miller and Sollie (1980), Feldman and Nash found that the postpartum mood was highly positive, especially for women. However, there is some question regarding how the authors measured mood. Several of the items for the mood measurement appeared to relate to marital issues (e.g., concerned about spouse, spouse does not understand me).

Although there is not a great deal of empirical research investigating the emotional aspect of parenthood, the studies which were reviewed found the transition to parenthood to be accompanied by changes in mood. However, conflicting results were obtained. One study found a decline in mood, while the other found an increase in mood. While not specifically investigating mood changes, other studies which examined parenting stress found that the transition to parenthood is stressful to some degree and that many changes occur for the new parents (Feldman & Nash, 1984; Harriman, 1983; Miller & Sollie, 1980; Russell, 1974; Weinberg & Richardson, 1981).

This section has reviewed two aspects of the emotional impact of parenthood. One was the change in the emotional relationship with one's parents, and the other was a change in emotions experienced by new parents. Next, a review of family of origin experiences and attachment theory and their relationship to parenting stress and each other will be presented.
Attachment Theory and Family of Origin

A few researchers have begun to investigate the role the family of origin plays in the amount of stress experienced by first-time parents. As we saw from Belsky and Isabella's model (1988) for viewing the experience of parenthood, the developmental history of the parent is believed to be an important variable in the amount of stress experienced. Also, there is an associated intrapsychic variable related to the family of origin factor. Theory suggests a relationship between the developmental history of the parent (family of origin) and attachment style of the parent. According to theory, attachment styles are learned from significant others, especially the parents. Further, attachment theory suggests that those with unhealthy attachment styles are more vulnerable to stresses. It is implied by theory that the attachment pattern of the parent is another variable to be considered when investigating the stress associated with the transition to parenthood. First a review of attachment will be presented, followed by a review of the relationship between attachment style and parenting stress. Finally, a discussion of the relationship between family of origin and parenting stress will be provided.

Attachment is defined by Bowlby as "the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others..." (Bowlby, 1982a, p. 3). He asserts that
attachment behavior is instinctual and exists in each of us, and that the way it is expressed is learned from interactions with significant others, especially our parents.

Bowlby’s theory was originally developed to help explain the reactions of children who were separated from their parents due to war, long hospitalizations, and the like. Because these children were so distressed and went through similar stages of grieving for their lost parents, Bowlby began to believe that attachment behavior was instinctual and a major factor in a child’s development. Attachment theory has gained a considerable amount of support from studies of infants and children (Ainsworth, et al., 1978; Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975).

The theory applies to adults as well as children. Bowlby (1977) asserts that attachment is a life-long trait. However, it is not necessarily stable over time. The idea that an individual’s childhood relationship with his or her parents affects later close relationships, including adult love relationships and parent-child relationships is central to attachment theory (Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Ricks, 1985). There is empirical support for this idea also. Hazan and Shaver (1987) and Fiala and Janoff-Bulman (1989) are two sets of authors who have applied attachment theory to the study of adults. These two studies pertained to the
relationship between attachment patterns and adult love relations. An attachment questionnaire developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987) was used in both studies.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that 56% of respondents classified themselves as securely attached, 25% classified themselves as avoidant, with the remaining 19% being anxiously attached. These percentages are similar to those obtained when classifying children. Their findings provide support for the idea that Bowlby's patterns apply to adults as well as to children.

Several attachment styles which were developed from work with infants and children have been posited (Bowlby, 1977, 1988; Ainsworth, et al., 1978). One is consistent with healthy development and is called secure attachment. Children with this type pattern are confident that a parent or caregiver will be available, responsive, and helpful should adverse situations be encountered. Adults with a secure attachment style are seen as able to attach to others and still maintain their sense of psychological separateness. Also, a person with this style would be expected to be less vulnerable to life's stressful events (Bowlby, 1988).

A second pattern encountered is that of anxious/ambivalent attachment. This style is considered unhealthy. Children who evidence anxious/ambivalent attachment are always uncertain whether a caregiver will be responsive,
thus are always prone to separation anxiety. They tend to be clingy and anxious. Likewise, adults who are anxiously attached are clingy and worry that others do not love them and will leave them (Bowlby, 1982b, 1988).

The third style found is that of avoidant attachment. Those with this style of attachment expect to be rebuffed when they seek care, and as a result attempt to live their life without the love and support of others. Bowlby reports that clinical evidence suggests that this pattern is the most pathological of the three (Bowlby, 1982a). Therefore, it is suggested that those with this pattern, like those who are anxiously attached, will not respond well to stressful life events such as parenthood.

**Attachment Style and Parenthood**

Bowlby (1988) theorizes that a person’s vulnerability to stressful life events is determined to a very significant degree by the pattern of attachment developed during the early years. Thus, persons who have unhealthy attachment are more likely to respond to stressful life events negatively than those with healthy attachment.

DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) used Bowlby’s attachment theory as the basis for her research which examined mothers’ styles of attachment and parenting abilities. Bowlby’s theory (1988) suggests that pathology of maternal behavior can be attributed, in part, to the disruption of early attachment bonds in the mother’s own
early development. Using abusive and nonabusive mothers, DeLozier attempted to test this assumption. In child abusing families the attachment process is assumed to be dysfunctional, and DeLozier suggested that this attachment difficulty is often transmitted along generational lines. She hypothesized that abusive mothers would report experiencing a greater number of disruptions or threats of disruptions in their early attachments, and that they would demonstrate more serious current attachment problems than nonabusing mothers.

Information was obtained regarding the mother’s childhood and relevant relationships throughout her life. The Separation Anxiety Test (SAT, Hansburg, 1972) was used to assess attachment style. Although initially designed for use with children and adolescents, it had previously been used successfully with adults.

DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) obtained a very significant difference between abusive and nonabusive mothers regarding their attachment styles. Abusive mothers were found to exhibit either severe anxious attachment or detachment. DeLozier concluded that abusive mothers had low levels of attachment capacity and were not well individuated. Findings further suggested that abusive mothers experienced difficulties in their own childhood attachments and relationships. She maintains that this resulted in later problems in attachment and caretaking
behaviors as an adult. Further, she states that these problems can be traced, in part, to faulty patterns of attachment. While not specifically related to the stress associated with parenthood, this study provides evidence that attachment styles of parents are related to parenting difficulties. In turn, it is suggested that parenting difficulties are related to parenting stress.

Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) conducted a study similar to DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) using Mexican American abusive and nonabusive mothers. She used a Spanish version of the SAT to assess current attachment patterns, and an attachment history questionnaire which provided information about family of origin experiences. Mitchell hypothesized that abusive mothers would have more unhealthy attachment patterns than nonabusive mothers. Specifically, she hypothesized that abusive mothers would evidence anxious and hostile attachment.

Results indicated that abusive mothers evidenced more pathological responses on the SAT than nonabusive mothers. Specifically, it was found that abusive mothers had moderate levels of anxious attachment. Also, abusive mothers reacted with greater distress to the separation scenes depicted on the SAT cards regardless of the severity of the scenes than nonabusing mothers. Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) also found that abusive mothers had difficulties with attachment in their own families of origin.
The relevance of these two studies for the present investigation is that they provide evidence that a parent's attachment pattern is related to family of origin, and to the adaptation to parenting. Specifically, they provide evidence to suggest that attachment difficulties in the parent are related to later parenting problems. While not directly dealing with parenting stress, it can be speculated that abusive mothers experienced higher levels of stress related to parenting than nonabusive mothers.

Fathers were not included in either study. Therefore, it cannot be determined if fathers' attachment patterns would have been related to parenting difficulties. Another criticism of these studies is that the marital relationship was not assessed. It could be that the quality of the marital relationship had an effect on the parenting experience.

While not pertaining directly to the present study, several studies have examined the mother's family of origin experiences and its relationship to her child's attachment level (Hall & Pawlby, 1981; Morris, 1982; Ricks, 1985). In general, these studies have found that children of mothers who described their relationships with their own parents as rejecting or problematic had insecure attachment. It is suggested that the mother's adverse family of origin experiences affected her attachment style, which in turn influenced her child's attachment. These studies and the
two presented by DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) and Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) provide support for attachment theory's claim that attachment styles affect the response to stressful life experiences like parenthood.

Family of Origin and Parenthood

Research (Frommer and O'Shea, 1973a, 1973b,; Cox et al., 1985) and theory (Main et al., 1985; Ricks, 1985) suggest that early experiences in the family of origin shape the personality, which in turn affects the response to stressful events. Additionally, theory and research maintain that parenting styles are consistent from one generation to the next. Next, studies which explore the relationship between family of origin and parenting stress will be presented.

Frommer and O'Shea (1973a, 1973b,) explored the relationship between a mother's childhood experiences and her adaptation to parenthood. They conducted a series of interviews with English mothers over the course of their child's first year of life. The interviews focused on the problems encountered in parenting. In both studies married women having their first child were surveyed. In the first study (Frommer & O'Shea, 1973a), separation in the mother's childhood was examined. "Separation" was defined by asking mothers two questions: a) "Did one or both of your parents die before you were 11 years of age?"; and b) "Were you separated from one or both of your parents before the age of
No information was obtained regarding the nature or duration of either type of separation. A group of 58 separated mothers was formed along with a control group of the same number of first-time mothers who had not experienced a separation. Interviews with the mother explored her feelings toward her child, her behavior toward her child, her feelings toward her husband, and her adaptation to being a new mother.

Results indicated that separation from parents in the mother's family of origin was related to problems in parenting. In each of three categories (depression, physical complaints, anxiety) separated mothers reported significantly more difficulty than nonseparated mothers. Separated mothers also had babies who had more sleeping difficulties, feeding problems, and temper tantrums than did babies of nonseparated mothers.

In a follow-up study, Frommer and O'Shea (1973b) not only obtained information about the mother's separation experiences, they gathered information regarding the mother's perceptions of the atmosphere in her childhood home. The results obtained indicated that mothers who rated the atmosphere in their childhood homes as argumentative had significantly more depression than mothers who said their home was harmonious. The results of these two studies suggest that adverse childhood experiences affect the mother's ability to deal effectively with the transition to
parenthood. It seems that an actual separation or threat of separation (i.e., conflictual home atmosphere) does not bode well for the new mother's adaptation to parenthood.

The studies by Frommer and O'Shea (1973a, 1973b) are important because they were among the first researchers who specifically looked at family of origin experiences and the adaptation to parenthood. The first study (1973a) found that mothers who were separated from their parents as children had more anxiety and depression than mothers from nonseparated homes. Although stress and depression and anxiety are not the same, this finding implies that stress may have been higher for separated mothers than for nonseparated mothers.

Two criticisms of these studies are offered. One is that mothers only were investigated, fathers were not included. Also, no standardized measure of the marital relationship was obtained. However, the authors did ask the mothers how they felt about their husbands. It was found that mothers with adverse family of origin experiences rated their marriages less satisfactory than mothers from nonseparated backgrounds.

In a more recent study Cox and her associates (Cox, et al., 1985) explored, among other factors, the effect of the family of origin upon the transition to parenthood. They assessed 38 white, middle-class couples at five points in time: a) during the second trimester of the couple's first
pregnancy; b) at the birth of the child; c) three months postpartum; d) when the child was one year old; and e) when the child was two years old.

The authors obtained information regarding personality variables, the family of origin, and the marital relationship. The respondents rated aspects of their childhood relationships with their mothers and fathers in a questionnaire adapted from one used by Shereshefsky and Yarrow (1973). It was designed to tap family of origin relationships. Three family of origin variables were assessed: a) sensitivity of the new parent’s mother and father; b) intrusiveness of their mother and father; and, c) support from each parent during adolescence. The marital relationship was assessed in several ways: a) using portions of a taped interview; b) observing a tape of the couple’s interaction; and c) with a standard questionnaire on marital satisfaction. Individual psychological health was measured prenatally using 10 psychological measurements. Parenting competence, enjoyment, and adaptation to parenting were assessed postnatally at three months with an interview and observations.

The authors hypothesized that parents who reported good parenting from their own parents would experience early parenthood more adaptively and would evidence better parenting skills with their infants compared to parents who reported poor parenting from their own parents. The results
obtained provided support for their hypothesis. Specifically, they found that mothers' parenting skills were predicted by their perceptions of their own mother's intrusiveness, the support they received from their fathers during adolescence, the sensitivity of their fathers, and their own psychological health. For men, adaptation to parenthood was predicted powerfully by their perceptions of their father's intrusiveness, and by the quality of their own marital relationship.

There are some differences in variables that predict adaptation to parenthood for men and women. For women, a larger number of family of origin factors predicted better parenting. For men, the relationship with his father during childhood, and his current marital relationship were the best predictors of his response to parenthood. While not examining the stress associated with parenthood directly, it can be assumed that those mothers and fathers who were better parents had less stress associated with being new parents than those who were judged to have poor parenting skills.

The studies by Frommer and O'Shea (1973a, 1973b,) and Cox et al. (1985) support the tenet that family of origin experiences are strongly related to the adaptation to parenthood. This is consistent with the ideas of theorists who study attachment (Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Main et al., 1985; Ricks, 1985). Positive family of origin
experiences have been shown to be related to better adaptation to parenthood, while negative experiences are related to difficulty with the transition. This suggests a relationship between family of origin experiences and the stress associated with the transition.

The two studies by DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) and Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) provide evidence supporting Bowlby's (1988) idea that a parent's attachment style is related to early family of origin experiences. These studies also found that parenting ability was related to attachment style. Parents with secure attachment were found to have less parenting difficulty than parents with attachment problems. The studies by Frommer and O'Shea (1973a, 1973b) and Cox et al. (1985) provide further evidence that early family of origin experiences are related to later parenting ability. Thus, theory and empirical data suggest there is a relationship between family of origin, attachment style, and the reaction to parenthood. Since the effects of attachment style and family of origin experiences have not been included in one study, it is impossible to discern if one of these factors is more predictive of parenting stress than the other.

However, two studies provide evidence to suggest that attachment style is the more important factor of the two with respect to parenting. Main et al. (1985) found that mothers who experienced adverse family of origin
conditions, but who had worked through their anger, had
good parenting skills. Additionally, their children were
found to be securely attached; presumably because their
mothers had secure attachment patterns. This suggests that
these mothers had developed secure attachment patterns
despite their negative childhood experiences and were able
to respond to parenting demands effectively.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) investigated attachment styles
and romantic love. They studied respondents from different
age groups. One group was composed mainly of college
freshmen and the mean age was 18 years. Another group was
composed of respondents who answered a newspaper quiz, and
their mean age was 36. They found a difference between the
two groups regarding the continuity of their attachment
styles. While significant correlations were obtained
between current attachment style and family of origin
experiences for both age groups, the correlation was not as
strong for the older respondents. The authors contend that
as persons age they participate in a greater number of
significant relationships which provide them with an
opportunity to revise their attachment style.

These two studies provide evidence that attachment
style may be derived partly from family of origin
experiences, but can be reworked at later ages. This
implies that both family of origin and attachment style are
related to the adaptation to parenthood, but attachment
style may be more influential than family of origin experiences. Of course, this is highly speculative, and both variables have not been investigated in one study.

Another factor related to the stress accompanying parenthood which has received considerable attention in the literature is the marital relationship. A review of the relationship between the marriage and parenthood stress will be provided next.

**Marital Relationship and Parenting Stress**

There is both theoretical and empirical data to suggest that the quality of the marital relationship affects the amount of stress experienced during the transition to parenthood. Belsky and Isabella (1988) include the marital relationship as one of the determinants of parenting ability in their process model. Although focusing on parenting ability rather than the stresses associated with parenthood, the area they write about is quite related to parenting stress. Belsky cites studies which imply that a good marital relationship is associated with good parenting skills (Belsky, 1984, 1988).

Bowlby (1988) provides further theoretical support for the notion that marital quality and parenting are related. He writes that a person's vulnerability to stressors is strongly influenced by the current intimate relationship. Certainly, the marital relationship is a current intimate relationship. This implies that the marital relationship is
related, in part, to the degree of parenting stress experienced.

There is a vast literature of research concerning the marital relationship and the transition to parenthood. Much of this research centers on how the marital relationship changes with the birth of the first child. Overwhelmingly these studies have found that the quality of the marital relationship decreases for couples becoming first-time parents (Belsky et al., 1983; Cowan, et al., 1985; Feldman & Nash, 1984; Miller & Sollie, 1980; Ruble et al., 1988; Shereshefsky & Yarrow, 1973).

Other studies have linked the quality of marriage with the quality of parenting (Belsky, 1979; Goldberg & Easterbrook, 1984; Pederson, 1982). In general, these studies have found that a good marriage is predictive of good parenting. Overall, we can say there is empirical evidence to suggest that the quality of the marital relationship declines with the birth of the first child, and that parenting skill is related to marital quality. While there have been many studies investigating parenthood and the quality of the marital relationship, there have been few studies exploring the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting stress. Goldberg et al. (1985) write that theory and clinical observations have led to "predictions that marital quality and parenting characteristics should be related, with high quality
marital relationships being conducive to positive parental attitudes and behaviors" (p. 485).

Some studies have assessed the connection between marital satisfaction and the stresses experienced by new parents. The majority of these studies had as their focus the amount of stress associated with the transition to parenthood, and included the marital relationship as a possible contributing factor to the stress experienced. Most of these studies have been reviewed earlier, therefore they will be briefly presented here focusing on the interaction between the marital relationship and parenting stress.

Dyer (1963) assessed the effect of the first child upon family roles and relationships. One of the variables he measured was the marital relationship. He found that marital satisfaction had an effect on the amount of stress experienced by new parents. Specifically, he found that those couples who rated their marriage as excellent experienced significantly less stress than couples who rated their marital relationship as poor.

Two critiques of this study are offered. One is that Dyer did not use a standardized measure of marital quality making it difficult to compare his results with other studies. Further, he did not provide scores for men and women separately; he only gave results for couples. We cannot determine if gender differences existed.
Also investigating the amount of crisis associated with the transition to parenthood, Russell (1974) included the marital relationship as one of the variables which she predicted would be related to crisis. Using a standardized marital adjustment questionnaire, the Locke-Wallace short form (1959), she found that marital adjustment was significantly associated with stress. Subjects with high levels of marital adjustment were less likely to experience high degrees of stress, while poor marital adjustment was associated with high levels of parenting stress. Her study, unlike Dyer’s (1963), included scores for men and women separately, and she used a standardized measure of marital adjustment. While marital adjustment was significantly related to stress for men and women, this relationship was more significant for men than women.

Hobbs did a series of studies dating from 1965 to 1976 and each study had different results regarding the role of the marital relationship and the amount of stress experienced. In his first study (Hobbs, 1965), he found that over 90% of the respondents recalled that their marriage had been happy and satisfying prior to the birth of the baby. Although he obtained moderate to low stress levels for the parents in this study, he does not provide information regarding the relationship between the marriage and stress scores. In his 1968 study, he used a questionnaire and an interview to examine the stress
associated with parenthood. He found a statistically significant negative correlation between the questionnaire scores and marital adjustment. While no statistical difference was obtained for the interview data and the marital relationship, he reports that it was in the expected direction. For both the questionnaire and interview data, a good marital relationship was associated with lower stress findings. The better the couple’s marriage, the less difficulty they reported with the transition.

Hobbs and Cole (1976) did a third replication study and found that for fathers only the quality of the marital relationship correlated with the amount of stress experienced. Lower levels of stress were associated with a good marital relationship. The three studies by Hobbs provide some conflicting results. In only one study was the marital relationship found to be related to stress for both men and women.

Cox and her associates (1985) investigated intergenerational influences on the parent-child relationship. They assessed the family of origin, the marital relationship, and individual personality factors. They hypothesized that the family of origin would be the most powerful predictor of positive parent-child interactions, and of a good adaptation to parenthood. Although they were not directly addressing the stress associated with parenthood, indirect information can be
surmised. It can be assumed that parents who have positive parent-child interactions have less stress than parents with negative interactions.

The authors found that for mothers, the family of origin was the single best predictor of positive parent-child interactions. However, for fathers, his current marital relationship and his childhood relationship with his father best predicted positive parent-child interactions. Results of this study indicate that, for men, the quality of the marital relationship is related to parenting stress. The studies by Dyer (1963), Russell (1974), Hobbs (1965, 1968, 1976), and Cox et al. (1985) all obtained results which suggest that the quality of the marital relationship is an important predictor of parenting stress.

Statement of the Problem

Research has shown that becoming a first-time parent is often associated with stress. However, conflicting results have been obtained by researchers regarding the degree of stress found with the advent of parenthood. Some studies found rather high and extensive amounts of stress, while others have found more moderate levels of stress. One reason for this is due to the way in which stress was defined. Behavioral definitions of stress, such as how many changes occurred with parenthood, produced higher stress scores. Subjective definitions of stress, such as asking respondents how bothered they were by the changes they
experienced, produced lower stress scores. Although results have differed, in general researchers have found that the transition to parenthood produces some amount of upheaval and stress for the new parents. Additionally, women have been found to experience greater levels of parenting stress than men.

Early studies focused mainly on the stress associated with the role strain produced by the additional duties of parenthood. More recent research attempted to investigate other factors which are predictive of parenting stress. It has been found that parenting stress is associated with more than one factor.

Additionally, stress has been found to be multidimensional. Parenting stress has emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components to it. The Parenting Stress Index (PSI, Abidin, 1986) which will be used in this study to measure stress attests to this. It has subjective and objective questions. Also, the PSI is divided into two domains of parenting stress (parent and child), and each domain has several subscales. In sum, we can say that stress is multidimensional and multidetermined.

Interpersonal as well as individual variables have been examined in an attempt to find factors which predict parenting stress. The marital relationship is one interpersonal factor which has been found to be related to the amount of stress experienced by new parents. A second
interpersonal factor which has been recently investigated is the family of origin of the new parents. Theory suggests that the current and past relationship with one's parents are important factors which relate to how the new parent experiences parenthood. The retrospective relationship with one's parents has been more of a focus of empirical research than has the current relationship. The current perception of the relationship with one's parents has received little empirical investigation. Theory maintains that the transition to parenthood may awaken unresolved conflicts in parents associated with their own parents which may provoke a change in the current relationship with one's parents. Another interpersonal factor relates to the amount of added work there is associated with becoming a parent. The new parents need to decide how to divide child care and housework.

An individual variable which has been theorized to be related to the response to parenthood is the attachment style of the parent. Theory suggests that healthy attachment styles are related to more adaptive responses to the transition to parenthood. Although it has a great deal of theoretical support, it has not been empirically investigated.

To date, theory and research have found these five variables (responsibility for child care and housework, the emotional turmoil associated with parenthood, family of
origin experiences, the marital relationship, and attachment style) to be related to the amount of stress associated with first-time parenthood. However, they have not all been included in one study. The present study will include these five variables in an attempt to discover their relationship to parenting stress and to each other. Men and women will be assessed separately in an attempt to discern if gender differences exist.

Several questions arise when thinking about the overall amount of stress associated with parenthood, and these five variables. One question concerns the overall amount of parenting stress experienced. From a review of the existing literature, it is expected that the transition to parenthood is accompanied by at least moderate amounts of stress for most parents, with some parents experiencing high levels of stress. It is also expected that the stress will have a multidimensional aspect to it. Additionally, women are expected to experience higher levels of parenting stress than men.

Additional questions concern the relationship between parenting stress and the perception of the quality of the current and past family of origin relationships, attachment style, marital relationship, and responsibility for child care and maintenance of the home. For each of these five variables research and theory suggests a particular relationship to parenting stress.
Research suggests that responsibility for child care and housework is partly responsible for the parenting stress experienced by new parents. It is expected that those parents who have more responsibility for these tasks will experience greater parenting stress than those parents who have less responsibility. It is also expected that being more responsible for child and home care will be related to high scores on the Restriction of Role subscale, the Sense of Competence subscale, and the Relationship with Spouse subscale of the PSI. A relationship between responsibility for child care and housework and the Relationship with Spouse subscale is postulated because it is speculated that if the spouse shares responsibility for these tasks there will be less strain on the marital relationship. Also, the more involved a parent is with the child, the more competent he or she will feel. Therefore, a relationship between responsibility for housework and child care and a sense of competency is posited. Further, it is expected that women will report more responsibility for child care and housework than men.

Theory purports an association between how one feels and thinks about the current relationship with his or her parents and parenting stress. According to theory, the transition to parenthood may reactivate old conflicts and issues with one’s parents. If these issues with one’s parents have not been resolved, the transition to
parenthood will be difficult. It is expected that the greater the amount of emotional turmoil reflected, in part, in the current relationship with one's parents, the greater the parenting stress. This variable has psychological and emotional components to it, thus we would expect it might be related to the Depression and Attachment subscales of the PSI.

Childhood family of origin experiences have also been linked to how one experiences the transition to parenthood. Research suggests that early positive experiences are related to better adaptation to the transition. Thus, we would expect that parents reporting unhealthy family of origin experiences will have greater parenting stress than parents reporting healthy family of origin experiences.

The correlation between the marital relationship and parenting stress has been fairly well delineated in the research. In general, good marital relationships are associated with lesser amounts of parenting stress. It is predicted that poor marital relationships will be related to greater levels of parenting stress. Further, it is expected that a poor marital relationship will correlate with high scores on the Relationship with Spouse subscale of the PSI. This relationship has been found to be stronger for males than females. Thus, it is expected that the quality of the marital relationship has a
stronger relationship to parenting stress for men than for women.

An intrapersonal variable suggested by theory to be related to the transition to parenthood is the attachment style of the parent. However, it has received little empirical investigation. An healthy attachment style is theorized to be related to a good adaptation to parenthood. It is expected that unhealthy attachment-individuation balances will be related to higher levels of parenting stress. It is predicted that attachment style will be related to the Attachment subscale of the PSI.

Additionally, it will be determined if one of the five variables is a more powerful predictor of parenting stress than the others. Theory and research suggest that the family of origin experiences and attachment styles of the new parents are more powerful predictors of parenting stress than the other factors. The study by Cox et al. (1985) found that family of origin experiences were more predictive of the adaptation to parenthood than other variables investigated. This finding was especially significant for women. Attachment theory suggests a link between attachment styles and family of origin. That is, we learn our attachment styles, in part, from the relationships in our family of origin. However, research has found that attachment styles can change and are not solely dependent upon family of origin experiences (Hazan
& Shaver, 1987; Main et al. 1985). This finding suggests that attachment style, not family of origin experiences is the stronger predictor of parenting stress.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

A sample of 100 first-time parents between the ages of 21 and 45 were used for this study. The parents had to be married and living together. They were assessed when their child was between birth to 24 months of age. They were asked to participate in a study examining some of the stressors associated with first-time parenthood.

Procedure

Parents were recruited from childbirth education classes, and postnatal parenting classes from the greater New Haven, CT area. Parents from childbirth education and postnatal parenting classes were asked to put their name on a list if they wished to participate in the study. They were informed that they would be called at a later date. Some subjects were called within the first month after their child was born, and others were called several months later. This allowed for parents with different age babies to be assessed.

During the follow-up telephone call to potential subjects, they were asked if they still wished to participate. If they said yes, a questionnaire packet was sent to them. The packet consisted of a cover letter (see...
Appendix A), a consent form (see Appendix B), and the eight measures (see Appendices C - J). Subjects were provided pre-addressed and pre-stamped envelopes to return their consent forms and measures. Subjects were given the option of obtaining a copy of the results by checking a line on the consent form. All questionnaires were presented in the following order: Personal Information Questionnaire, Parenting Stress Index, Task Related Index, Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index, Attachment Style Prototypes, Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Family of Origin Scale, and the Separation Anxiety Test.

Materials

**Personal Information Questionnaire.** The Personal Information Questionnaire (PIQ) was devised by the investigator to assess aspects of the subject's current life situation. Information such as age, sex, socio-economic status, hours of employment, race, and religion were obtained (see Appendix C).

**Parenting Stress Index.** The Parenting Stress Index (PSI) was used to assess the amount of stress associated with parenting (Abidin, 1986) (see Appendix D). The PSI was developed as a screening and diagnostic instrument for use with parents of children aged 10 and below. The ages of the children in the normative sample ranged from one month to 19 years of age. The mean age was 14 months, and the median age was 9 months. The scale was designed to
identify the stress associated with parenting. Parents of a clinical and non-clinical sample of children were used.

The scale is comprised of 101 items and is self administered. It requires respondents to answer questions about parenting and their child on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree. A Total stress score is obtained, along with a Child Domain score and a Parent Domain score. Higher scores indicate greater levels of stress. Total scores between 180 and 250 are considered to be in the normal range. Persons scoring above 260 are considered to be under a great deal of parenting stress. Scores below 175 are extremely low and Abidin (1986) asserts that parents scoring in this range may have difficulty attaching to their child and have little investment in the parental role. Scores above the 80th percentile rank on the two domains (Parent and Child) and each of the subscales within the two domains are considered high. An optional Life Stress score can also be computed.

The Child Domain score is divided into six subscales which include: a) adaptability; b) acceptability; c) demandingness; d) mood; e) distractibility/hyperactivity; and f) reinforces parent. The Parent Domain scale is divided into seven subscales which include: a) depression; b) attachment; c) restrictions of role; d) sense of competence; e) social isolation; f) relationship with
spouse; and g) parent health. The Life Stress scale provides an index of the amount of current stress outside the parent-child relationship.

The normative sample for the PSI was predominantly white parents between the ages of 18 and 65, with a mean age of 30.7. Both mothers and fathers were assessed. The alpha reliability coefficient for the Total Stress Score on the PSI is .95. The alpha reliability coefficients for the child and parent domain subscales range from .62 to .80. The stability of the PSI is supported by test-retest reliability coefficients of .81 and .71 for the Child Domain and Parent Domain, respectively.

Lafiosca and Loyd (1987) examined the relationship between parenting stress as measured by the PSI and a state-trait anxiety measure. The authors compared a group of parents of normal children to a group of parents who brought their child to a child development center for evaluation. Several measures were used. These included a measure of state-trait anxiety, a child behavior checklist, and a social desirability scale. One finding was that the PSI was able to correctly identify 100% of the parents of the normal children, and 60% of the parents of children seen for evaluation. Also, the authors found the Child Domain score of the PSI to be significantly correlated to the child behavior checklist. The Parent Domain score was significantly correlated with the anxiety measure.
Additionally, low correlation coefficients were found between the PSI and the social desirability measure for the clinic sample (.12) and the total sample (.33). The authors concluded that parents complete the PSI in a generally non-defensive manner.

Jenkins (1982) compared mothers of nursery school aged children in regular and special education classes. She was interested in their levels of parenting stress and anxiety. Results obtained indicated that the Total score of the PSI did not distinguish between the mothers of regular or special education children. However, the Child Domain score of the PSI did. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between the subscales of the PSI and the state-trait anxiety measure.

Task Related Index. The Task Related Index (TRI) was devised by the investigator to measure some of the tasks associated with being a new parent (see Appendix E). The scale was compiled from several sources (Bekslly et al., 1983; Cowan et al., 1985; Dyer, 1963; Goldberg et al., 1985; Hobbs, 1965; LeMasters, 1957). It is divided into two parts. The first part is comprised of seven tasks related to care of the home (TRI-HH) such as cooking and grocery shopping. The second part is comprised of eight tasks related to care of the child (TRI-CC) such as feeding the baby and taking the baby to the doctor. The scales ask subjects to rate who is most responsible for each of the 15
tasks. Ratings range from 1 (always the husband's responsibility) to 75 (always the wife's responsibility). Each statement can be rated on a scale from 1 to 5. Scores of 1 to 2 indicate that husbands are most responsible for household and childcare tasks. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that wives have the most responsibility for these tasks. A score of 3 indicates that they equally share these tasks.

**Emotional Impact of Parenthood.** The Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index (EIPI) was developed by the investigator to assess the current emotional state of the new parents (see Appendix F). It is composed of two sections. One is an adjective checklist (EIPI-A), and the other is comprised of statements regarding the current relationship with one's parents (EIPI-P). This scale was compiled from research done by Feldman and Nash (1984) which assessed, among other things, the mood of new parents, and by Weinberg and Richardson (1981) which looked at the dimensions of stress in early parenting. It is also based on theoretical literature (Benedek, 1959; Edward et al., 1981).

The first portion (EIPI-A) is composed of 16 adjectives which can be described as positive or negative. The 10 negative adjectives include: a) edgy; b) bothered by the changes which are associated with parenting; c) emotionally upset; d) emotionally drained; e) tired; f) frustrated; g) worried; h) stressed; i) infuriated; and j) sad. The six
positive adjectives are: a) happy; b) excited; c) high energy level; d) worry-free; e) challenged; and f) calm. Respondents are asked to rate themselves on each adjective using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = I have felt this way much less than usual, to 5 = I have felt this way much more than usual.

The second portion of the scale (EIPI-P) is derived from theoretical literature which suggests that conflicts or old issues with one's parents will be reactivated with parenthood. This section consists of 24 statements regarding how one currently thinks and feels about his or her mother and father. Seven of the statements are positively worded (e.g., I want more contact with my mother). Five of the statements are negative (e.g., I find that I get irritated thinking about my mother). Each statement is repeated twice. Once using mother as the referent and again for father. High scores on the EIPI indicate emotional distress. Positively worded adjectives and statements are reversed for scoring.

**Attachment Style Prototypes.** The Attachment Style Prototypes (ASP) developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987) is a single-item measure of attachment style. It was to be used to measure attachment styles of the parents. The measure is composed of three statements about one's feelings in a love relationship (see Appendix G). These statements correspond to the attachment styles secure, avoidant, and
anxious/ambivalent. For example, the statement corresponding to secure attachment describes persons who are comfortable depending on others, and who do not worry about being abandoned by their partner. The measure was designed to assess a respondent’s typical way of behaving and feeling in a relationship. The measure, which is based on attachment theory, was developed for use with adults.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) used their attachment measure to investigate the relationship between romantic love and attachment. They reported data on 620 subjects who responded to a newspaper article. Of the subjects responding, 205 were men and 415 were women. Their ages ranged from 14 to 82, with a median age of 34, and a mean age of 36. Among other things, they had subjects choose one of the three statements which best described them. Using this forced choice method, Hazan and Shaver found that 56% of the subjects classified themselves as secure, 25% classified themselves as avoidant, and the remaining 19% described themselves as anxious/ambivalent in love relationships. The authors assert that these proportions are quite similar to the attachment styles of infants in studies of infant-mother attachment.

Levy and Davis (1988) used Hazan and Shaver’s attachment measure to study the relationship between attachment styles and lovestyles. They used the same three statements corresponding to the three attachment styles
that Hazan and Shaver (1987) used. However, rather than requiring a forced choice, they allowed subjects to rate themselves on each of the three statements. Using a 5-point rating scale from 1 = not at all like me to 5 = completely or almost completely like me, Levy and Davis had subjects rate the degree to which each statement fit their feelings and experiences in relationships. They found that 62% of the subjects rated themselves 3 or higher on the avoidant statement, 28% rated themselves as anxious/ambivalent, and 10% rated themselves as secure.

While these proportions are different from those obtained by Hazan and Shaver, subjects were still able to categorize themselves. This suggests that the measure is a consistent indicator of attachment styles, at least as rated by the person. The results obtained by Levy and Davis suggest that every respondent rated himself or herself 3 or above on only one attachment style. They do not say whether any subjects rated themselves 3 or above on more than one statement or less than 3 on all statements.

For the current study, the measure was used in a manner similar to the way it was used by Levy and Davis (1988). Subjects were asked to rate themselves on each of the three statements using a 5-point scale. To classify themselves in an attachment style category, subjects had to rate themselves 3 or higher. Those who did not rate themselves as fitting into any group, or who rated
themselves 3 or above on more than one group were placed in an undifferentiated category.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS, Spanier, 1976) is a 32-item scale designed for use with married or unmarried cohabitating couples. It assesses the process of marital adjustment (see Appendix H). The DAS yields a total score of dyadic adjustment as well as four subscales. The subscales are: a) satisfaction; b) cohesion; c) consensus; and d) affection. The Consensus subscale is defined by 13 statements on the DAS and scores can range from 0 to 65. The Affection subscale is composed of four statements and scores range from 0 to 12. The Satisfaction subscale has 10 statements and scores range from 0 to 51. The Cohesion subscale is defined by five statements and scores range from 0 to 24. High scores indicate more of the characteristics measured by that construct.

Total scores on the DAS may range from 0 to 151 with higher scores indicating greater adjustment. A mean of 114.8 was obtained for Spanier's original data. Respondents rate the items on a Likert scale which has different ranges for different sets of questions. For example, respondents rate how often something occurs, how often they and their mate agree or disagree, and how happy or unhappy they are.
Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the DAS. The reliability coefficient for the Total Dyadic Adjustment Scale is .96. The reliability coefficients for the subscales range from .74 to .94.

Spanier (1976) correlated the DAS with the Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959). The Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale is another widely used marital adjustment measure. The correlation between these scales is .86 for married respondents.

Spanier (1976) administered the DAS to a sample of married and divorced persons. For each item on the DAS, the divorced sample differed significantly from the married sample. Additionally, the mean total scale scores for the married and divorced samples differed significantly. The mean scores for the married group was 114.8, and 70.7 for the divorced group.

Family of Origin Scale. The Family of Origin Scale (FOS, Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine, 1985) is a 40-item self-administered questionnaire designed to assess the perceived health in one's family of origin (see Appendix I). The instrument provides a total score which indicates the degree of perceived health in the family of origin. Scores for the constructs of autonomy and intimacy are also provided. Subjects are asked to answer questions regarding their family of origin using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree that it describes
my family of origin to 5 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin. The highest possible total score is 200, and the lowest possible total score is 40. In a validating study of the instrument the authors found that one-third of their respondents scored between 160-198. The next group of scores ranged from 135-159. The lower one third of this group scored between 63-134. Higher scores are indicative of healthier responses.

The FOS was normed on 278 college students of which 39 were Black and 239 were White. High reliability was demonstrated using a test-retest design, and a reliability coefficient of .97 was obtained over an interval of two weeks.

The validity of the FOS was demonstrated in a study which examined alcohol-distressed and non-alcohol-distressed marriages (Holter, 1982). The FOS was used to measure the perceived health of the family of origin. A significant difference in perceived health of the family of origin was found between men in non-alcohol-distressed marriages and men in alcohol-distressed marriages.

Fine (1983) assessed 184 never married individuals using the FOS, an inventory of rational thinking, and a scale which measures one’s perceptions of marriage. Significantly different perceptions of marriage were found among subjects with high, medium, and low FOS scores. Also, the FOS was related to the level of rational
thinking. This suggests that those subjects who perceived their families of origin as being higher in health had a more positive perception of marriage and more rational thinking than those subjects with unhealthy families of origin.

In a very recent study, Lee, Gordon, and O'Dell (1989) explored the validity of the FOS. Their subjects included 100 adults currently in therapy, 100 adults not in therapy, 32 adults who were previously in therapy, and 41 college students. The authors ran five experiments. The first was designed to compare adults in treatment with a control group of adults similar to the experimental group except that they were not in treatment. Results of this experiment found that the overall score on the FOS discriminated between the experimental and control groups, but the subscales did not. Another experiment attempted to confirm or disconfirm the meaningfulness of the subscales of the FOS. The authors were unable to confirm the usefulness of the subscales. They found one factor which accounted for 65% of the variance. The authors concluded that the FOS is a good measure of healthy versus unhealthy family of origin experiences, but the subscales do not differentiate groups. Thus, for the present study, the Total Score only was used to classify respondents' family of origin experiences along a continuum of unhealthy to healthy.
Separation Anxiety Test. The Separation Anxiety Test (SAT, Hansburg, 1972) was used to assess the subject's level of attachment and individuation. The scale was originally devised for clinical work with disturbed children. It has since been used with adults (Hansburg, 1986). The test consists of 12 ink drawings which depict a child experiencing different separation experiences (e.g., leaving for camp, death of the mother). The respondent is asked to check which of 17 statements reflects how he or she believes the child is feeling. Additionally, the 12 cards depict females and males and the appropriate gender should be used for each subject. That is, male subjects examine and respond to cards with boys, and female subjects respond to cards depicting girls.

The 12 cards are evenly divided into strong and mild pictures. The six strong pictures are thought to be more highly charged with respect to separation issues (e.g., death of mother), and the six mild pictures are less highly emotionally charged (e.g., child leaving to go to school). In general, the attachment need is less than the individuation need during mild separation experiences. That is, it is expected that cards depicting mild separation experiences will elicit more individuation responses than attachment responses. In contrast, strong separation experiences should be met with more attachment needs than individuation needs. Thus, cards which depict
strong separation experiences should elicit more attachment responses, and cards depicting mild separation experiences should elicit individuation responses.

The manner in which the SAT is typically scored yields an attachment-individuation balance score. Theoretically, it can also be used to place subjects in attachment groups. However, several researchers using this method have obtained results which did not allow them to use the SAT in this manner (Marsh, 1990; Norman, 1989). Therefore, the manner of scoring the SAT used by the present investigator is experimental in nature. Although based on information provided by Hansburg (1972, 1980), the method of scoring differs somewhat from that proposed by him. There are two exceptions to this. An overall attachment score and overall individuation score are computed which follows Hansburg’s scoring method. However, four additional scores are computed.

The four additional scores which are computed provide an index of the relationship between responses on mild and strong cards. The scores are differences between responses on mild and strong cards. The attachment difference score measures the difference between attachment responses on cards depicting strong separation experiences and mild separation experiences. It is expected that subjects will respond with more attachment responses on strong separation experiences. The individuation difference score measures
the difference between individuation responses on cards representing strong separation experiences and mild separation experiences. Mild separation experiences should be responded to with individuation. The mild difference score is a measure of the individuation and attachment responses on cards depicting mild separation experiences. It is expected that the subject will respond with more individuation than attachment responses. The last score is the strong difference score. It is a measure of the difference between attachment and individuation responses on cards depicting strong separation experiences. More attachment responses than individuation responses are expected.

Several researchers have used the SAT with adults. However, it should be noted that the method of scoring was not the same as the present study. DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) used the SAT with abusive and nonabusive mothers, and found that the SAT distinguished between the two groups. Additionally, abusive mothers were found to have low levels of attachment capacity, and were not well individuated.

Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) used the SAT with a group of Hispanic mothers who were abusive and nonabusive. A Spanish version of the SAT was used. Like DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986), Mitchell found that abusive mothers had more pathological responses on the SAT than
nonabusive mothers, and that abusive mothers had moderate levels of anxious attachment.

Research Design

The present study was correlational and descriptive in nature. The independent variables were perceived responsibility for child care and house care tasks, the change in emotions associated with parenthood, the change in the current relationship with one's parents, the marital relationship, the family of origin, and the balance of attachment and individuation.

Hypotheses

1. It was predicted that new parents in this study, on the average, would experience moderate to high levels of parenting stress. Moderate to high levels of parenting stress were defined as a Total Score of 260 or greater on the PSI. It was also predicted that women would have higher stress scores than men.

2. It was predicted that more perceived responsibility for child care and housework would be related to high levels of parenting stress. In particular, more responsibility for these two areas would be related to high scores on the PSI subscales of Restriction of Role, Sense of Competence, and Relationship with Spouse. Additionally, it is predicted that women would be perceived as having more responsibility for these tasks than men.
3. It was predicted that high levels of emotional turmoil, as measured by the change in emotions associated with parenthood, and the change in the current relationship with one’s parents, would be related to high levels of parenting stress. It was expected that this variable would be related to the Depression and Attachment subscales of the PSI.

4. It was expected that unhealthy childhood family of origin experiences would be related to high levels of parenting stress.

5. It was predicted that poor marital adjustment would be related to high levels of parenting stress. Poor marital adjustment would also be related to the Relationship to Spouse subscale of the PSI.

6. It was predicted that unhealthy attachment and individuation would be related to increased parenting stress.

7. It was predicted that attachment and individuation and family of origin would be more powerful predictors of parenting stress than the other variables.

Analyses

The first hypothesis was concerned with the level of stress experienced by the new parents. This question was descriptive in nature and was answered by calculating the mean Total Stress Score on the PSI for the group.
The next five hypotheses were correlational in nature. Correlations were computed for the independent variables and the PSI Total score, Parent Domain score, and subscales.

Additionally, a stepwise regression analysis was performed to determine the relative predictive power of each of the independent variables with regard to parenting stress. The Total Score and the Parent Domain score of the PSI were the dependent variables.

In a stepwise regression the first independent variable entered into the equation is the one with the highest correlation with the dependent variable. The second independent variable entered is the one that results in the largest increase in variance accounted for over and above the variance contributed by the first variable. This process continues until the statistical significance of variance accounted for fails to be met.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 100 men and women who met the following criteria: a) age 21 years or older; b) married and living with spouse; c) first child age 24 months or younger with no other children. Subjects were recruited primarily from childbirth classes in the greater New Haven, CT area. A total of 136 questionnaires were distributed and 100 were returned for a 73% return rate. The final sample contained 46 men (46%) and 54 women (54%). Ages of the subjects ranged from 21 to 42. The average age for women was 29 and the average age for men was 31. The sample was predominately white (94%), and well educated (all but three subjects had a high school education, while 20% had 4 years of college, and 11% had 20+ years of college). Sixty percent of the group had a family income of $46,000 or more a year. The average length of time married was approximately three years with a range from nine months to 10 years 5 months.

Forty-two percent of the men worked between 40 to 50 hours a week, and 52.2% reported professional positions. Of the female respondents, 53.7% worked outside the home.
The number of hours worked per week by the women ranged from 7 to 55. Approximately 48.8% of the working women worked 20 hours or more a week. Of the working mothers, 80% returned to work when their child was between one month and five months old. Of those women who worked, 86% used child care and 98% reported they were satisfied with child care arrangements.

**Description of Independent Measures**

Seven independent measures were used in the present study. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of these instruments by sex. The Task Related Index measured who was primarily responsible for household and child care tasks. The scale was divided into two sections. The first part focused on household tasks and the second part on child care tasks. A score of 7 on the household task scale indicates that the husband is mostly responsible, a score of 21 indicates that husband and wife are equally responsible, and a score of 35 indicates the wife is mainly responsible. On the child care task scale, a score of 8 indicates the husband is primarily responsible, 24 indicates they are equally responsible, and a score of 40 indicates the wife is mostly responsible. This scale was analyzed separately for men and women.
Table 1  
Means and SDs of the Independent Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Females Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRI-CC</td>
<td>28.87</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>31.74</td>
<td>5.47*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRI-HH</td>
<td>21.98</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>24.89</td>
<td>4.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIPI-A</td>
<td>45.74</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>50.35</td>
<td>9.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIPI-P</td>
<td>69.29</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>67.68</td>
<td>7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAS</td>
<td>106.39</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>106.17</td>
<td>10.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOS</td>
<td>140.78</td>
<td>28.65</td>
<td>143.06</td>
<td>28.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTACHMENT</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>6.69</td>
<td>24.15</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUATION</td>
<td>21.28</td>
<td>13.14</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. TRI-CC = Task Related Index - Child Care; TRI-HH = Task Related Index - Housework; EIPI-A = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Adjective Checklist; EIPI-P = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Current Relationship with Parents; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; FOS = Family of Origin Scale; SAT = Separation Anxiety Test.  
Significant difference between scores for males and females, * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.
Results indicated that men perceived they were about as responsible for household chores as their wives ($M = 21.98$). Women, on the other hand, indicated they perceived they were somewhat more responsible for household tasks than their husbands ($M = 24.89$). This difference was significant ($t = -3.32, p < .001$). Both men and women indicated the woman was generally more responsible for child care tasks than men (men $M = 28.78$; women $M = 31.74$). Again, women perceived themselves as having more responsibility for child care than the men, and this difference was significant ($t = -2.49, p < .05$). However, results indicate that men and women share responsibility for these tasks. A score of 21.00 on TRI-HH and a score of 24.00 on TRI-CC indicates men and women equally share responsibility for these tasks.

The Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index measured subjects' emotional reactions to parenthood. The measure had two parts. The first part was an adjective checklist of affective and behavioral terms, and measured the change in the personal, emotional reaction to parenthood (EIPI-A). The second section dealt with the subjects' thoughts and feelings concerning the change in the current relationship with their parents (EIPI-P). Scores on the EIPI-A are slightly higher for women ($M = 50.35$) than for men ($M = 45.74$) indicating women felt significantly more negative emotions than men since becoming a parent ($t = -2.54, p$
<.01). However, it should be noted that for this scale a score of 48 indicates that subjects did not perceive any change in their emotions since the birth of their child. So, even though women reported more negative emotions associated with parenthood than men they still reported only a slight increase overall. Subjects reported both positive and negative emotions associated with parenthood. The average of these emotions was slightly in the negative direction. Scores on the EIPI-P were quite similar for men and women (men M = 69.29; women M = 67.68). These scores indicated that men and women perceived little change in how they viewed their relationships with their own parents since becoming parents themselves. Additionally, the difference between men's and women's perceptions was not significant.

The Attachment Style Prototypes (ASP) measures the subjects' self-rated attachment style. Subjects were asked to rate themselves on three statements according to how they perceived themselves in a love relationship. The three statements correspond to secure attachment, anxious/ambivalent attachment, and avoidant attachment. A previous study found that 56% of subjects classified themselves as having secure attachment, 25% as having avoidant attachment, and 19% as having anxious/ambivalent attachment (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). Levy and Davis (1988) obtained similar percentages. Somewhat different results were
obtained for the present study with 69% of subjects classifying themselves as securely attached, 9% classifying themselves as avoidant, and 7% classifying themselves as anxious/ambivalent. Fifteen percent were unable to distinctly classify themselves and were placed in a fourth group. Using only those subjects who were able to distinctly classify themselves into one of the three groups, 81% classified themselves as securely attached, approximately 11% classified themselves as avoidant, with the remaining 8% classifying themselves as anxious/ambivalent.

The Separation Anxiety Test (SAT) measures attachment and individuation responses to separation experiences. The subject was asked to look at 12 pictures depicting separation experiences and check which of 17 statements he or she believed reflected what the child in the picture was experiencing. Several scores were computed for the SAT (attachment, individuation, attachment difference, individuation difference, strong difference, mild difference). Men had a mean attachment score of 23.00 and women had a mean attachment score of 24.14. The attachment scores for men and women did not significantly differ. The attachment score measures attachment responses to each separation experience regardless of the intensity of the picture. The mean of the individuation score for men was 21.28 and for women was 16.88. The scores were not
significantly different. Similar to attachment scores, individuation scores indicate the individuation responses to the separation experiences regardless of the intensity of the experience. The attachment and individuation scores for men and women in the present study are in line with normative data presented by Hansburg (1980). He states that the average percentage of attachment responses to all pictures should be between 20% and 25%. Additionally, the attachment score should exceed the individuation score by 4% to 8%.

Unlike the attachment and individuation scores, Hansburg does not provide normative data for the four difference scores. These scores were not originally included in his normative study. However, they are used in the present study to provide additional qualitative information regarding attachment and individuation. The difference scores were defined earlier, but will be reviewed here for quick reference. The attachment difference score is the difference between the attachment response on the strong cards minus the attachment response on the mild cards. The individuation difference score is the difference between the individuation response on the mild cards minus the individuation response on the strong cards. The mild difference score is the difference between the individuation response to the mild cards minus the attachment response on the mild cards. The strong
difference score is the difference between the attachment response on the strong cards minus the individuation response on the strong cards. All of the difference scores should be positive numbers, and the results of the present study are consistent with this. Although there are no norms for these scores, the means and ranges of the four difference scores will be presented for each gender.

The attachment difference score for men was 19.80 and 13.53 for women. The scores for men and women are significantly different ($t = 2.36, p < .05$). The attachment difference score for the total sample ranged from -12 to 38, with a mean of 16.42. The individuation difference score was 36.50 for men and 31.14 for women. These scores are not significantly different. The range of the individuation difference scores for the total sample was -2 to 71, with a mean of 33.61. The mild difference score for men was 33.06 and 22.14 for women. These scores did not significantly differ for men and women. The range of these scores for the entire sample was -23 to 78, with a mean of 27.17. The strong difference score was 23.23 for men and 22.53 for women. These scores did not differ significantly. The range of the strong difference scores for the entire sample was -13 to 44, and the mean was 22.88.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) measures subjects' marital adjustment. The Total score was used. The mean of
the DAS Total score for the present study (106.27) is slightly lower than the mean of the normative sample (114.8). However, it was still within the range for healthy relationships. Higher scores on the DAS indicate better adjustment. No significant difference is found for men and women on the DAS (men M = 106.39; women M = 106.16).

The Family of Origin Scale (FOS) measures perceived health in subjects' families of origin. The mean of the FOS for the present study is 142.01. The mean for the normative sample is 144.1. Higher scores are indicative of healthier families of origin. Scores for men and women do not appreciably differ (men M = 140.78; women M = 143.05).

**Dependent Measure**

The Parenting Stress Index (PSI) measures the amount of parenting stress experienced by the new parents. A Total score, Parent Domain score, and Child Domain score were computed. Scores for the subscales which comprise the Parent Domain and Child Domain were also computed. For each scale, higher scores are indicative of increased stress. The means and standard deviations for the main scores for men and women on PSI are presented in Table 2. The means and standard deviations for all subscales of the PSI are provided in Table K-1.

The Total score is composed of scores from the Parent Domain and the Child Domain. The Parent Domain measures
Table 2

Means and SDs of Dependent Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
<td>Mean SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Domain</td>
<td>108.22 18.34</td>
<td>116.17 20.96*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Domain</td>
<td>94.11 16.93</td>
<td>92.36 14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>202.36 32.68</td>
<td>208.56 33.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PSI = Parenting Stress Index

* Significant difference between scores for males and females, p < .05.

Parenting stress related to characteristics of the parent, while the Child Domain measures parenting stress associated with characteristics of the child. Women have a mean Total score of 208.55, and men have a mean score of 202.35. The scores for men and women did not significantly differ. For both women and men, the present scores are within average ranges on the PSI.

Men and women had significantly different levels of parenting stress as assessed by the Parent Domain. Men had a mean score of 108.21 and women had a mean score of 116.16. Women had significantly higher levels of parenting stress than men when measured by the Parent Domain score (t = -1.99, p < .05). Levels of parenting stress did not
appreciably differ for men and women when it was measured by the Child Domain score (men M = 94.11; women M = 92.35).

The above results indicate that parents in the present study had average levels of parenting stress. This is opposite of what was predicted. Based on previous studies it was expected that the new parents in the present study would have moderate to high levels of parenting stress.

Major Findings

Pearson correlations were computed to examine the relationships between a number of variables. Due to the sheer number of relationships, they will not all be discussed. Only those relationships which pertain to the hypotheses will be presented. However, a correlation matrix for all the independent and dependent variables for males, females, and the total sample is presented in Table K-2.

Relationship between Parenting Stress and Household and Child Care Tasks

Correlations were computed for each gender. No significant correlation was obtained for men or women between perceived responsibility for household tasks and parenting stress as measured by the Total score of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI). Likewise, no significant correlation was found for men or women between responsibility for child care tasks and parenting stress.
when parenting stress was defined by the Total score of the PSI. This was not as predicted. However, a significant correlation was obtained for men between the Parent Domain score of the PSI and responsibility for child care \( (r = .2434, p < .05) \). The Parent Domain subscale measures parenting stress based on characteristics of the parent only. For men, as his spouse's responsibility for child care tasks increased his parenting stress, as measured by the Parent Domain score, increased.

When the PSI subscales Role Restriction, Sense of Competency, and Relationship with Spouse were correlated with responsibility for household and child care tasks different results emerged for men and women. For men, the Sense of Competency subscale was significantly correlated with responsibility for child care tasks only \( (r = .4215, p < .01) \). Although not part of the hypothesis, the Attachment subscale was found to be significantly correlated to responsibility for child care for men \( (r = .2957, p < .05) \). This indicates that a sense of competency and relatedness to one's child were related to the amount of child care tasks men perform. Specifically, for men a sense of incompetence, and problems attaching to his child were related to doing less child care than his spouse.

For women, none of the three subscales were correlated with the responsibility for household care. However, responsibility for child care was significantly correlated
with the Relationship with Spouse subscale ($r = .3402, p < .01$). This finding indicates that as women had more responsibility for child care their relationship with their husband became more strained. Responsibility for child care was not significantly correlated with the two other subscales for women.

Relationship between Parenting Stress and the Emotional Impact of Parenthood

The Emotional Impact of Parenthood was separated into two parts. The first part was an adjective checklist measuring the change in emotions associated with parenthood, and the second part measured new parent’s perceived change in the current relationship with their own parents.

Correlations were computed for men and women separately. For men and women, there was a significant correlation between Total score of the PSI and the change in emotions since parenthood (men, $r = .4954, p < .001$; women, $r = .6736, p < .001$, respectively). For men and women, as the change in emotions since parenthood became more negative, parenting stress increased. This result was in the predicted direction. However, it was also predicted that parenting stress for men and women would be significantly related to their current relationship with their parents. This result was not obtained.
The two PSI subscales, Depression and Attachment, were expected to be related to the change in emotions and to the change in the current relationship with one’s parents. The change in emotions was significantly correlated with the Attachment subscale ($r = .3386, p < .01$) and the Depression subscale ($r = .2728, p < .05$) for men. Only the Attachment subscale was significantly correlated with the current relationship with parents for males ($r = .3398, p < .01$). As men felt more negatively about parenthood, their level of depression increased and their sense of their inability to relate to their child increased. Further, their perceived ability to relate effectively to their child was related to their perceived current relationship with their own parents.

The results for women were similar to those obtained for men. The change in emotions since parenthood was significantly related to the Attachment subscale ($r = .2306, p < .05$) and the Depression subscale ($r = .5660, p < .001$). In contrast to men, the Depression subscale was significantly correlated with the current relationship with one’s parents ($r = .3760, p < .01$). As women felt more negatively about parenthood their level of depression increased and their perceived ability to effectively relate to their child decreased. Also, as their current relationship with their parents was perceived as more negative their level of depression increased.
Relationship Between Parenting Stress and Family of Origin

For men, a negative correlation was obtained for the psychological health in the family of origin and the Total PSI score ($r = -0.2804, p < .05$). A similar finding was obtained for women between the psychological health in their families of origin and the Total PSI score ($r = -0.3891, p < .01$). Both findings were in the expected direction. For men and women, as the psychological health in the family of origin decreased, parenting stress increased.

Relationship between Parenting Stress and Attachment Status

Six scores were computed related to attachment status. The attachment score assesses the amount of overall attachment responses to the separation experience regardless of the intensity of those experiences. The individuation score assesses the amount of overall individuation responses regardless of the intensity of the separation experience. Four difference scores were also computed based on the differences between responses to the mild and strong cards on the SAT. Mild cards refer to a pictorial depiction of a mild separation event such as going to sleep at night. An example of a strong separation stimulus is the death of the mother. Subjects are expected to react with more attachment responses to strong stimulus cards and more individuation responses to mild stimulus cards.
When the four difference scores (attachment difference, individuation difference, difference on mild cards, difference on strong cards), and the total attachment and individuation scores were correlated with the Total score and the Parent Domain score of the PSI very different results emerged for men and women. For women, none of the attachment status scores correlated significantly with parenting stress. This was not as predicted.

For men, several significant correlations were obtained. First, correlations between the attachment status scores and the Total score will be presented. Three of the six attachment scores were significantly related to the Total score of the PSI. The individuation score (the total number of individuation responses regardless of the intensity of the stimulus) had a significant, negative correlation to the Total score \((r = -0.2842, p < 0.05)\). This suggests that as men were less individuated, their parenting stress increased. The attachment score was also significantly correlated with the Total score \((r = 0.2459, p < 0.05)\). This suggests that as attachment increased, parenting stress increased. The mild difference score had a significant, negative correlation with the Total score \((r = -0.2950, p < 0.05)\). This finding suggests that fewer than expected individuation responses to mild cards were related to increased parenting stress.
When the Parent Domain score was correlated with attachment status even more relationships were obtained for men. Again, no significant relationship was obtained for women between the Parent Domain score and attachment status scores. However, four of the six attachment status scores were significantly related to parenting stress for men. These will be discussed separately.

A significant relationship was found between the Parent Domain score and the score for overall attachment status ($r = .2652, p < .05$), and for overall individuation status ($r = -.3103, p < .05$). These findings suggest that as attachment responses increased regardless of the intensity of the stimulus, parenting stress increased. Also, as overall individuation scores decreased, parenting stress increased. A significant negative relationship was found between the individuation difference score (the difference between individuation responses on mild and strong cards) and parenting stress ($r = -.2657, p < .05$). Subjects should respond with more individuation responses to the mild cards versus the strong cards. The present finding suggests that as inappropriate individuation responses increased, parenting stress increased. A final finding was that the difference between attachment and individuation responses on mild cards (mild difference) was negatively related to parenting stress ($r = -.3303, p$
Fewer individuation responses than expected on the mild cards were related to increased parenting stress.

**Relationship between Parenting Stress and Marital Adjustment**

For men, there was no significant correlation between the PSI Total score and marital adjustment. A significant negative relationship was obtained for women between the PSI Total score and marital relationship ($r = -0.3415$, $p < .01$). At least for women, this finding was as predicted. Poor marital adjustment was related to increased parenting stress.

For both men and women, a significant negative correlation was found between the Parent Domain score and marital adjustment (men, $r = -0.3457$, $p < .01$; women, $r = -0.4134$, $p < .001$). The PSI subscale, Relationship with Spouse, had a significant negative correlation to marital adjustment for both men and women ($r = -0.4061$, $p < .01$; $r = -0.3860$, $p < .01$, respectively). These findings were as predicted. For men and women, the above findings suggest that as their relationship with their spouse became more strained, marital adjustment decreased. However, the mean scores for the present sample reveal that the new parent's marital adjustment was healthy.

**Factors Which Predict Parenting Stress**

In order to determine which correlation of independent variables were most predictive of parenting stress, stepwise regressions were computed for the entire sample.
In a stepwise regression procedure predictor variables are entered one at a time in order of their significance to the dependent variable. The predictor variable with the greatest contribution to the variance of the dependent variable is entered first, followed by the variable which has the next largest contribution. This process continues until all predictor variables have been entered or until the remaining variables fail to have predictive value.

For the entire sample, parenting stress was regressed onto responsibility for household tasks, responsibility for child care tasks, the change in the emotional response to parenthood, the change in the current relationship with one’s parents, marital adjustment, psychological health in family of origin, and two attachment status scores. Parenting stress was defined using the Total Score and the Parent Domain score of the PSI. The results of the regression are presented in Table 3.

Two variables predicted stress as measured by the Total score. The change in emotions associated with parenthood entered the equation first and accounted for 41.07% of the variance. Responsibility for child care tasks entered the equation next. Together these two variables accounted for 45.01% of the variance. No other variable entered the equation.

When the Parent Domain score was used as the dependent variable rather than the Total score of the PSI, one other
Table 3

Significant Predictors of Parenting Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Total PSI Score</th>
<th>Parent Domain Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIPi-A</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRI-CC</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>36.02***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PSI = Parenting Stress Index; EIPI-A = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Adjective Checklist; TRI-CC = Task Related Index - Child Care; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

*** p < .001

variable predicted parenting stress. Marital adjustment entered the equation following the change in emotions, and responsibility for child care. These three variables accounted for 53.01% of the variance.

Regressions were also computed for each gender separately. A note of caution is provided however. When each gender is analyzed separately, the number of cases becomes small for the number of independent variables subjected to the equation. Thus, the equation may not accurately reflect the predictive value of the independent variables. Using the Total score of the PSI as the
dependent variable, the change in emotions associated with parenthood entered the equation first for men and women (men, $B = .6221$, $p < .0001$; women, $B = .6649$, $p < .0001$).

For women, this variable accounted for 44.21% of the variance ($R^2 = .44$, $F(1,48) = .38$, $p < .0001$). This is the only variable which entered the equation for women. For men, the responsibility for child care also entered the equation. These two variables, the change in emotions accompanying parenthood and responsibility for child care, accounted for 43.64% of the variance ($R^2 = .43$, $F(2,38) = 14.71$, $p < .0001$).

When the Parent Domain score of the PSI was used as the dependent variable, the results remained the same for males. However, for the women, responsibility for child care entered the equation, along with the change in emotions associated with parenthood. Together these two variables accounted for 55.02% of the variance ($R^2 = .55$, $F(2,47) = 28.75$, $p < .0001$).

However, the factors which were found to predict parenting stress were not expected. Based on attachment theory and previous research by Cox et al. (1985), it was expected that attachment status and family of origin experiences would be most predictive of parenting stress.

Additional Analyses

One factor which may have affected the present findings is the problem of multicollinearity.
Multicollinearity becomes problematic when a high correlation exits among one or more independent variables. If this occurs, then these variables are related and one or more variables may not enter the regression equation because they would not add to the variance already accounted for.

One way to test for multicollinearity is to examine the correlation coefficients of the independent variables (Lewis-Beck, 1980). High correlations would suggest that multicollinearity is a problem. An examination of the correlation coefficients among the independent variables reveals that two other independent variables were correlated with the change in emotions of the parents. These were the marital relationship and early family of origin experiences. However, neither had a particularly strong correlation with the change in emotions (marital relationship $r = -0.2338$, $p < 0.01$; family of origin, $r = -0.3415$, $p < 0.001$). These two factors were the only ones with a significant relationship to the change in emotions.

The responsibility for child care was also predictive of parenting stress. Pearson correlations were examined to determine if other independent variables correlated with the responsibility for child care. Two attachment variables had significant, but very weak correlations with the responsibility for child care (attachment, $r = 0.1774$, $p < 0.05$; strong stimulus attachment, $r = 0.1973$, $p < 0.05$).
The perceived responsibility for housework was the variable with the highest correlation to the perceived responsibility for child care ($r = .4767$, $p < .001$).

Lastly, marital adjustment was also found to be predictive of parenting stress. Two variables were found to be significantly related to marital adjustment. These were the family of origin and an attachment-individuation balance variable. The family of origin variable had a weak, but significant correlation with the marital adjustment variable ($r = .1981$, $p < .05$). Additionally, the family of origin variable was significantly correlated with parenting stress.

Lewis-Beck (1980) states that performing regressions with all the independent variables as predictors of one another is an additional one way to assess for multicollinearity. A series of these regressions was performed (see Table K-3). Results of these regressions suggest that the family of origin variable was highly related to the other independent variables ($R = .61$). Additionally, the four attachment and individuation difference scores predict one another perfectly. Results also indicate that several independent variables are highly related.

Although the hypothesis that attachment and individuation and family of origin would predict parenting stress was not found, it cannot be stated with certainty
that they are not important factors to consider. It could be that these two variables, especially family of origin, are related to the variables which were found to predict parenting stress (change in emotions, responsibility for child care, and marital adjustment).

Summary

In summary, with the exception of the ASP, subjects responded appropriately to the instruments. Unlike previous studies, average levels of parenting stress were obtained for the present study. Subjects reported few changes associated with parenthood in their own emotions or in their relationships with their own parents. Both positive and negative changes occurred with parenthood. Also, subjects reported they believed women shared more responsibility for child care tasks than men. However, men were very involved in child care. Both men and women perceived they were approximately equally responsible for household chores, although women reported they believed they were responsible for slightly more of these tasks than men. Subjects responded within norms on the amount of overall attachment and individuation responses on the SAT. Their marital relationships and their experiences in their families of origin were rated as good. It appears that the subjects in the present study were fairly healthy and well-adjusted.
However, several factors were found to be related to parenting stress for men and women. The change in emotions associated with parenthood was significantly correlated with parenting stress for men and women. Also, a significant correlation was found between parenting stress and the perceived health in the family of origin. The marital relationship was associated with parenting stress for men and women. For men, several attachment status factors were significantly related to parenting stress. However, no attachment status factors were related to parenting stress for women.

Although several factors were correlated with parenting stress, three factors were found to interact and predict parenting stress. The change in emotions powerfully predicted parenting stress. Also, responsibility for child care and the marital relationship predicted parenting stress. Table 4 verbally summarizes the significant findings of the study.
Table 4

**Significant Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSI</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Average levels of parenting stress were obtained for men and women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women experienced higher levels of parenting stress than men when parenting stress was measured using the Parent Domain score.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Working women did not have higher levels of parenting stress than nonworking women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRI-CC</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Both men and women shared in child care tasks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women perceived they shared significantly more responsibility for child care than men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived responsibility for child care was related to parenting stress for men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Perceived responsibility for child care was not related to parenting stress for women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Perceived responsibility for child care was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRI-HH

1. Both men and women shared in housework.
2. Women perceived they shared significantly more responsibility for housework than men.
3. Perceived responsibility for housework was not related to parenting stress for men or women.
4. Perceived responsibility for housework was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

EIPI-A

1. Men and women reported little change in their emotions associated with the transition to parenthood.
2. Positive and negative reactions were reported.
3. Women had more negative change in their emotions associated with the transition to parenthood than men.
4. The change in emotions associated with parenthood was related to parenting stress for men and women.
5. The change in emotions associated with parenthood was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

EIPI-P

1. Men and women reported little change in their current relationship with their parents associated with the transition to parenthood.
2. The change in the current relationship with their parents was not related to parenting stress for men or women.
3. The change in the current relationship with their parents was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

**FOS**

1. Men and women reported generally psychologically healthy families of origin.
2. Early family of origin experiences were related to parenting stress for men and women.
3. Early family of origin experiences were related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

**DAS**

1. Men and women reported good marital adjustment.
2. Poor marital adjustment was related to increased parenting stress.
3. Marital adjustment was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

**SAT**

1. Men and women reported a healthy balance between attachment and individuation.
2. The attachment and individuation balance was not related to parenting stress for women.
3. The attachment and individuation balance was related to parenting stress for men.
4. The attachment and individuation balance was related to different dimensions of parenting stress for men and women.

Note. PSI = Parenting Stress Index; TRI-CC = Task Related Index - Child Care; TRI-HH = Task Related Index - Housework; EIP-A = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Adjective Checklist = EIP-P = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Current Relationship with Parents; FOS = Family of Origin Scale; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; SAT = Separation Anxiety Test.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine factors which relate to the stress experienced by many first-time parents. Based on previous studies and theoretical literature, five main areas were included in this study. The factors are the responsibility for child care, responsibility for household chores, the change in emotions associated with parenthood, the change in the current relationship with one’s parents associated with parenthood, the marital relationship, family of origin experiences, and attachment status. The study also proposed that attachment status of the parents would be most predictive of parenting stress followed by family of origin experiences.

Before the hypotheses are presented, a brief review of the manner of assessing parenting stress will be undertaken. In very early studies parenting stress was defined as the amount of change new parents experienced in their lives. Later research focused on how distressing the changes which occurred were. The Parenting Stress Index (PSI), which was the instrument used to measure parenting stress for the present study, includes both of the above aspects. The PSI was normed using clinical and nonclinical parents of mainly small children. Some of these
parents were first-time parents and others had more than one child. Parenting stress, as defined for this study, is quite specific and refers to stress associated with the demands of parenting only. The level of stress experienced by the new parents in the present study is compared to the level of stress experienced by a normative group of parents. Stress related to other factors, such as moving, changing jobs, illness in the family, or finances, is not included in the measure of parenting stress for this study.

The PSI provides three main scores. These are the Total Score, the Child Domain score, and the Parent Domain score. The Total score is comprised of the Parent and Child Domain scores. The Child Domain score has six subscales, and measures parenting stress which is a function of the child (e.g., the child's adaptability, demandingness, activity level, etc.). While important, this scale is not used in the present study because of this study's focus on the adult. The Parent Domain score is composed of seven subscales. It assesses parenting stress which is related to factors associated with the parent only (e.g., depression, attachment, spousal relationship, etc.). This scale and the Total score are used in the present study to assess parenting stress. Parenting stress defined by the Total score will be referred to as family stress because it includes aspects of the parent and child. Parenting stress defined by the Parent Domain score will be
referred to as parent stress because it includes only aspects associated with the parent.

Seven hypotheses were specified for the present study. The first hypothesis was that, in general, new parents would have moderate to high levels of family and parent stress. The present data did not support this hypothesis. Parents in the present study had average levels of family and parent stress. It was also hypothesized that women would experience significantly higher levels of family and parent stress than men. This was supported.

The second hypothesis predicted a positive correlation between family and parent stress and perceived responsibility for child care and household chores. This hypothesis was partially supported. No significant correlation was found between family stress and perceived responsibility for household tasks for men or women. However, a significant correlation was obtained between parent stress and perceived responsibility for child care for men only. Neither perceived responsibility for child care or household tasks was significantly correlated with family or parent stress for women. This finding was not as predicted.

An additional prediction for this hypothesis was that women would perceive they shared significantly more responsibility for child care and household tasks than men. This prediction was supported. Although both sexes
perceive women as having more responsibility for these two tasks than men, both sexes reported that men shared the burden for these chores.

Hypothesis three predicted that the emotional turmoil experienced by new parents would be related to family and parent stress. Emotional turmoil was defined for the present study as having two components. The first component was the change in emotions since becoming a parent. The second component was the change in the current relationship with one’s parents. Partial support was obtained for this hypothesis. The change in emotions associated with parenthood was significantly related to family and parent stress for both men and women. However, the change in the current relationship with one’s parents was not related to family or parent stress for men or women.

Hypothesis four predicted that family and parent stress would be related to unhealthy family of origin experiences for both sexes. This hypothesis was supported for both men and women. As psychological health in the family of origin decreased, family and parent stress increased.

The fifth hypothesis concerned the relationship between family and parent stress and the marital relationship. It was predicted that a good marital relationship would be related to lower levels of family and
parent stress. This hypothesis was supported for both sexes for marital adjustment and parent stress. However, marital adjustment was significantly related to family stress for women only. For men and women, it was found that as the stress of parenting increased their marital adjustment decreased.

Hypothesis six addressed the interaction of attachment styles and parenting stress. It was not possible to adequately test this hypothesis as planned. Subjects in the present study were densely clustered in one attachment style group (secure), as measured by the Attachment Style Prototypes Scale (ASP). This prohibited further analysis using attachment styles as measured by this scale. However, the attachment and individuation balance as measured by the Separation Anxiety Test (SAT) provided some information related to the subjects' attachment status. For women, none of the attachment status scores were correlated with family or parent stress. Several of these scores were significantly related to family and parent stress for men. In general, as attachment and individuation responses indicated less healthy adjustment, family and parent stress increased for men. Specifically, as attachment increased to an unhealthy level and individuation decreased to an unhealthy level, the stress of parenting increased.
Hypothesis seven concerned factors which predict family and parent stress. It was expected that attachment status and family of origin variables would be more predictive of family and parent stress than the other variables. This hypothesis was not supported. Results indicated that the change in emotions associated with parenthood was the strongest predictor of family and parent stress for men and women. Additionally, the responsibility for child care and the marital relationship were found to predict family and parent stress.

Discussion of the Findings

The present study was somewhat exploratory in nature. An attempt was made to discern factors which are related to and predictive of the stress of parenting. Factors such as marital adjustment and perceived responsibility for child care and household tasks were included because previous studies found them to be related to parenting stress (Cowan et al., 1985; Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965; Russell, 1974). Variables associated with the family of origin, attachment status, and the change in emotions and the change in the current relationship with one's parents were included based on theoretical assumptions. Data for men and women were analyzed separately because previous studies have found that men and women experience the transition to parenthood differently.
A major finding of the present study is that the new parents did not have high levels of family or parent stress when compared to other parents. This finding was somewhat unexpected and several reasons for this result will be examined. These include subject characteristics and the method of measuring parenting stress. Also, women had higher levels of family and parent stress than men.

A second major finding was that women perceived they shared significantly more responsibility for child care and household tasks than men. However, both sexes also reported that men shared these tasks. A surprising finding was that even though women perceived themselves as having more responsibility for these tasks, this was not associated with family or parent stress. The findings for men were somewhat different. Men’s parent stress increased as they perceived themselves to be less responsible for child care.

Another area explored was how the current family of origin and early childhood experiences related to family and parent stress. The change in the current relationship with one’s parents was not related to family or parent stress. However, negative family of origin experiences when the parent was young were associated with increased parenting stress. Early family of origin experiences were also related to more dimensions of family and parent stress for men than women.
A surprising finding related to attachment style was obtained for subjects in the current study. Subjects in the study overwhelmingly rated themselves as securely attached on the ASP. This is inconsistent with previous findings and reasons for this will be explored. Since attachment style, as measured by the ASP, could not be used to provide information about this variable and parenting stress, the SAT was used to provide information regarding attachment and individuation. This form of measurement provides qualitative information about attachment status. For women, attachment status had no relationship to family or parent stress. Findings indicated that for men, unhealthy attachment and individuation were associated with increased family and parent stress.

A relationship was also found between early childhood family of origin experiences and attachment status. This finding provides support for attachment theory. Attachment theory states that attachment status is dependent, in part, upon early childhood experiences.

A final major finding pertained to the variables which predicted family and parent stress. The change toward more negative emotions strongly predicted family and parent stress for men and women. The responsibility for child care and marital adjustment also predicted parent stress. The change in emotions accounted for the greatest share of variance of the factors predicting family and parent
stress. This suggests that it is how one responds to parenthood, not the added responsibility of parenthood, that determines parenting stress.

Additionally, gender differences were obtained for many of the variables. It seems that parenting stress may have different dimensions for men and women.

Levels of Parenting Stress

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of the present study is the level of family and parent stress reported by the subjects. First-time parents in the present study reported levels of family and parent stress within normal ranges. This was an unexpected finding. It was expected that, on the average, new parents would experience moderate to high levels of stress associated with parenting compared to other parents.

There are several possible reasons for this finding. One explanation pertains to the definition and measurement of the stress of parenting. The present study utilized a standardized instrument to measure family and parent stress. Based on a fairly complete review of the parenting literature, no other study was found which used a standardized measure. In general, previous researchers used measures created by themselves or others to assess stress associated with parenting. Normative information was not provided on the instruments used by other researchers. As far as can be determined, the present
study is the first one to compare new parents to a normative group.

Over time, the means of assessing the stress of parenting have become more sophisticated. Researchers generally inquire about the amount of change associated with parenthood and the emotional reaction to those changes. The PSI incorporates aspects of both concepts. Thus, parents respond to questions about behavioral changes and the emotional impact of those changes. Also, Abidin (1986) provides normative data regarding the PSI. Previous studies have not provided normative data concerning the instruments used to measure parenting stress.

Aside from instrumentation factors, there are several external validity factors which may have influenced the results obtained. Parents in the present study are mostly white (94%) and middle-class. Fifty-three percent had at least a college education, and 60% had a family income of $46,000 a year or more. It is possible that educated parents who have a good income experience less stress than lower income parents. McBride (1990) offers support for this line of thinking. She reviewed studies which suggested that working-class women experience more stress with parenthood than middle-class women.

However, the socio-economic status of parents in the present study did not differ drastically from the new parents in previous studies. The studies which were
reviewed were fairly evenly divided regarding the use of middle-class and working-class subjects. The socio-economic status of the parent was not associated with the amount of stress found in these studies. Thus, it does not seem that socio-economic status alone could account for the low amounts of family and parent stress found in the present study.

A second subject characteristic which could affect the amount of stress reported is preparation for parenthood. The vast majority of subjects in this study were recruited from childbirth education classes. Although the classes targeted preparation for childbirth, parenting issues were discussed. It could be that parents who are involved enough with their pregnancy to attend childbirth classes are more emotionally ready and prepared for parenthood than other parents. If this is true it would be expected that their stress associated with parenting would be lower. However, it is unlikely that this one feature could account for the low amount of family and parent stress obtained in this study, especially given that the classes focused on childbirth rather than parenting.

Another possible influence on the results obtained deals with subject bias in responding. Parenthood is highly romanticized in our culture, and it is possible that new parents are reluctant to admit to negative feelings regarding parenthood. Thus, parents may have responded to
the PSI in socially desirable ways. However, in a recent study, Lafiosca and Loyd (1987) found the PSI to have a low correlation with a social desirability scale. This suggests that parents' responses to the PSI are mostly nondefensive.

Perhaps as Rossi (1968) suggests, the transition to parenthood is a normal life event which is handled relatively well by most new parents. Certainly the results obtained in the present study support Rossi's idea that in general new parents do not experience a great deal of stress associated with parenting when compared to other parents.

Although many of the studies reviewed found moderate to high levels of stress associated with parenthood, there were some which found low levels. For example, the studies by Hobbs (1965, 1968) and Russell (1974) found low levels of stress. Both researchers used a definition of stress which asked parents how distressed they were by the changes in their lives that occurred due to the transition to parenthood. These researchers found many changes in the new parent's lives, but relatively little distress due to the changes. Although behavioral changes were not assessed in the present study, there is some anecdotal evidence that changes do occur in new parent's lives. Quite a few new parents expressed to the researcher that many changes had occurred in their lives, such as lack of sleep, less time
for one's spouse, and less time for oneself. However, when the stress of parenting was assessed objectively this sample of new parents did not indicate that they were experiencing more than the average amount of stress. As stated previously, it is difficult to compare the results of the present study regarding family and parent stress with results of previous studies. Previous studies did not provide normative information concerning the instruments used to measure the stress of parenting.

It is likely that there are rewards and costs related to parenting. The present data support this assertion. Parents in this study were found to respond to the transition to parenthood with negative as well as positive emotions. Feeling tired and feeling happy received the highest endorsement from new parents in the present study. The rewards of parenting may attenuate the stress of parenthood which is experienced. Thus, new parents do experience stress associated with parenting, but also experience positive aspects of parenting. These results are consistent with results obtained by Russell (1974). She found that parents reported positive as well as negative aspects of first-time parenthood.

To sum, it appears that the transition to parenthood is not as stressful as once believed, at least for white, middle-class parents. Possible explanations for this finding have been discussed. A further explanation may be
related to attenuating factors. In general, new parents in this study reported psychologically healthy adjustment. They had fairly good marital adjustment, good early family of origin experiences, and healthy attachment and individuation. Additionally, they had positive reactions to new parenthood. Even though women perceive they share more responsibility for child care and housework than men, the spouses appear to share these tasks. So, overall, this group of parents is fairly healthy which may have helped reduce their family and parent stress.

However, the above factors were all found to be correlated with family and parent stress. If these factors are in an unhealthy direction (e.g., poor marital adjustment), family and parent stress increased. However, if they are in the positive direction, family and parent stress decreased. Thus, it is likely that these factors helped to lessen the stress of parenting experienced by these new parents.

Support for this is provided by theorists and researchers. Theorists such as Bowlby (1988), Belsky and Isabella (1984), and Goldberg et al. (1985) purport that good family of origin experiences and a good marital relationship can mediate the stress of parenting. Empirical support can also be found. Dyer (1963) and Russell (1974) found that a good marital relationship is associated with lower levels of stress. Russell also found
that positive changes occur with new parenthood. Additionally, positive early family of origin experiences were found to be associated with lower levels of parenting stress (Cox et al., 1985). These findings are consistent with findings of the present study. Perhaps as noted by other researchers (Weinberg & Richardson, 1981; Miller & Sollie, 1980), rather than assessing the levels of the stress of parenting, the focus should be on factors which attenuate or exacerbate the stress.

An additional area to be discussed is the difference in the level of parent stress reported by men and women. Consistent with previous research, new mothers in the present study had significantly higher levels of parent stress than new fathers. This is consistent with research by Cowan et al. (1985), Hobbs (1965, 1968), Russell (1974), and Miller and Sollie (1980) who all found that women experience more stress associated with new parenthood than men.

In sum, average levels of family and parent stress were obtained in the present study. This is contrary to some previous studies, but is consistent with others. Several possible reasons for these results were discussed. One reason related to the methods of assessing family and parent stress. Other reasons included subject characteristics. Overall, this group of new parents reported fairly healthy adjustment, and positive changes
associated with parenthood. This may have helped lower the family and parent stress they experienced.

**Multiple Roles and Parenting Stress**

This section is related to the additional tasks men and women perform when they become parents. There has been a great deal written about multiple roles and the stress of parenting, especially as this applies to women (Belsky et al., 1986; McBride, 1990). Prior to becoming a parent, often one is a spouse and worker. Time is divided between employment, the marital relationship, and care of the home. Traditionally, even when they work, women have been more responsible for household chores than men. The belief is generally held, and research validates it, that women experience more role strain with the advent of parenthood than men due to the increased roles they assume. In general, women have assumed more responsibility for home and child care than men. The demands of multiple roles were assessed in the present study by obtaining information on responsibility for child care and household chores, and by comparing working and nonworking women.

In general, men believed they were about as equally responsible as women for taking care of household chores. Women, on the other hand, believed they were somewhat more responsible than their husbands for doing household tasks. Although women perceived they were more responsible for household work than their husbands, from women's
perspectives men did assume responsibility for a substantial amount of housework. That is, men and women shared responsibility for housework.

Likewise, men and women shared responsibility for child care. However, both believed that women were generally more responsible for child care than men. In sum, women perceive they share more responsibility for child care and housework than men. However, both sexes report that men are also involved in these tasks. It is interesting to note that the perceptions of men and women differed, in that women perceived themselves as having more responsibility in these two areas than men perceived them having. Apparently, men and women have different perceptions of the division of labor. This could lead to difficulties for the couple and for each individual. For example, if women perceive they are doing more than their spouse, they could feel resentful which could lead to marital problems. Empirical support for this is provided by Belsky et al. (1986).

Another interesting finding of the present study for women is their perceptions that they have more responsibility for child care and household chores are not significantly related to family or parent stress. There are several possibilities for this finding. Perhaps women have been socialized to expect that they should be the primary caretakers for home and family so do not interpret
their perception that they are doing more as especially stressful. Another possibility is that the attitudes of men and women are changing and men are more willing now than in the past to assume responsibility for these two traditionally female areas. Results of the present study support this. Even though women perceived they were responsible for a greater share of these chores than men, both men and women perceived that men were doing a substantial amount.

However, if women perceive themselves as doing more than men in the areas of housework and child care they may believe that their husbands are not doing enough. This could lead to a strained marital relationship. Although women's perception that they do more than their share of work is not related to family or parent stress, it is related to some dimensions of parent stress.

Women in the present study did report more role restriction and marital strain than men. This finding is consistent with previous research which found that women rated their marital relationships more negatively as the division of labor with respect to housework and child care became more traditionally oriented (Belsky et al., 1986; Ruble et al, 1988).

For men, parent stress was significantly related to the performance of child care tasks, but not household tasks. Their parent stress increases as their
responsibility for child care decreases. This means that as men report that their wives were more responsible for child care tasks, their parent stress increased. At first glance, this does not make sense. But, if we look at the dimensions of parent stress perhaps an understanding can be found. As men report sharing less in child care, their stress related with their sense of competency increases. Also, as men share less in child care they have problems attaching to their child.

By not sharing more in the care of their child, men experience a sense of incompetency about caring for their child, and also experience difficulty attaching to their child. Also, the less they share in child care, the more parent stress they experience. Perhaps if men shared more in child care, they would build their efficacy in caring for and attaching to their child, and their parent stress would decrease.

It seems that the stress of parenting may be defined somewhat differently for men and women, at least with respect to the factor of responsibility for child care. Thus, men and women may have different concerns to consider when trying to determine the level of involvement in child care and housework. If women have a greater share of responsibility for these tasks, both men and women suffer problems. Equal involvement by men and women is beneficial for both. This is consistent with results obtained by
Goldberg et al. (1985). They found that a father’s involvement with the baby was associated with better parental adjustment.

When investigating multiple roles, working and nonworking mothers should be compared. Working mothers have the additional role of worker. The present study found that the level of stress experienced by working and nonworking mothers was not significantly different. A little over one half of the women in this study worked, and of those approximately 65% worked 20 hours a week or more. Working and nonworking mothers showed significant differences on only two of the many variables assessed. Working mothers shared less in child care and household care than nonworking mothers. Additionally, only 24% of working mothers had outside help with household work.

Intuitively this finding does not make sense. Generally, one would expect that working mothers would experience more family and parent stress. However, two studies may help clarify these findings. Elman and Gilbert (1984), and Van Meter and Agronow (1982) found that stress is lessened for working mothers if her spouse approves of and supports her decision to work, and if she is satisfied with the child care arrangements. In the current study, 94% of the working mothers reported that they were satisfied with their child care arrangements. It is not known whether their spouses approved of and supported their
decision to work or not however. It seems that working mothers may not experience a great deal of stress related to parenting if their spouse supports them and if they have child care arrangements they are satisfied with. This suggests that working women can lower their levels of stress related to parenting by paying particular attention to these two areas. Working may not have as adverse an effect on women with children as previously believed, at least in the area of parent stress.

One point to keep in mind is that the present study measures individual perception of responsibility for work. Data on the couple was not obtained. It cannot be determined if couples differed in their perceptions. It could be that the difference in perceptions between couples is related to family and parent stress. Also, each individual in a couple may have different ideas regarding what tasks need to be done to effectively care for their child and home. Information on the couple’s perceptions regarding responsibility for work is an area which needs further investigation.

Family of Origin and Parenting Stress

Family of origin and the stress of parenthood are theorized to be related (Benedek, 1959; Valentine, 1982). Empirical evidence supports theory (Cowan et al., 1985; Sachs, 1984). In the present study, family of origin factors were assessed currently and retrospectively. In
general, both men and women reported little change in their current relationship with their own parents since becoming parents. Further, for men and women, this factor was not significantly related to family or parent stress.

However, when the dimensions of parent stress were examined some interesting results emerged. For men, a negative change in the current relationship with their parents was related to having problems attaching to their child, and feeling a sense of competency. Women reported a somewhat different pattern. A negative change in the relationship with her parents was related to depression. In sum, even though the current relationship with one’s parents was not related to family or parent stress, it was related to certain aspects of stress for both sexes.

Several theorists (Benedek, 1959; Valentine, 1982) and researchers (Cowan et al., 1978; Sachs, 1984; Shereshefsky & Yarrow, 1973) have written about the current relationship with one’s parents and the response to the transition to parenthood. They suggest that becoming a parent can precipitate the reworking of old conflicts with one’s parents. These conflicts were believed to be related to dependency needs of the new parents. If a parent is still working on dependency issues with his or her parent, then the ability to effectively attach to someone other than the parents may be hampered. Consistent with theory, the present study found that a father's ability to attach to
his child was related to the change in his current relationship with his parents.

Shereshefsky and Yarrow (1973) also investigated the current relationship with one’s parents as it related to the new parent’s transition to parenthood. They found that new parents who saw their own mothers in a positive manner were more confident in their parenting role. This finding is consistent with the finding of the present study that new fathers who had a positive change in their relationships with their own parents felt competent in their parenting ability. Also, the Shereshefsky and Yarrow study found that women who saw their mothers as being close to them, empathic, and supportive were less likely to be anxious and overly concerned about parenthood. In the present study, depression in new mothers was related to their current relationship with their parents. While depression and anxiety are not the same, this does suggest that women’s emotional response to parenthood is affected by their current relationship with their parents.

The results of the present study seem to be consistent with the view that the current relationship with one’s parents is associated with certain aspects of parent stress for new parents. Caution needs to be used in interpreting the above results for several reasons. One is that new parents in the present study reported little change in the current relationship with their own parents. However, the
change which did occur was on the average of a negative nature. Also, the change in the current relationship between new parents and their own parents was not associated with family or parent stress. A third reason for being tentative regarding the present results is related to the instrument used to assess the change in the current relationship with one’s parents. It is a nontested instrument. It is hoped this scale measured pertinent dimensions of the current relationship between new parents and their parents, but because it is nontested, it is not certain that it measured what was intended. So, although certain dimensions of parent stress were found to be related to the change in the current relationship with one’s parents, these results need to be tentatively presented.

The early relationship between the new parents and their parents was also assessed. Parents were asked to rate the health of their families of origin when they were growing up. A finding for both men and women was that unhealthy experiences in the family of origin were associated with family and parent stress. This finding suggests that the atmosphere in which we are reared has an impact on the way we respond to stressful life events. Additionally, this finding is consistent with previous studies which found poor early family of origin experiences
to be related to later parenting difficulties (Cox et al., 1985; Frommer & O'Shea, 1973 a,b).

Again, an examination of the dimensions of parent stress revealed some differences for men and women. For men, negative early experiences in their families of origin were related to feeling depressed and having difficulty with their spouse. For women, in addition to the above difficulties, negative family of origin experiences were also related to difficulty attaching to her child, and feeling isolated.

The above findings are consistent with previous research and theory. Belsky and Isabella (1988) propose a model of factors which influence parenting ability. They include family of origin experiences as one of the variables which influence parenting ability, and research supports their model. Two studies by Frommer and O'Shea (1973 a,b) found adverse family of origin experiences to be related to depression in new mothers. The same two studies also found that adverse family of origin experiences were related to unsatisfactory marital relationships.

In another study, Cox and her associates (Cox et al., 1985) found that men's and women's adaptation to parenthood was strongly predicted by family of origin experiences. Cox et al. found that women's parenting ability was predicted by more family of origin variables than men's parenting abilities. They also found that the marital
relationship predicted parenting ability for men, but not for women. These findings are consistent with the present study. It seems that early family of origin experiences are more influential than current family of origin experiences with respect to the transition to parenthood. Additionally, it seems that early family of origin experiences are related to more dimensions of parenting stress for women than men. This suggests that a woman’s parenting is highly influenced by the parenting she received, and the environment in which she was reared. These early family of origin experiences may be a better model for what new mothers experience than the current relationship with her parents. Cox et al. suggest that this may be a developmental phenomenon. That is, when the child is young, a new mother may rely more on her own early family experiences to help her parent. Later, other factors such as the current relationship with her parents and her marital relationship may become important.

Several points can be summarized for the previous section. Overall, the change in the current relationship with one’s parents is not related to family or parent stress. However, some dimensions of parent stress such as attachment difficulty, feeling ineffective in dealing with one’s child, and depression are related to the change in the current relationship with one’s parents. On the other hand, parent and family stress are related to early family
of origin experiences. Unhealthy early family of origin experiences are related to increased family and parent stress. Additionally, several dimensions of parent stress are related to early family of origin experiences. For men and women these include depression, and marital problems.

**Attachment Status and Parenting Stress**

The relationship between attachment status and the stress of parenting was also examined. Attachment theory suggests that attachment status affects the response to stressful life events, including the transition to parenthood (Bowlby, 1988; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Research supports theory (DeLozier, cited in Hansburg, 1986; Mitchell, cited in Hansburg, 1986). However, research in this area has been scarce.

Attachment status for the present study was explored using two instruments. One was the Attachment Style Prototypes (ASP), and the other was the Separation Anxiety Test (SAT). Some difficulty assessing attachment status was encountered. Using the ASP, subjects in the present study distributed themselves in the three attachment groups (secure, anxious/ambivalent, avoidant) much differently than subjects in previous studies. Sixty-nine percent of the subjects classified themselves as secure as compared to approximately 56% to 62% of subjects in previous studies. This percentage is even higher for the present study when those subjects who were unable to clearly classify
themselves are excluded. In that case, 81% of subjects classified themselves as securely attached. Few subjects classified themselves as avoidant or anxious/ambivalent.

There are several possibilities that could account for this finding. One is that subjects in this study are different in some way from subjects in previous studies, at least with respect to attachment style. It could also be that the subjects in the present study perceive themselves differently from subjects in previous studies. Most previous studies which used the ASP have used subjects who were college age (early 20s) and unmarried. Also, adult samples recruited from newspaper ads have been used. It is plausible to speculate that subjects who are married and who have just had their first child view themselves differently than young, unmarried adults. It is also likely that marriage and parenthood require the emotional stability in relationships which characterize securely attached individuals. Perhaps those who would classify themselves as avoidant or anxious/ambivalent are less likely to be married or parents, thus would not have been included in this study. A third possibility is that subjects in the present study were less willing to admit to problems with attachment than other subjects. Again, persons who have just had their first child, may not want to view themselves as anything other than securely attached. However, data from the SAT suggest that subjects
in the present study were not unusual with respect to attachment and individuation. Subjects' responses to the SAT in the present study were consistent with normative data.

Since the majority of subjects in the present study classified themselves as securely attached using the ASP, this method of classification could not be used to meaningfully examine the relationship between attachment style and parenting stress. The SAT was used instead for this purpose. The SAT was used to provide descriptive information regarding attachment status rather than attachment style. One finding using the SAT is that new parents in the present study had more attachment responses than individuation responses regardless of the intensity of the separation experience they responded to. Men and women did not differ on this finding. This suggests that the subjects in the present study have an appropriate capacity for attachment and separation and can use each appropriately with respect to the separation demands of the environment. According to Hansburg (1972), these findings are in line with normative data, and suggest healthy adjustment with respect to the balance of attachment and individuation.

Several attachment and individuation balance scores from the SAT were also used to explore the relationship between attachment and individuation and family and parent
stress. The balance of attachment and individuation assess a person’s ability to effectively use either response depending upon environmental cues. Most of the experiences in our day-to-day lives are associated with mild separation experiences. Thus, it is expected that we would respond with more independence and self-reliance than attachment. However, when we experience a strong separation event, such as divorce, it is expected that we will respond with more attachment needs than individuation. Healthy individuals are able to respond flexibly with either attachment or independence depending upon the demands of the environment.

The balance of attachment and individuation was not significantly correlated with family or parent stress for women at all. For men, an inappropriate need for attachment is related to family and parent stress. Likewise, too little independence or individuation is related to family and parent stress for men. Thus, not being individuated enough and being overly concerned with attachment leads to family and parent stress for men. This manner of attachment has been termed anxious attachment by Hansburg (1972). Hansburg (1982b) suggests that parents who have this style of attachment will have parenting difficulties.

The dimensions of parent stress were also examined. For men, an unhealthy balance of attachment and individuation was related to feeling ineffective in caring
for his child, depression, and marital problems. Although family and parent stress were not related to attachment and individuation for women, some dimensions of parent stress were. This should be explored cautiously since the attachment and individuation of women was not related to family or parent stress. It seems that the lack of the capacity to react appropriately to separation experiences was related to feeling constrained in the role of parent, and to depression for women.

Men who exhibited anxious attachment in the present study had increased family and parent stress. In general, persons who exhibit anxious attachment are fearful that their loved one may leave them or may not return their affection. Thus, in addition to problems attaching to their child, the fathers in this study may have had attachment problems related to their spouse. If so, this could lead to marital difficulties. And, we already know that marital difficulties are related to increased family and parent stress. Anxious/ambivalent attachment is related to various interpersonal difficulties (Hansburg, 1972) and parenting may be one of those.

The relationship between attachment and individuation and family and parent stress is not very strong for women. However, the relationship for men is much stronger. One possible explanation for this may be related to cultural differences between men and women with respect to
attachment. It may be that women are more comfortable with attachment issues than men. Men may be more comfortable with individuation issues (Guttman, 1975).

The Relationship Between Attachment Status and Family of Origin

Attachment theory suggests that attachment status is learned from early family of origin experiences (Bowlby, 1982a; Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Ricks, 1985). If so, it would be expected that these two factors would be correlated with one another.

For men and women, healthy family of origin experiences were significantly related to healthy responses to mild separation experiences. In other words, good family of origin experiences related to a parent’s sense of self-reliance and independence when confronted with a mild separation experience. Relating to mild separation experiences with self-reliance is consistent with attachment theory. Hansburg (1972) states that a person should react to mild separation experiences with independence and self-reliance.

The above findings provide support for attachment theory. Bowlby (1988), Mahler et al. (1975), and Ricks (1985) are theorists who maintain that attachment status is related to early family of origin experiences. Researchers studying children (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Main et al., 1985) have found children’s attachment status to be related
to their mother’s style of parenting. Research with adults has obtained similar findings. DeLozier (cited in Hansburg, 1986) and Mitchell (cited in Hansburg, 1986) found that early childhood experiences influenced the attachment status of adult women.

The findings of the present study are consistent with the above studies in showing that attachment status and family of origin variables are related. However, this area has received scant empirical investigation, thus findings at this point are exploratory.

**Predictive Factors of Parenting Stress**

To determine factors which predict family and parent stress, multiple regression equations were performed for the entire sample. So far, a discussion of factors which correlate with the stress of parenting has been presented. Correlations provide information about individual factors. Multiple regression allows the researcher to investigate combinations of factors, rather than individual relationships. The stepwise regressions performed provided information regarding which combination of factors best predicted the stress of parenting.

Even though several variables were found to be correlated with the stress of parenting, only three were found to predict family and parent stress when all the variables were considered together. Family and parent stress were best predicted by the change in emotions
associated with parenthood, the perceived responsibility for child care, and the marital relationship.

However, the factors which were found to predict family and parenting stress were not as expected. It was initially hypothesized that attachment status and family of origin experiences would most strongly predict the stress of parenting. Two possibilities come to mind to understand these findings. One is that these variables are not important factors to consider when trying to predict the stress of parenting. Another possibility is that attachment and family of origin are highly related to the predictor variables. If they are related to the predictor variables they would not add unique information to the prediction of family or parent stress.

The data support the latter explanation more than the first. Many of the independent variables are correlated with one another, and the results of a series of multiple regressions also found fairly high interrelationships among some the independent variables. This suggests that there may be one or more underlying dimensions being measured by the independent variables.

For example, the perceived responsibility for child care and the perceived responsibility for housework are highly correlated. The perceived responsibility for child care is the variable which was found to predict family and parent stress. This would imply that perceived
responsibility for housework is not important for predicting family and parent stress. However, it is likely that the perceived responsibility for child care and housework represent an underlying, more general dimension. Perhaps the perceived responsibility for child care and housework portray the broader aspect of how spouses negotiate the division of responsibility for work. It may also be a reflection of how traditional the roles are for the couple. Research suggests that how traditional the roles are is associated with marital and parenting stress (Belsky et al., 1986; Pearlin, 1975; Ruble, et al., 1988).

This dimension would be similar to, but different from marital adjustment which was found to be a predictor of family and parent stress. The marital adjustment variable did not measure negotiation or compromise, nor did it measure how traditional roles are. Thus, it seems plausible to assert that negotiation of the division of labor between spouses may be a general dimension which encompasses the two variables of perceived responsibility for child care and housework.

The idea of a generalized dimension which encompasses several variables may also help understand why the family of origin and attachment and individuation variables did not make any unique contribution to the prediction of family and parent stress. Again, results of analyses indicated that family of origin and attachment status are
related to other variables, thus may not be measuring unique factors. If so, they would not be found to be predictive of the stress of parenting.

The family of origin variable has a high amount of overlap with several of the other variables. It is related to the change in emotions associated with parenthood, the change in the current relationship with one's parents, the marital relationship, and several attachment individuation variables. Additionally, when each independent variable was regressed onto each of the others, two interesting findings emerged. One is that the family of origin variable was the most highly predicted by the set of independent variables. Second, the change in emotions was predicted by the family of origin variable. These findings suggest that the family of origin has a high interrelatedness with several other variables.

Attachment status was also found to be highly correlated with several other independent variables. It was related to family of origin, the marital relationship, responsibility for child care, and the current relationship with one's parents. Like, family of origin, attachment status has a high degree of correlation with the other independent variables. The change in the current relationship with one's parents has a high degree of interrelatedness to the family of origin variable.
It is proposed here that the family of origin, attachment status, and change in the current relationship with one’s parents are all encompassed under a broader dimension. It is suggested that these variables tap a dimension of interpersonal distress. It seems that these three variables are assessing how we learn to respond to others and react to life’s experiences. This idea is supported by attachment theory which maintains that our experiences with our parents influence our personality which in turn influences how we respond to different life experiences. Interestingly, this concept of interpersonal distress is related to the theoretical definition of attachment, but is not related to how it is measured, at least in this study.

Attachment status has been found to be difficult to measure. For example, none of the attachment and individuation subscales as measured by the SAT are correlated with the Attachment subscale of the PSI. Theoretically it is expected that these scales would have some significant correlation, since they are both measuring attachment. But, it could be that these two scales are measuring different components of attachment. One scale purports to measure parent-child attachment, and the other supposedly measures general attachment status. Consistent with the present study, Rice, Cole, and Lapsley (1990) found low intercorrelations between three measures of
attachment. Rice et al. suggest the possibility of ambiguity in what attachment and individuation measures are assessing. Conceptually attachment may contain different components. It may be that we have to be quite specific regarding which component of attachment we wish to measure. Perhaps if attachment could be assessed adequately, it could be more effectively determined whether attachment status is related to the stress of parenting or not.

Predicting the different dimensions of parent stress yielded interesting results since the dimensions were predicted by somewhat different variables. However, these results should be interpreted cautiously due to the number of analyses performed and because of the interrelatedness of the variables. In general, the independent variables impacted upon the dimensions of parent stress similarly to the way they impacted upon the broader factors of family and parent stress. That is, the change in emotions predicted all but one dimension of parent stress. The dimension of depression was predicted by the most independent variables. The two dimensions which we were least able to predict were parental health and attachment. The attachment dimension was predicted by family of origin experiences only, and the parental health dimension was predicted by the change in emotions only. This suggests that there may be other factors that predict these dimensions of parent stress. While marital adjustment was
found to predict family and parent stress, its impact was found to be via only two dimensions of parent stress. These are the relationship with spouse and social isolation.

The above findings suggest that parent stress may be so general that it is not a very useful factor to explore. It appears that being as specific as possible about which dimension of parent stress one is interested in allows for a better understanding of predictors of parent stress rather than investigating the general term. This is consistent with how Abidin (1986) suggests the PSI be used. He maintains that to gain a better understanding of the stress of parenting for an individual the dimensions of the PSI should be explored. For example, if a parent is found to have above average levels of parenting stress, the clinician or researcher needs to examine the different subscales of the PSI to determine where the stress lies.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the above discussion, the following conclusions can be made.

1. Average levels of parenting stress were experienced by the new parents in this study. The experience of parenthood had positive as well as negative aspects to it. The positive rewards of parenting likely attenuated the experience of the stress of parenthood for the parents.
2. There was an indication that multiple roles were not related to family or parent stress. Men and women shared the responsibility for child care and housework. However, women perceived they shared more responsibility for child care and housework than men. It seems that men's and women's perceptions differ with respect to the division of work. Additionally, there was no difference between the levels of family or parent stress experienced by working versus nonworking women.

3. It seems that men and women experience the transition to parenthood differently. Parent stress is significantly higher for women than men. Men and women appear to have different perceptions regarding the perceived responsibility for child care and housework. Also, different factors related to different dimensions of parent stress for men and women. For example, the perceived responsibility for child care was related to a sense of incompetency for men. For women, perceived responsibility for child care was related to feeling depressed.

4. There appears to be evidence for two major dimensions which predict the stress of parenting. One relates to interpersonal distress and subsumes the family of origin, the change in the current relationship with one's parents, the attachment status variables, and the change in emotions. The other major dimension seems to
relate to how spouses negotiate roles and decide on the division of responsibility for child care and housework.

5. Family of origin and attachment status were not the strongest predictors of the stress of parenting. However, they may have indirect influence on the factors which were predictive of the stress of parenting.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations of the current study will be discussed. One which has been presented earlier is the possible problem of multicollinearity which can occur when a multiple regression equation is performed. Multicollinearity is problematic when independent variables are highly correlated with one another. Most of the independent variables in this study have weak to mild relationships. No independent variables had a Pearson correlation of .50 or more. However, there is still some amount of interrelatedness among the variables. Results of multiple regressions found that the family of origin variable is highly related to the other independent variables. Additionally, results of the multiple regression found the four attachment difference scores were perfectly correlated. Thus, these four variables would not have provided unique information individually. These scales were used in an exploratory manner because norms did not exist for them. It is suggested that if the SAT is used in future research, only the attachment and
individuation scores be computed. Normative data exist for these two scores.

A second limitation of the study is a fairly common one. The data is self-report in nature. Subjects' responses may have been influenced by response bias. However, there are several indicators which suggest that this is not problematic. One is that standardized instruments were used in this study, and subjects in this study did not respond in unusual ways on these instruments. Further, previous studies have found that the PSI, which was used to assess the stress of parenting in this study, is not influenced by response bias. That is, subjects in general were found to respond non-defensively on the PSI.

The sample of subjects used in this study may limit the generalization of findings. This study was presented to prospective subjects as an exploration of first-time parenthood. Subjects then decided whether they wanted to participate. If selection bias was a problem then only those subjects who were having an easy time with their transition may have volunteered. Additionally, the subjects for the present study were not randomly chosen. All subjects were volunteers and most were drawn from childbirth classes. It is suggested that future research in this area use local birth announcements as a way of subject selection.
In general, this was a sample of higher SES subjects. The majority of subjects in this study were Caucasian, well-educated, and had a high income level. They were all married and their approximate age was 30. It is likely that responses from working-class or minority groups would be quite different. Also, younger and/or unmarried persons would probably provide different results than the present subjects. Harriman (1983) attempted to contact subjects who were not initially in her study and found that they were younger and more likely to be unmarried than participating subjects. She concluded they may have been under too much duress to participate in the study. The present study only surveyed married parents at least 21 years old. Different results might likely have been obtained if subject characteristics were more diverse.

An additional area of concern for the present study relates to some of the instrumentation used. The instruments used to measure change in emotions since parenthood, change in the relationship with one’s parents, and responsibility for child care and household chores were devised by the author. These instruments were all based on those used by previous researchers. However, because they are untested it is possible that they are not measuring the construct that it was hoped they were measuring. For example, the measure used to assess the change in emotions actually measured a continuum of reactions to parenthood
which ranged from positive reactions to negative reactions. The way this measure was scored averaged positive and negative reactions and it appeared that the subjects in this study had little change in their emotions. What is more accurate is that they experienced both emotions.

A further difficulty with measurement is related to how attachment and individuation were assessed. Different measures of attachment appear to measure different dimensions of attachment. In the present study, the Attachment subscale of the PSI was not correlated to the attachment-individuation subscales of the SAT. Although the Attachment subscale measures only the parent’s attachment to the child, and the SAT measures general attachment, it is still expected that they would be somewhat related. While, there have been no studies which have specifically correlated the various measures of attachment, a study by Rice et al. (1990) found three different measures of attachment and individuation to have low intercorrelations. They concluded that the measurement of attachment is ambiguous.

The narrow age range of children which was used as criteria for parental selection may have influenced the results. Only parents of children who ranged in age from birth to 24 months were included in this study. A child of one age may present different stresses than a child of another age. Children between two and three years of age
are at a different developmental age than younger children. Children this age begin to become more assertive regarding their independence and separation from parents, and this may cause different kinds or levels of stress for parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several ideas for future research come to mind. One is to use a longitudinal rather than a cross-sectional design. A longitudinal design would allow the researcher to explore how the parent may change in several areas as the transition to parenthood is traversed. The present study assessed change in two areas by requiring subjects to rate their responses according to whether change had occurred or not. Significant findings emerged using this rather simple technique. This suggests that changes in emotional and social areas occur with parenthood and a longitudinal design is perhaps the most logical way to assess change. Also, longitudinal or cross-sectional data would allow the researcher to explore the stress of parents with different aged children.

Since this study found average levels of stress related to parenthood, it seems that different subjects respond to the transition to parenthood differently. It would be interesting to explore how parents with different levels of stress differ from each other. That is, what areas in a parent's life make it more likely that he or she will experience stress related to parenting. It could be
that subjects in this study had less stress because they were married, generally in their late twenties and early thirties, were well-educated, had good incomes, and good marriages. It would be interesting to note if different variables were related to the stress of parenthood for subjects from differing SES groups.

Several gender differences were obtained in the present study. Although data for men and women were analyzed separately, data for couples was not obtained. It appears that men and women have different perspectives on issues such as child care and housework. But, we do not know how couples’ perspectives might differ. Analyzing men and women separately and as couples might allow researchers to better study division of labor issues and possible changes in the marital relationship.

Another area to pursue is the stress of parenting for working versus nonworking women. Results of this study suggest that working women do not have more stress related to parenting than nonworking women. This is contrary to previous research. Further research to determine if the current results can be consistently obtained is needed. Along these lines is the idea of multiple role strain. The female subjects in the present study reported more perceived responsibility for child care and household chores than the males. Even those who added outside employment did not report increased parenting stress. As reported
previously, even though women perceive they share significantly more of household and child care tasks, men are assuming some of this burden. It would be interesting to see whether societal attitudes have changed over time. Perhaps now men and women more equally share responsibility for child care and maintenance of the home. This might allow women to more comfortably assume multiple roles.

Future research in the area of parenting stress should continue to use standardized measures of parenting stress for two reasons. One reason is so accurate comparisons between studies and samples can be made. Second, the use of standardized instruments would provide normative information concerning the levels of stress which are obtained. The average levels of parenting stress obtained in the present study could be an accurate reflection of the stress experienced by new parents, but we do not know because this study cannot be compared accurately to previous studies.

A last recommendation concerns the finding that family of origin experiences and attachment status are related. This theoretical idea has received a shortage of empirical support. In the present study, both these variables were found to be related to the stress of parenting. Continued exploration of this finding is encouraged. Improved measures of attachment and clearer definitions of what component of attachment is being measured are also needed.
Summary

This study explored factors which are related to the stress of parenting. Average levels of parenting stress were obtained suggesting that the transition to parenthood is no more stressful than any other parenting experience. Stress related to parenting was experienced by the new parents, but they also reported positive aspects of parenthood. It was concluded that some of the positive aspects of parenting may attenuate the stress associated with parenthood. Also, new parents in this study had good marriages, good early family of origin experiences, shared in the responsibility for child care and housework, had little negative change in the current relationship with their parents. These factors may have also helped lessen the stress of parenthood.

While fairly positive views of the transition to parenthood were obtained, several variables were found to be significantly correlated with the stress of parenting. In addition to correlational data, predictive data was also obtained. The strongest predictor of family and parent stress was the change in emotions accompanying parenthood. Additionally, responsibility for child care and the marital relationship predicted family and parent stress. The emotional response to parenthood was more strongly related to parenting stress than the added tasks associated with parenting.
The factors which were hypothesized to predict parenting stress, attachment and family of origin experiences, were not found to be predictors. It was concluded that there are two major dimensions of the stress related to parenting. These are the interpersonal distress experienced by new parents, and the negotiation of the division of responsibility by spouses. These dimensions may be broader constructs underlying the independent variables.

Surprisingly, working and nonworking women responded similarly in the areas assessed. Working women did not experience higher levels of stress than nonworking women. It was concluded that multiple roles may not be problematic for women who want to work and who have help with housework and child care from their husbands. Additionally, several gender differences were obtained. Men and women appear to have different perceptions regarding the responsibility for child care and housework. It was suggested that parenting stress has different dimensions for men and women.

Limitations of the study were considered. One important concern is response bias due to how subjects were selected. This group of subjects were volunteers, and were predominately middle-class. This poses problems for generalizing these results to other groups. Also, some of the instruments used in the study were not normed or validated making comparisons to other studies difficult. Areas for future research were outlined.
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the transition to parenthood. Much of this research has focused on the effects of parenting on the child. Only recently has research begun to explore the effects of the transition to parenthood on the parent. This study is concerned with the normal stresses that affect new parents. Specifically we are trying to understand factors which are associated with stress for new parents.

If you choose to participate in this study, your answers will be kept confidential. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions in the surveys. I am interested in how a group as a whole responds, not your individual scores. Please do not put your name on any of the questionnaires.

The questionnaires each contain instructions which are self explanatory. Please answer as quickly and as honestly as you can. It is very important that you answer every question. If you choose to do so, you may withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no risks or discomforts involved in the study. It is hoped that the results will aid professionals who work with new parents to determine who might be at risk for a difficult transition.

A consent form is attached to the packet. Please read it and sign it if you wish to participate. Please return it along with the questionnaires. It will be separated from your questionnaire upon receipt. Please remember that your answers are confidential.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Donna Abbott, M. S.
Vicki L. Campbell, Ph.D.
University of North Texas
Department of Psychology
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of this research is to study some of the factors which may predict the stress associated with first time parenthood. The factors which will be explored in this research are: the day-to-day demands of a new infant, the marital relationship, the current and past relationship with one's family of origin (the family one grew up in), and one's ability to be close to others.

I have read a clear explanation of the research and understand what is requested of me. I understand that the information collected is confidential and that no risk to me is involved. I understand that the study is for research purposes, and that I may withdraw my consent for my participation at any time.

With my understanding of this, having received this information and satisfactory answers to the questions I have asked, I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

At a later date we may be interested in following up the information collected in this study. We would like to contact you to request your participation at that time.

I would be willing to be contacted at a later date: ___Yes ___No

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Vicki L. Campbell, Ph.D.

I wish to receive a summary of the results of this study: ___Yes ___No

Name (print) __________________________________________

Signature ____________________________________________

Date ________________________________________________

Address ______________________________________________

Telephone Number ____________________________________
APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE
Directions: There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Your honest feelings and thoughts are requested. It is important that all participants answer the questionnaires in the same order; therefore, please answer each page one at a time as they are presented. Please answer all questions as accurately as possible. If a question has multiple answers, choose only one. Each set of questions asks that you write a number on the line to the left of the question. Remember, all responses are confidential. Do not write your name on this questionnaire.

PIQ

_____ 1. Age: (in years) 6-7

_____ 2. Sex: 1 = male 2 = female 8

_____ 3. Are you currently married? 1 = yes 2 = no 9

_____ 4. Indicate the length of time married: 10-13

   years _______ and months ________

_____ 5. Race:

   (1) Caucasian 14
   (2) Hispanic
   (3) Black
   (4) Asian American
   (5) Other (please specify ____________________ )

_____ 6. Religious preference:

   (1) Protestant 15
   (2) Jewish
   (3) Catholic
   (4) Other (please specify______________________ )
7. Your education level (indicate the highest year completed in numbers)

High School  College  Masters  Doctoral
9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20+

8. Please indicate your current annual family income:

(1) $15,000 or below
(2) $16,000 to $25,000
(3) $26,000 to $35,000
(4) $36,000 to $45,000
(5) $46,000 or greater

9. Do you work?  1 = yes  2 = no

10. What is your occupation?

(1) Professional
(2) Managerial
(3) Sales
(4) Trained Worker
(5) Laborer
(6) Have never worked outside the home

11. Indicate the number of hours per week you work outside the home: ________ hours

12. How old was your baby when you went back to work? ________ months ________ weeks

13. How old is your child currently?

__________ months ____________ weeks

14. Do you use childcare?  1 = yes  2 = no
15. Please indicate the type of childcare you use:
   1) Commercial Day Care
   2) Relative
   3) Someone comes to your home
   4) Other (please specify) ________________________

14. How many hours per week of childcare do you use? ___33-34___

_________ hours

17. Are you satisfied with your current arrangements?
   1 = yes  2 = no

18. Do you have outside help with household responsibilities?
   1 = yes  2 = no

19. If yes, has this been since the birth of your child?
   1 = yes  2 = no

20. How many hours per week do you have outside household help? ___38-39___

_________ hours

21. How old currently is your child in months and weeks?
   ___40-43___

_________ months  _______ weeks

22. Is your mother living?  1 = yes  2 = no

23. Is your father living?  1 = yes  2 = no
APPENDIX D

PARENTING STRESS INDEX
Please answer the following questions as they relate to you and your child. The questions on the following pages ask you to mark an answer which best describes your feelings. While you may not find an answer which exactly states your feelings, please mark the answer which comes closest to describing how you feel. Your first reaction to each question should be your answer. Please mark the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by filling in the number which best matches how you feel using the following rating scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</table>

1. When my child wants something, my child usually keeps trying to get it. 46
2. My child is so active that it exhausts me.
3. My child appears disorganized and is easily distracted.
4. Compared to most, my child has more difficulty concentrating and paying attention.
5. My child will often stay occupied with a toy for more than 10 minutes.
6. My child wanders away much more than I expected.
7. My child is much more active than I expected.
8. My child squirms and kicks a great deal when being dressed or bathed.
9. My child can be easily distracted from wanting something.
10. My child rarely does things for me that make me feel good.
11. Most times I feel that my child likes me and wants to be close to me.
12. Sometimes I feel my child doesn’t like me and doesn’t want to be close to me.
13. My child smiles at me much less than I expected.
14. When I do things for my child I get the feeling that my efforts are not appreciated very much.
15. Which statement best describes your child?
   1. almost always likes to play with me
   2. sometimes likes to play with me
   3. usually doesn’t like to play with me
   4. almost never likes to play with me
16. My child cries and fusses:
   1. much less than I had expected
   2. less than I expected
   3. about as much as I expected
   4. much more than I expected
   5. it seems almost constant.
17. My child seems to cry or fuss more often than most children.
18. When playing, my child doesn’t often giggle or laugh.
19. My child generally wakes up in a bad mood.
20. I feel that my child is very moody and easily upset.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>21. My child looks a little different than I expected and it bothers me at times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. In some areas my child seems to have forgotten past learnings and has gone back to doing things that are characteristic of younger children.</td>
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<td>23. My child doesn’t seem to learn as quickly as most children.</td>
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<td>24. My child doesn’t seem to smile as much as most children.</td>
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<td>25. My child does a few things which bother me a great deal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. My child is not able to do as much as I expected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. My child does not like to be cuddled or touched very much.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. When my child came home from the hospital, I had doubtful feelings about my ability to handle being a parent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. I feel capable and on top of things when I am caring for my child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Compared to the average child, my child has a great deal of difficulty getting used to changes in schedules or changes around the house.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. My child reacts very strongly when something happens that my child doesn’t like.</td>
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</table>

33. Leaving my child with a babysitter is usually a problem.
34. My child gets upset easily over the smallest thing.
35. My child easily notices and overreacts to loud sounds and bright lights.
36. My child's sleeping or eating schedule was much harder to establish than I expected.
37. My child usually avoids a new toy for a while before beginning to play with it.
38. It takes a long time and it is very hard for my child to get used to new things.
39. My child doesn't seem comfortable when meeting strangers.
40. When upset, my child is:
   1. easy to calm down,
   2. harder to calm down than I expected,
   4. very difficult to calm down,
   5. nothing I do helps to calm my child.
41. I have found that getting my child to do something or stop doing something is:
   1. much harder than I expected,
1. Think carefully and count the number of things which your child does that bothers you. For example:
   - dawdles
   - refuses to listen
   - overactive
   - cries
   - interrupts
   - fights
   - whines, etc. Please fill in the number which includes the number of things you counted.
   1. 1-3
   2. 4-5
   3. 6-7
   4. 8-9
   5. 10+

2. When my child cries it usually lasts:
   1. less than 2 minutes,
   2. 2-5 minutes,
   3. 5-10 minutes,
   4. 10-15 minutes,
   5. more than 15 minutes.

3. There are some things my child does that really bother me a lot.

4. My child has had more health problems than I expected.

5. As my child has grown older and become more independent, I find myself more worried that my child will get hurt or into trouble.

6. My child turned out to be more of a problem than I had expected.

7. My child seems to be much harder to care for than most.

8. My child is always hanging on me.

9. My child makes more demands on me than most children.

10. I can't make decisions without help.

11. I have had many more problems raising children than I expected.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>53. I enjoy being a parent.</td>
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<td>54. I feel that I am successful most of the time when I try to get my child to do or not do something.</td>
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<td>55. Since I brought my child home from the hospital, I find that I am not able to take care of this child as well as I thought I could.</td>
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<td>56. I often have the feeling that I cannot handle things very well.</td>
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<td>57. When I think about myself as a parent I believe:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. I can handle anything that happens,</td>
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<td>2. I can handle most things pretty well,</td>
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<td>3. sometimes I have doubts, but find that I can handle most things without any problems,</td>
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<td>4. I have some doubts about being able to handle things,</td>
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<td>5. I don't think I handle things very well at all.</td>
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<td>58. I feel that I am:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. a very good parent,</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. a better than average parent,</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. an average parent,</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. a person who has some trouble being a parent,</td>
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<td>5. not very good at being a parent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59. What were the highest levels in school or college you and the child's father/mother have completed?</td>
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**Mother:**

1. 1-8th grade  
2. 9-12th grade  
3. Vocational or some college  
4. College graduate  
5. Graduate or professional school  

**Father:**

1. 1-8th grade  
2. 9-12th grade  
3. Vocational or some college  
4. College graduate  
5. Graduate or professional school
|-------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|

61. How easy is it for you to understand what your child needs or wants?

1. very easy,
2. easy,
3. somewhat difficult,
4. it is very hard,
5. I usually can't figure out what the problem is.

62. It takes a long time for parents to develop close, warm feelings for their children.

63. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me.

64. Sometimes my child does things that bother me just to be mean.

65. When I was young, I never felt comfortable holding or taking care of children.

66. My child knows that I am his or her parent and wants me more than other people.

67. The number of children that I have now is too many.

68. Most of my life is spent doing things for my child.

69. I find myself giving up more of my life to meet my children's needs than I ever expected.

70. I feel trapped by my responsibilities as a parent.

71. I often feel that my child's needs control my life.

72. Since having this child I have been unable to do new and different things.

73. Since having a child I feel that I am almost never able to do things that I like to do.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Strongly Agree</th>
<th>2 Agree</th>
<th>3 Not Sure</th>
<th>4 Disagree</th>
<th>5 Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>It is hard to find a place in our home where I can go to be by myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>When I think about the kind of parent I am, I often feel guilty or bad about myself.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>I am unhappy with the last purchase of clothing I made for myself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>When my child misbehaves or fusses too much I feel responsible, as if I didn't do something right.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>I feel every time my child does something wrong it is really my fault.</td>
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<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>I often feel guilty about the way I feel towards my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>There are quite a few things that bother me about my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>I felt sadder and more depressed than I expected after leaving the hospital with my baby.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>I wind up feeling guilty when I get angry at my child and this bothers me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>After my child had been home from the hospital for about a month, I noticed that I was feeling more sad and depressed than I had expected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Since having my child, my spouse (male/female friend) has not given me as much help and support as I expected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Having a child has caused more problems than I expected in my relationship with my spouse.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Since having a child my spouse and I don't do as many things together.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Since having my child, my spouse and I don't spend as much time together as a family as I had expected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Since having my child, I have had less interest in sex.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Having a child seems to have increased the number of problems we have with in-laws and relatives.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Having a child has been much more expensive than I had expected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>I feel alone and without friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>When I go to a party I usually expect not to enjoy myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>I am not as interested in people as I used to be.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>I often have the feeling that other people my own age don't particularly like my company.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>When I run into a problem taking care of my child I have a lot of people to whom I can talk to get help or advice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Since having my child I have a lot fewer chances to see my friends and to make new friends.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>During the past six months I have been sicker than usual or have had more aches and pains than I normally do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Physically, I feel good most of the time.</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99. Having a child has caused changes in the way I sleep.

100. I don't enjoy things as I used to.

101. Since I've had my child:
   1. I have been sick a great deal,
   2. I haven't felt as good,
   4. I haven't noticed any change in my health,
   5. I have been healthier.

Please check whether any of the following have occurred in your immediate family during the last 12 months.

102. Divorce
103. Marital reconciliation
104. Marriage
105. Separation
106. Pregnancy
107. Other relative moved into household
108. Income increased substantially (20% or more)
109. Went deeply into debt
110. Moved to new location
111. Promotion at work
112. Income decreased substantially
113. Alcohol or drug problem
114. Death of close family friend
115. Began new job
116. Entered new school
117. Trouble with superiors at work
118. Legal problems
119. Death of immediate family member
APPENDIX E

TASK RELATED INDEX
TRI

Please use the following rating scale, and rate who is responsible for the following tasks. Please put only one number in the blank before each statement.

1  2  3  4  5  
almost always  sometimes  both sometimes  almost always  
husband  husband  equally  wife  wife

1. Cooking the dinner meal.
2. Doing the laundry.
3. Washing the dinner dishes.
4. Taking out the garbage.
5. Cleaning the house.
7. Overall amount of work in running the house.

Using the same rating scale as above, rate who is most responsible for child-care activities.

1. Diapering the baby.
2. Bathing the baby.
3. Getting up during the night to care for the baby.
4. Putting the baby to bed at night.
5. Feeding the baby.
6. Caring for the baby when he or she is ill.
7. Taking the baby to the doctor.
8. Amount of overall work in taking care of the baby.
APPENDIX F

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF PARENTHOOD INDEX
EIP!

In this set of statements we are interested in how your feelings may have changed since the birth of your child. Please answer the following statements according to how you have felt since your child was born.

1 = I have felt this way much less than usual
2 = I have felt this way somewhat less than usual
3 = I have felt this way about the same as usual
4 = I have felt this way somewhat more than usual
5 = I have felt this way much more than usual

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Edgy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bothered by the changes of being a parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Emotionally upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Emotionally drained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>High energy level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Stressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Infuriated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Worry-Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using the rating scale listed below, please answer the following statements. Again, we are interested in how your feelings may have changed since the birth of your baby. Please answer the following according to how you have felt since your child was born.

1 = I have felt this way much less than usual
2 = I have felt this way somewhat less than usual
3 = I have felt this way about the same as usual
4 = I have felt this way somewhat more than usual
5 = I have felt this way much more than usual

1. I find myself thinking more about my mother since my child was born.
2. I find myself thinking more about my father since my child was born.
3. I find I want more contact with my mother.
4. I find I want more contact with my father.
5. I find myself angry at my mother for something which occurred in my childhood.
6. I find myself angry at my father for something which occurred in my childhood.
7. I find myself wanting to be close to or comforted by my mother more frequently now than before the baby was born.
8. I find myself wanting to be close to or comforted by my father more frequently now than before the baby was born.
9. I find that I miss my mother quite a bit lately.
177

1 = I have felt this way much less than usual
2 = I have felt this way somewhat less than usual
3 = I have felt this way about the same as usual
4 = I have felt this way somewhat more than usual
5 = I have felt this way much more than usual

10. I find that I miss my father quite a bit lately.

11. I find that I get irritated thinking about my mother.

12. I find that I get irritated thinking about my father.

13. I find that my relationship with my mother is not as
difficult since my child was born.

14. I find that my relationship with my father is not as
difficult since my child was born.

15. I find that I feel sad about the relationship I had as
a child with my mother.

16. I find that I feel sad about the relationship I had as
a child with my father.

17. I find myself avoiding thinking about my mother.

18. I find myself avoiding thinking about my father.

19. I find I have greater tolerance for my mother than
before my child was born.

20. I find I have greater tolerance for my father than
before my child was born.

21. I find that I ask for advice more from my mother now
that my child is born.

22. I find that I ask for advice more from my father now
that my child is born.
1 = I have felt this way much less than usual
2 = I have felt this way somewhat less than usual
3 = I have felt this way about the same as usual
4 = I have felt this way somewhat more than usual
5 = I have felt this way much more than usual

--- 23. I find that I think about childhood memories with my mother in a positive way.

--- 24. I find that I think about childhood memories with my father in a positive way.
The statements below refer to your feelings in a love
relationship. We are more interested in the way YOU typically
feel when you are in a relationship than we are in any particular
relationship partner, past or present. Please rate each of the
following three statements on the degree to which they fit your
feelings and experiences in relationships. Use the following
ratings: 1 = Not at all like me
2 = Generally unlike me
3 = Somewhat like me
4 = Generally like me
5 = Completely or almost completely like me

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and
am comfortable depending on them and having them depend upon me.
I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone
getting too close to me.

2. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I
find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow
myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too
close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than
I feel comfortable being.

3. I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would
like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or
won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with
another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.
APPENDIX H

DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE
The next set of questions asks about your marital relationship as it is now. This questionnaire asks about different aspects of relationships, and different sets of criteria are used to respond to the items.

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships.

Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item using the following rating scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always Agree</th>
<th>Almost Agree</th>
<th>Occasionally Agree</th>
<th>Frequently Agree</th>
<th>Almost Disagree</th>
<th>Always Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Handling family finances.
4. Demonstrations of affection.
5. Friends.
6. Sex Relations.
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior).
8. Philosophy of life.
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws.
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important.
11. Amount of time spent together.
12. Making major decisions.
14. Leisure time, interests, and activities.
15. Career decisions.
Now use the following ratings for the next set of items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All the Time</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>More Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship? (Rec 4 1)

17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?

18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

19. Do you confide in your mate?

20. Do you ever regret that you married? (or lived together)?

21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?

22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"

Please use the following ratings for the next two items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every Day</th>
<th>Almost Every Day</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Do you kiss your mate?

24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?
How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

Never  Less than  Once or  Once or  Once a day  More often
    once a month twice a twice a
    month week

0 1 2 3 4 5

25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas.
26. Laugh together.
27. Calmly discuss something.
28. Work together on a project.

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks.

Yes  = 0  No  = 1

29. Being too tired for sex.
30. Not showing love.

Please choose the number which best represents the degree of happiness in your relationship. Number 3 represents the degree of happiness of most relationships.

Extremely Fairly A Little Happy Very Extremely Perfect
Unhappy Unhappy Unhappy Happy Happy Happy

0 1 2 3 4 5 6

31. Please rate the degree of happiness in your relationship.
Please choose one of the following statements to best describe how you feel about the future of your relationship?

5 = I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.

4 = I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.

3 = I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.

2 = It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.

1 = It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

0 = My relationship can never succeed, and there is no work that I can do to keep the relationship going.

32. Please choose the number from the above statements which best describes your relationship.
APPENDIX I

FAMILY OF ORIGIN SCALE
The family of origin is the family with which you spent most or all of your childhood years. This scale is designed to help you recall how your family of origin functioned.

Each family is unique and has its own ways of doing things. Thus, there are no right or wrong choices in this scale. What is important is that you respond as honestly as you can. In reading the following statements, apply them to your family of origin as you remember it. Using the following rating scale, please write the appropriate number beside each question.

5 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin
4 = Agree that it describes my family of origin
3 = Neutral
2 = Disagree that it describes my family of origin
1 = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin

1. In my family, it was normal to show both positive and negative feelings.
2. The atmosphere in my family usually was unpleasant.
3. In my family, we encouraged one another to develop new friendships.
4. Differences of opinion in my family were discouraged.
5. People in my family often made excuses for their mistakes.
6. My parents encouraged family members to listen to one another.
7. Conflicts in my family never got resolved.
8. My family taught me that people were basically good.
188

9 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin
4 = Agree that it describes my family of origin
3 = Neutral
2 = Disagree that it describes my family of origin
1 = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin

9. I found it difficult to understand what other family members said and how they felt.
10. We talked about our sadness when a relative or family friend died.
11. My parents openly admitted it when they were wrong.
12. In my family, I expressed just about any feeling I had.
13. Resolving conflicts in my family was a very stressful experience.
14. My family was receptive to the different ways various family members viewed life.
15. My parents encouraged me to express my views openly.
16. I often had to guess at what other family members thought or how they felt.
17. My attitudes and my feelings frequently were ignored or criticized in my family.
18. My family members rarely expressed responsibility for their actions.
19. In my family, I felt free to express my own opinions.
20. We never talked about our grief when a relative or family friend died.
21. Sometimes in my family, I did not have to say anything, but I felt understood.
5 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin
4 = Agree that it describes my family of origin
3 = Neutral
2 = Disagree that it describes my family of origin
1 = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin

22. The atmosphere in my family was cold and negative.
23. The members of my family were not very receptive to
   one another’s views.
24. I found it easy to understand what other family
   members said and how they felt.
25. If a family friend moved away, we never discussed our
   feelings of sadness.
26. In my family, I learned to be suspicious of others.
27. In my family, I felt that I could talk things out and
   settle conflicts.
28. I found it difficult to express my own opinions in my
   family.
29. Mealtimes in my home usually were friendly and
   pleasant.
30. In my family, no one cared about the feelings of other
   family members.
31. We usually were able to work out conflicts in my
   family.
32. In my family, certain feelings were not allowed to be
   expressed.
1 = Strongly agree that it describes my family of origin
2 = Agree that it describes my family of origin
3 = Neutral
4 = Disagree that it describes my family of origin
5 = Strongly disagree that it describes my family of origin

33. My family believed that people usually took advantage of you.
34. I found it easy in my family to express what I thought and how I felt.
35. My family members usually were sensitive to one another's feelings.
36. When someone important to us moved away, our family discussed our feelings of loss.
37. My parents discouraged us from expressing views different from theirs.
38. In my family, people took responsibility for what they did.
39. My family had an unwritten rule: Don't express your feelings.
40. I remember my family as being warm and supportive.
Table J-1

Scores of Males and Females on the Parenting Stress Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>202.36</td>
<td>32.68</td>
<td>208.56</td>
<td>33.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Domain</td>
<td>108.22</td>
<td>18.34</td>
<td>116.17*</td>
<td>20.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>15.76</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>17.98*</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>12.02</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Restriction</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>18.43*</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Competency</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>5.53</td>
<td>25.42</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Isolation</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>12.29</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Spouse</td>
<td>15.83</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>18.04*</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Health</td>
<td>11.39</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Domain</td>
<td>94.11</td>
<td>16.93</td>
<td>92.36</td>
<td>14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>25.02</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>24.79</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptability</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>11.07</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demandingness</td>
<td>16.64</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>4.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>8.65</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distractibility/ Hyperactivity</td>
<td>23.46</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>23.04</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforces Parent</td>
<td>8.89</td>
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Note. Significant difference between males and females.

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Table J-2

Correlation Matrix of Dependent and Independent Measures for Males

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**Note.** PSI = Parenting Stress Index; TRI-CC = Task Related Index - Child Care; TRI-HH = Task Related Index - Housework; EIPI-A = Emotional Index of Parenthood - Adjective Checklist; EIPI-P = Emotional Index of Parenthood - Current Relationship with Parents; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; FOS = Family of Origin Scale; ATTACH = Attachment Score of SAT; INDIV = Individuation Score of SAT; ATT-DIFF = SAT Attachment and Difference Score; IND-DIFF = SAT Individuation Difference Score; MILD-DIFF = SAT Mild Difference Score; STRONG-DIFF = SAT Strong Difference Score.

<sup>a</sup><sub>P < .05</sub>;  
<sup>b</sup><sub>P < .01</sub>;  
<sup>c</sup><sub>P < .001</sub>.  

200
Table J-3

Results of Multiple Regressions for Independent Variables

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Note. TRI-CC = Task Related Index - Child Care; TRI-HH = Task Related Index - Housework; EIPI-A = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Adjective Checklist; EIPI-P = Emotional Impact of Parenthood Index - Current Relationship with Parents; DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; FOS = Family of Origin Scale; SAT = Separation Anxiety Test.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001
REFERENCES


