

**A Cognitive-Behavioral Analysis of Stress and Coping
in Parents At Risk of Abusing**

Kathleen O'Connor Hoekstra

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ABSTRACT

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Critical incidents of parent coping with their provocative children were observed over eight interviews with 27 at-risk parents whose demographic profiles typically matched that associated with the so-called "feminization of poverty". Following the Lazarus stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm, relationships between child provocativeness and parent cognitive appraisal of the situation were analyzed, and the relationship of each of these respective social and psychological levels of stress to actual coping behavior studied. The role of anger--an emotion often associated with abuse--was also examined in relation to these stress and coping variables. And, finally, the temporal order of these components of the coping process was analyzed.

Adaptiveness of parent cognition and coping behavior varied with the stressfulness of the situation when this was defined as child provocativeness. There were indications that the positive aspects of child provocativeness, parent cognition, and parent coping behavior went together, with child provocativeness being dependent on parent cognition and behavior rather than the other way around. Thus, it was concluded that abuse

should be viewed as a transactional encounter which, while immediately triggered by provocative child behavior, is also dependent on preceding parent behavior, and parent cognitions. The implications were for prevention and intervention efforts which foster more adaptive levels of both cognition and behavior in parents.

While all relationships were not statistically significant, support was found for the primacy of cognition in coping: the temporal order which Lazarus posits, i.e., that cognition precedes emotion which precedes actual coping behavior, was supported.

It was recommended that findings be interpreted cautiously, with consideration of the small size and heavily minority makeup of the sample. It was also recommended that additional sources of stress in the parent-child relationship, and related parent cognitions and coping responses be identified in research. The PCE study design and instruments were seen as appropriate models for such expanded study. It was emphasized that in follow up studies involving similar minority samples, increased consideration be given to measurement and interpretation in light of cultural reality.

The correspondence of cognitive perspectives with social work values, goals, and daily work at the interface of person and environment was noted, and recommendations were made for helping students and

practitioners make the needed cognitive shift toward
integrating such perspectives in practice.

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DEDICATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Parent-Child Encounter study, hereinafter called the PCE study, is based on a larger study, "An Experimental Comparison of Cognitive-Behavioral Interventions Aimed at Anger of Parents at Risk of Child Abuse" (Whiteman, Fanshel, and Grundy, 1987) which is discussed in the literature review, and in which I participated as a researcher/therapist during my doctoral studies at Columbia University School of Social Work. In this "Anger" study of 59 abusing and at-risk parents, the authors sought to specify the effects of four cognitive-behavioral treatments (cognitive restructuring, systematic desensitization, problem solving, and a composite of these) on the reduction of situational anger and potentially harmful parent responses to provocations.

Results of the Anger study indicated that all three individual cognitive-behavioral techniques were superior to the standard casework which controls received, and that the composite technique, with emphasis on problem solving, was the most successful in reducing parental situational anger, and in positively moderating related parent cognitions in hypothetical parent-child interactions. For example, this cognitive-behavioral treatment helped parents to be more empathic and accepting toward hypothesized provocative child behavior.

A. Relationship to PCE Study

By using triangulation, i.e., multi-method data collection, the Anger study has provided a tool for strengthening the validity of that study's findings as well as for examining related questions and hypotheses. That is, in addition to parents' reactions and responses to hypothetical provocations presented in the Anger study's pre and post tests, parent self reports of provocative child behavior, and their own response behaviors and related cognitions in a variety of parent-child encounters were collected in each of the eight study interviews in semi-structured questionnaires (Appendix A). The four researcher/therapists who were experienced clinicians and doctoral candidates in social work recorded these reports on tape as well as on the written questionnaires. These parent self reports were used in the Anger study for assessment as well as to demonstrate and practice the experimental cognitive-behavioral techniques. However, they were not fully analyzed in the Anger study.

B. Critical Incidents of Parent Coping

In these reflective questionnaires, parents were asked about a range of parent-child encounters. They were asked to describe a time in the previous week when they and their children did not get along well (conflict); when they got along well (harmony); and when the parent headed off trouble (conflict avoided).

Parents were also asked to describe their coping behavior in a future hypothetical parent-child conflict triggered by similar child provocativeness. Therapists systematically probed responses by asking questions designed to pinpoint specific child provocation, parent coping behavior, and parent cognitions regarding both. Thus, "critical incidents" (Flanagan, 1936) of the stress and coping process as defined by Lazarus (1966) were made available for study, with the foregoing areas of inquiry providing natural units of analysis.

Analyses of these critical incidents of parent stress and coping made possible, (1) developing typologies of (a) provocative child behavior which instigates stressful parent-child encounters, and (b) parent coping behavior in response to such provocation; (2) identifying the content and quality of parent cognitions in these kinds of stressful parent-child encounters which have potential for escalating to abuse; (3) increasing theoretical understanding of (a) the transactional process in which such child stressors and parent cognitions determine the adaptiveness of parent coping behavior; and (b) the influence of parent response on subsequent child behavior; and (4) determining the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral techniques in promoting more adaptive parent coping in actual encounters.

The PCE study addressed the first three of these objectives; the fourth objective, which is addressed in

the larger Anger study, was not pursued in the PCE study because of the smallness of the PCE sample (n=27) which is described in the study design section.

C. Theoretical Perspective on the Coping Process

The theoretical framework for viewing parent coping in these stressful parent-child encounters was Lazarus' stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm which is discussed fully in the literature review. Briefly stated, Lazarus postulates that an environmental or "social" stressor (e.g., provocative child behavior) is cognitively appraised by an individual to create a psychological level of stress which is based on the meaning of the stressor for that individual. This cognitive appraisal brings forth the "impulse to cope" (emotion) which, together with cognitive appraisal influences actual coping behavior.

In the PCE study, an attempt was made to identify the cognitive-phenomenological coping process in at-risk parents who reported stressful parent-child encounters with potential for abuse. Thus, social and psychological levels of stress, as well as parent coping behavior, were described in actual parent-child encounters, and the effects of these variables on each other determined.

D. Some Limitations of the PCE Study

Study data consisted of parents' self reports which were not independently observed. This threat to

reliability was compensated for by collecting similar data systematically at several points in time.

Also, rather than have parents rate their own children's behavior on provocativeness, a panel of seven raters was employed to develop a provocativeness scale. Because these raters were white, middle class professionals, their perceptions of provocativeness in children may differ from those of less educated minority parents. Thus, validity of this scale for the latter parents should be tested further.

While the PCE study takes a more inclusive view than some abuse studies, it is less inclusive than others. For example, while it is more inclusive than trait studies, it does not accommodate the universe of sociocultural or ecological variables demonstrated to be essential to comprehensive understanding of abuse (Gelles, 1980; Garbarino, 1976). For example, parents' own upbringing, marital violence, illness, unemployment. Also, because neither the larger Anger study nor the PCE study monitored parent behavior beyond the study period, it was not possible to state definitively whether parent coping reported during the study represented longer term parent performance.

In addition, information was not systematically gathered during or after the study period on child effects of parent coping behavior. Instead, parent coping behavior was assigned a child welfare risk rating

(i.e., coded as adaptive or maladaptive) based on findings in the parenting and abuse literature. The question of whether adaptiveness as defined in the existing literature corresponds to cultural realities experienced by minority parents was not addressed in the current study. Since this and other study measures were based on theories and measures developed on non-minority groups, findings should be interpreted in light of these omissions.

Because the sample parents had identified themselves and had been identified by professionals as either abusing or at risk of abusing, the relationship between child provocativeness, maladaptive parent coping and negatively valenced parent cognitions was purified. These parents would be expected to report a sizeable number of conflicts with their children, at least moderate levels of anger and child-blaming, weaker perception of internal locus of control, less perspective-taking level of reasoning, and coping behavior that was often maladaptive enough to be of concern. Thus, a rich view is made available for learning how all these factors which have been implicated in child abuse are related. The importance of studying such samples is underscored by a recent statistic indicating that each year in America one and a half million children are beaten so seriously that they come to the attention of the authorities (Van Dalen (1989)).

It should be noted that not including "normal" parents in the sample indicates the need to test findings on such criterion groups before generalizing beyond abusing and at-risk parents to all parents who experience stress in dealing with provocative children.

INFORMED CONSENT

All parents involved in the Anger study participated voluntarily in the study; were informed of the goals of treatment and of the research itself; and were informed that their refusal to participate would not affect their status at the agencies where they were clients. Participants received \$10 for each session. All participants gave signed consent for written documentation of their treatment (Appendix E), and all but a few (6) gave signed consent for taped documentation of their sessions. Consents were given with the understanding that all documents would be coded to protect confidentiality. Approval for the study was obtained from the Human Subjects Review Committee of Columbia University. Since participants agreed to allow the written and taped documents to be used for educational purposes during and following the study, analysis and publication of the PCE study is covered by the larger study's consent agreements and University approval.

Chapter 1

COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVES ON STRESS AND COPING IN AT-RISK PARENTS: A REVIEW

A. Introduction

Parental stress has been cited as a major factor in abuse (Kempe & Kempe, 1974; Fontana, 1978; Parke, 1982). However, in reviews of the child abuse literature, Allan (1978) and Berger (1980) found that distal environmental stressors alone, such as poverty, poor marital relationship, parent's own harsh upbringing have not been successful predictors of abuse. At the same time, there is growing evidence that a more immediate environmental stressor, provocative child behavior, and subjective factors (e.g., parent attributions, attitudes, and beliefs) regarding it may influence how parents cope when the outcome is abuse. In the following review, empirical and theoretical research related to this cognitive perspective on abuse is presented.

B. Cognition and Parenting Behavior

In an early parenting study Nowlis (1951) systematically examined the relationship between mothers' cognitions (e.g., aims, motivations, and justifications) and their responses to aggressive child behavior. He found that there were specific parental cognitions which either facilitated or inhibited a punitive maternal response to such child provocativeness. In punitive-facilitative responses, the following maternal cognitions were influential: (1)

Mother sees child as blameworthy; (2) mother values punishment as an effective teaching method and believes she is duty bound to punish the child; (3) mother blames herself because she is tired, angry, busy, out of control.

In punitive-inhibitive responses, the following cognitions were influential: (1) Child is not blameworthy; (2) punishment won't change the child's behavior; (3) mother feels that an unemotional response is satisfactory. From these findings Nowlis concluded that the meaning to mothers of their own behavior needed to be known in order to predict not only maternal responses to an aggressive child, but also to determine the effects of these subjectively motivated maternal responses on subsequent child behavior.

1. Complexity of Parent Cognition

Another well known early parent "attitude-behavior" study was Schaefer and Bell's (1958). Their Parent Attitude Research Instrument (PARI) identified 2 independent dimensions in parents (love-hostility; control-autonomy) which described 4 types of parents in a circumplex model. However, when Emmerich (1969) utilized a modified version of PARI to study the role of cognitive factors on parent behavior, he found that more subjective intervening cognitive factors such as an individual parent's goals and beliefs influenced parent strategies.

While generalizability of Emmerich's, as well as many of the early parenting studies, is limited by the fact that the sample was a homogeneous group of middle class parents, the study did demonstrate that parent cognition was more complex and subjective than earlier studies had indicated. As a result of his findings, Emmerich recommended developing instruments which, unlike PARI, were not standardized, but which could measure individual subjective parent cognition. More recently, Sameroff and Feil (1985) have attributed the inability of standardized, researcher designed parent attitude instruments such as PARI to predict child effects to their failure to recognize the role of more complex individual parent cognitive sets such as those Heider (1958) described.

2. The Cognition-to-Coping Process: A Gap in Research and Practice

In a review of parents' cognitions and behaviors, and child outcomes, Goodnow (1985) found that only empirical links between these have been demonstrated. The author criticizes the lack of description and explanation of the processes which underlie these associations. Similar to Goodnow, Sameroff and Feil (1985) point out the need for research to move beyond descriptions of the content of parents' ideas to explorations of the processes underlying these. For example, parent level of cognitive development or complexity related to the parenting task. That is, the

quality as well as the content of parent cognition needs to be understood to determine how cognition mediates parent behavior and influences subsequent child behavior.

McGillicuddy-De Lisi (1980) and Rosen (1985) have discussed the need for therapists to collaborate with clients to identify maladaptive client cognitions and examine how these may negatively impact client goals and interests. Sperry (1975) asserts that only if a therapist can recognize the overall level of client cognition, and can accept it, is there a real basis for cooperation and rapport. He states that such understanding and acceptance can set the stage for helping clients grow beyond less perspective-taking levels of cognition (e.g., egoistic) to higher, more complex levels on which successful interpersonal relationships depend.

Epstein et al (1987) note that while cognitive-behavioral approaches to family treatment generally share with functional, structural, strategic, and psychodynamic orientations the assumption that meaning has an impact on family members' behaviors, the absence of formal instruments for assessing cognitions (e.g, beliefs, expectations, attributions) has been an obstacle to identifying the process in which individual cognitions and maladaptive behaviors interact. These

authors recommend developing family self report instruments, and using observation techniques as well as standard interview schedules to measure family cognitions reliably.

3. Reliably Measuring Cognition

As discussed previously, early parent cognition measures have been criticized for overlooking the individualness and complexity of parent cognition. Davison, Robins and Johnson (1983) assert that reliably measuring cognition requires inquiring about an individual's own thoughts rather than measuring him on standardized instruments. Becker and Krug (1965) have challenged the notion that the use of fixed-standard instruments to learn parent cognitions is justified by the assumption that they counter parent defensiveness. They point out that this assumption has not been documented, and that their own studies with first person questionnaires demonstrate that, if asked directly, "parents are strongly motivated to communicate just what to do with their child".

4. Stress and Abuse: A Cognitive-Phenomenological View

Parke (1978) has noted that not all parents who share dysfunctional cognitions (e.g, attitudes, values, beliefs supportive of punitive discipline) are abusive. He points out that an adequate theory of child abuse must therefore account for why only some parents who

share dysfunctional cognitions become abusive. Noting the role of subjective stress in coping behavior generally, Parke suggests that parent responses to provocative child behavior may be influenced by their subjective experience of stress in such situations.

Several well known studies which demonstrate that stress cannot be defined exclusively by objective measures support Parke's explanation of stress as subjective. For example, Janis (1958) found that the intensity of preoperative fear in patients anticipating surgery was not correlated very substantially with the objective seriousness of the operation. Glass and Singer (1972) found that the effects of noise depended on the way it was evaluated by the person, and to what extent the person believed it could be controlled. Altman (1975) found that whether high population density is responded to as stressful crowding depends on the meaning to an individual of such a condition. And Pearlin (1975) found that it was not objective measures of status inequality which led to marital stress, but the meaning and value which one attached to status inequality.

Lazarus' conclusion that an environmental or "social" stressor is cognitively appraised by an individual to create a "psychological" level of stress converges with such findings and with Parke's explanation regarding stress. Applying this theoretical framework to abuse, parents would be seen as coping with a

psychological as well as objective or social level of stress when parent-child conflict eventuates in abuse, with the subjective or psychological level influencing actual coping behavior. The successful use with abusing parents of cognitive-behavioral therapies based on cognitive-phenomenological principles such as Lazarus' supports this view (Denicola & Sandler, 1980; Nomellini, 1980; Ambrose et al, 1980; Barth et al, 1983; Whiteman, Fanshel & Grundy, 1987).

a. Lazarus' Stress-Appraisal-to-Coping Paradigm

1.) The "Cognitive Revolution"

During the 1950's, psychology in general began to experience a paradigm shift away from exclusively normative research to greater emphasis on individual differences. This "new look" movement in which perception (e.g., motivation) accounted for individual differences was influenced by European Gestalt tradition and by growth in the areas of personality and clinical psychology. A parallel paradigmatic shift was the so-called "cognitive revolution" away from drive and tension-reduction concepts, and toward cognitive processes as central in human adaptation. Early cognitive theorists included Lewin (1935), Heider (1958), Kelly (1955), and Murray (1938).

2.) Empirical Studies

In his stress research in the 50's, Lazarus (1981) found empirical evidence that did not support the

traditional linear Stimulus--Response perspective on stress and coping. This was especially true when research took place in natural settings. As a result, Lazarus concluded that a theory of stress and coping needed to consider individual differences as mediators. Shifting from his earlier "trait" orientation in which stable motivational differences were seen as predictors of outcomes, Lazarus took the position that flux as well as stability must be considered in and between person and environmental variables.

In studies throughout the 1960's, Lazarus and his associates demonstrated that the experience of stress was dependent on subjects' cognitive appraisal of the content of a potentially threatening event, and that it was this subjective experience of stress which determined subjects' behavioral as well as emotional responses.

The best known of these stress and coping studies is one in which Lazarus and Alfert (1964) demonstrated that normally stressful events could be made less stressful through cognitive means of emotional control. In this laboratory study, subjects' self-reported galvanic skin reactions (GSR) were measured before and after subjects viewed a film depicting an Australian stone age culture's puberty ceremony. In the film a stone knife was used to partially dissect the penises of adolescent boys. Two versions of the film were shown to two groups of the sample subjects. These versions

included a "threatening" version" which graphically presented the ceremony, and an alternate version which introduced ego-defensive concepts of denial and intellectualization intended to downplay the harmful significance of the event.

Hearing the "defensive" passages before they viewed the film resulted in reducing subjects' self-reported affective disturbance, heart rate, and GSR indicators of threat. The authors concluded that, by altering the subjects' appraisal of the threatening event, the defense-oriented passages had served to reduce the stress reaction which had been observed in similar subjects who had viewed the alternate "threatening" version of the film.

Lazarus and his associates demonstrated that discrepancies between subjects' self-reports of affective disturbance and autonomic evidence of stress reactions could be accounted for by cognitive processes which intervened between the threat and the observed stress reaction. Thus, they concluded, the pathway between stress and coping behavior is not a direct one, but one mediated by cognition.

3. Postulates and Concepts

a.) Primary Appraisal

The coping paradigm which Lazarus and his associates developed as a result of their studies posits a cognitive-phenomenological process which begins when

an individual appraises a threatening situation.

Perceived threat, the key intervening variable in psychological stress, is defined as environmental/internal demands and conflicts between them which tax or exceed a person's resources. Threat is conceptualized as the anticipation of harm, and not a response to actual harm. A stimulus cue alerts one to how imminent and harmful the threat is, and how vulnerable he is. This stimulus cue is referred to as primary appraisal; the information about personal vulnerability, secondary appraisal.

In the threat-producing cognitive appraisal which Lazarus defines as primary appraisal, one evaluates the significance of an incident for his well-being by answering the questions, "What is at stake here", or "How much danger am I in". The answer may be one of three: that the incident is irrelevant, benign, or stressful. An appraisal of stress involves a judgment of harm or loss, threat, or negatively-toned challenge. An appraisal of harm or loss informs an individual that injury or damage has already been done (e.g., bereavement; loss of function, social esteem, or self esteem). An appraisal of threat informs one that such injuries are yet to occur. A less stressful appraisal of challenge does not inform an individual of harm, loss, or threat, but rather that the situation offers an opportunity for growth or mastery.

Lazarus states that perceiving a situation as harm, loss, or threat rather than challenge may be more likely when one assumes that the specific environment is hostile and dangerous, and that he lacks resources for mastering it. A cognitive appraisal of challenge, on the other hand, may be more likely when one perceives environmental demands as difficult, but not impossible to master; when he feels that he is able to draw upon existing or acquirable skills. While several authors have written regarding the influence of an individual's general belief systems about themselves and the environment on cognitive appraisal of specific encounters (Bandura, 1977; Ellis, 1973), Lazarus (1966) has stressed that the term cognitive appraisal does not imply good reality testing or adaptation, but simply that thought processes--quality notwithstanding--are involved.

b.) Secondary Appraisal

Primary appraisal determines the intensity and quality of the emotional response to any person-environment transaction. However, Lazarus states, evidence of the outcome of a primary appraisal of stress in the form of an observable emotion (e.g., anger or fear) is not sufficient to predict coping behavior. For example, fear may not necessarily be followed by aggression. Here, again, cognitions mediate an individual's response; a behavior-determining secondary appraisal will influence actual response

behavior. Lazarus asserts that without such an intervening process, it would be difficult to explain the demonstrated variety of coping strategies, including different stress reactions and the effects on these of different stimulus and personality variables. Because primary and secondary appraisal are interdependent, they may seem to fuse into one unit in the appraisal process.

Secondary appraisal which underlies an individual's actual coping strategy intervenes between the threat appraisal discussed above and the responses (emotional and behavioral) to this appraisal. In secondary appraisal, one makes ongoing judgments about his coping resources--his options, constraints. An individual's secondary appraisal is determined by (1) previous experiences in similar situations; (2) generalized beliefs about himself and the environment; and (3) availability of resources. Thus, in secondary appraisal, an individual asks the question, "What are the possible negative effects of particular actions I can take to remove or relieve this threat"; "How successful will a particular action be". One's responses seem to be based on judgments regarding such factors as the retaliatory power of the aggressor; internalized values against aggression; viability of alternative actions; social or situational constraints; and motivational structure of the individual about the environment and her resources for coping with it.

Lazarus (1966) provides the following example to illustrate the transaction between primary and secondary appraisal: If a threatened individual's internal structures (motivations, beliefs, values) permit anger, but appraisal of the content of the external situation informs him that an aggressive response to even an unjustified provocation would be dangerous, costly, or ineffective, the outcome will be anger but not aggression. If, on the other hand, internal structures strongly prohibit the expression of anger, the emotional response to an appraisal of threat may be fear or depression, and the outcome may be "flight".

c.) Transaction of Situational and Structural Cognitions

In both primary and secondary appraisal, both attributions regarding the immediate situation (e.g., the blameworthiness of the provocative child), and more structural "dispositional" cognitions (e.g., beliefs regarding children and parenting) are in transaction. While attributions may differ with a given situation, dispositional cognitions are more enduring, organized systems of cognitions--cognitive structures or personal dispositions (e.g., traits, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, abilities) which influence not only how an individual appraises a situation, but also how she copes with it (e.g., aggression, avoidance, repression, search for information).

Lazarus' description of dispositional cognitions corresponds to what Flavell (1971) defines as the universally accepted notion of a set of cognitive items that are somehow interrelated to constitute an organized whole or totality. It is also reminiscent of Kelly's (1955) theoretical system known as constructive alternativism in which the author proposed that each individual formulates personal constructs through which he views and interprets the world. Such constructs guide one's behavior when interacting with others.

d.) Transaction Between Person and Environment

Lazarus states that because the appraisal of threat is not a simple perception of the objective elements in a situation, but a judgment, an inference in which the data are "assimilated to a constellation of ideas and expectations" both stimulus and personality are in transaction in the process. He emphasizes that because perception of the environmental stressor, rather than its objective or social reality, influences the experience of stress by an individual, mediational as well as transactional processes are key to understanding the relationship between stress and reaction. Therefore, the appropriate level for analysis of coping in stressful situations is the psychological level, and an individual's cognitive labeling, as well as observable reactions to threat may be assumed to be legitimate indicators of a person's experience of psychological stress.

The application of Lazarus' SAC paradigm to abusive encounters makes possible determining how the social and psychological levels of stress are related, and how both levels are related to coping behavior. Determining these relationships may increase understanding of why some parents respond abusively in stressful parent-child encounters. Understanding the underlying dynamics of abuse may suggest laws regarding coping generally. Meichenbaum and Cameron (1980) have noted that clear understanding of the process which governs the relationship between cognition and behavior in stressful situations is a gap in cognitive-behavioral theory.

5. Attributions and Coping Behavior

1. Empirical and Theoretical Studies

Several studies have demonstrated the influence on an individual's coping behavior of attributions regarding a conflict situation. These suggest specific cognitions for study which seeks to identify relationships between cognition and behavior. For example, coping behavior has been found to be influenced by perception of an aggressor's behavior as threatening (Galdston, 1965; Evans, 1981); as targeted to himself (Bell & Harper, 1977; Rosenberg & Repucci, 1983); perception of the aggressor's intent as deliberate and harmful (Morris & Gould, 1963); and his power as greater (Kelly, 1955; Thibault & Riecken, 1955). The victim's

stated feeling of lack of control in the situation

(Sarason et al, 1978); victim's experience of anger (Schacter & Singer, 1962; Berkowitz, 1969; Koneci, 1975; Novaco, 1976); and victim's perception of an aggressive response as permitted, beneficial, and safe (Buss, 1961; Bandura, 1973).

2. Attribution and Abuse

a. The Role of Norms

While most attributions such as those listed above are concerned with interactions between adults, several authors have drawn implications for the role of cognition in abusive parent behavior from such findings. Parke (1982) has cautioned that abusing parents often justify their behavior in terms of higher moral principles. Because they may even see their punitiveness as necessary, abusing parents often see our interventions as interference. Kadushin and Martin (1981) found this position to be common among the abusing parents they studied. Feshback (1980) notes that retaliatory norms might require parent injury to an offending child.

b. The Role of Child Blaming

Feshback (1980) suggests that disinhibiting factors operating in abuse which overcome a developed inhibition toward violence among humans might be parents' perceptions of the child's responsibility and

intentionality. Fincham and Jaspers (1980) report several studies in which the authors found that particularly when the effects of child behavior are negative, discipline is likely to reflect parent assessment of blame. Dix and Grusec (1985) also found an association between anger and child blaming in parents.

c. The Role of Anger

Frude (1979) suggests that since abusing parents often seem to be in long term situations which are likely to promote aggression by dint of near-chronic frustration, the child abuse literature might be enriched with findings regarding anger and aggression. Patterson (1985) and Reid and Kavanaugh (1985) have reported a strong association between parent anger and abuse. Novaco (1977), asserting that anger may be conceptualized as a cognition, recommends the use of cognitive-behavioral anger control techniques with abusing parents.

d. The Role of Cognitions Regarding Corporal Punishment

In a study of 830 indicated cases of abuse, Kadushin and Martin (1981) developed a list of child behaviors which, while they were quite normal, had instigated an abusive event. The authors found that while these behaviors had initiated a parent response and influenced ongoing parent behavior during the event

which culminated in abuse, parent cognition, specifically attitude about corporal punishment, was a significant determinant of parent behavior.

By noting both the role of the child as initiator of a parent-child conflict, and the role of parent cognition in the actual outcome of such conflict, Kadushin and Martin demonstrated that both child and parent factors contribute to abuse. Thus, they demonstrated that both external and internal factors interact when the result is abuse. Theirs is typical of contemporary abuse studies reviewed by de Lissovoy (1979) in which the earlier dichotomy of the pathological parent and passive child is replaced by an interactional view. However, because the Kadushin and Martin study is essentially atheoretical, it does not suggest a systematic way to view (and thus perhaps change) a parent-child interaction which they suggest begins as child provocation, continues as cognitively mediated parent discipline, and escalates to abuse.

That is, while the authors acknowledge the influence of both child behavior and parent cognition on parent behavior, they do not explore the process which ensues when provocative child behavior triggers an abusive parent response. For example, it would have been helpful to know the relationship between the type of provocative child behavior and parent cognition and behavior. Knowing the meaning of the child's behavior to the parent might help to explain why these abusive

parents valued and used corporal punishment; why they stated that they would repeat their abusive behavior despite legal sanction, insisting that their behavior was disciplinary and not abusive. Also, the effects of parent abuse on subsequent child provocativeness would have been valuable information.

e. The Role of Attributional Bias

Harvey et al (1981) reviewed findings on attributional bias, and noted how these might be applied to studying parenting behavior. The authors begin by describing the "fundamental attributional bias" (Jones, 1979), that of an individual's tendency to attribute behavior to traits and dispositions while underestimating situational constraints. They point out that such bias might cause parents to overlook gaps in children's knowledge or self control which are due to a child's developmental status.

These authors also cite studies by Sillars (1981) who found responsibility for diverse kinds of conflicts (bargaining, young couples, corporate disputes, and international disputes) was attributed to negative dispositions of one's adversary. Thus, Sillars concluded that the effects of such attributional bias are probably quite pervasive in conflict.

Fincham and Jaspers (1980) discuss the "feature-positive" bias described by Fazio, Sherman, and Herr (1982) in which an individual's attributions are

influenced more by the commission of behavior than by the omission of it; and whereby acts of commission tend to be seen as intended, while omission is seen as simply overlooking. Steele and Pollack (1974) found that abusive parents tend to personalize child behavior so that even infants and toddlers might be seen as deliberately intending to anger parents or disrupt their activity. When Dix and Grusec (1985) found that parent blaming of child increased with child age, they cited Kelly's (1955) consensus factor, noting that parents judge a child by behaviors in like age children.

f. The Role of Cognitive Structure

Undoubtedly, several cognitive structures, or dispositions, or conceptual systems, as these may be variably described, influence how parents perceive harm, threat, or loss in stressful encounters triggered by provocative child behavior. However, a particular cognitive structure--the complexity of childrearing--has been associated with adaptiveness of parenting behavior and cognition.

In a controlled study of matched groups of abusive and non-abusive mothers, Starr (1982) found that while abusers and non-abusers did not differ significantly concerning knowledge of normal child care and development, these groups did differ on cognitive components of attitudes related to childrearing. Abusive mothers not only held maladaptive childrearing

attitudes, but saw the childrearing task as overly simple. Starr concluded that treatment should not only teach general aspects of child care and development, but also attempt to modify what he described as "deeply rooted attitudes toward the nature of caregiving."

In a longitudinal, at-risk approach with prospective methodology, Brunquell (1981) also found that even the inadequate mothers were almost all intellectually capable of child care. However, they were "unable to perceive and integrate their own feelings about themselves, others, and the world about them." The mothers who subsequently became abusers had been found to view childrearing as lacking in complexity. The ability to deal with the psychological complexity of childrearing contributed the largest portion of this prediction which was 85% accurate.

Because such psychological deficits could not be changed by providing information, skills training, or specific behavior therapy (at impulsivity, for example), Brunquell concluded that intervention could not simply be didactic or behavioral. The abusive mothers would need help in integrating the experience of motherhood and childrearing. As a result of his findings, Brunquell recommended continuing to look at personality characteristics in a broad sense and in the context of interactive situations.

McGillicuddy-De Lisi (1980) notes that despite evidence that indicates a relationship between parent

cognitive structures (e.g., childrearing belief systems) and parent behavior, studies on this are very few. She cites a handful in which parent cognitive style and behavior were related, with more descriptive-concrete parents displaying less effective teaching styles with their children (Weigerink & Weikert, 1967; Hess & Shipman, 1965); and in which parent cognitive complexity influenced how parents developed children's home play environment (Bishop & Chace, 1971).

There is wide consensus for broadly categorizing parent disciplining styles as power assertive or inductive as reported by Hoffman (1977). More recently, Applegate et al (1985) have proposed what may be a more useful constructivist approach to understanding parent disciplining behavior. They point out that parents do not intend to be either power assertive or inductive, that their behavior is meant to accomplish a practical task (e.g., to get a child to bed). Behavior is seen as strategic, as influenced by cultural, social-cognitive-developmental, and intentional structures. Thus, the authors conclude, the relationship of such internal and external variables to behavior is an important focus of research.

In their study of the relationship between individual differences in social-cognitive-development and mothers' disciplining styles (i.e., mother's parent-child communication style), the foregoing authors

found moderate correlations, suggesting that the development of advanced modes of social construing is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the more adaptive parent strategies--that is, for person-centered regulative and comforting behaviors. The authors concluded that construct abstractness or complexity was related to adaptive parenting strategies.

C. Measuring Parent Level of Cognitive Complexity: A Cognitive-Developmental Perspective

1. Introduction

Several researchers have adapted to social thinking Piaget's (1950) seminal cognitive-developmental model of logical thinking. For example, Kohlberg's (1969) analysis of moral reasoning; Sameroff and Feil's (1985) cognitive-developmental parent construction of the child; Selman's (1971) cognitive-developmental model of interpersonal understanding; and Newberger's (1977) measure of parent awareness. Sameroff and Feil, and Newberger specifically describe parent reasoning related to children and the parenting role. These authors describe hierarchical levels of parent reasoning regarding the child and parent roles, and posit that the way a parent interprets the behavior of her child is related to the parent's complexity of thought. Newberger (1977) has reported a relationship of parent level of cognitive development i.e., of parent reasoning, to abusive behavior.

2. Newberger's Measure of Parent Level of Reasoning

In her analysis of normal parents' responses to hypothetical parenting situations, Newberger labelled the four hierarchical developmental levels of parent reasoning (egoistic, conventional, subjective-individualistic, and analytic) "Parent Awareness". Her approach has as its theoretical antecedents cognitive-developmental approaches to interpersonal understanding developed by Piaget (1950), Kohlberg (1969), and Selman (1971). Newberger's model is similar to the foregoing in that it has an "implicit moral orientation as well as a perspective-taking core". In Appendix G, cognitive-developmental levels described by Piaget, Kohlberg, and Selman are compared with Newberger's.

Newberger interviewed 55 parents representing a broad cross section of social and family backgrounds. Using direct questioning and hypothetical dilemmas regarding parent's view of the child, of her role as a parent, and of her reasoning about the meaning and handling of various childrearing issues (discipline and authority, resolving conflict, meeting needs, and trust and affection), Newberger developed a manual which describes parental reasoning for each issue at each level of awareness.

Newberger's descriptions closely parallel those of Kohlberg and Selman (Appendix H). In these authors' conceptions, egoistic parent orientation is defined as

a projection of parental experiences, wants, and needs. The egoistic parent brings a single perspective to bear in parent-child conflict, namely her own equilibrium and comfort. A conventional parent considers the parent-child relationship in terms of mutual cultural or traditional social role obligations, and she conceives of the child's internal states and needs in a stereotypical way. The goal of such parents in parent-child conflict is fairness and achieving what is right, and avoiding what is wrong behavior in both parent and child.

For a subjective-individualistic parent, (hereinafter called individualistic) each child is seen as having unique qualities as well as qualities shared with children in general. Such a parent believes it is important to understand parent-child interactions from the child's perspective as well as from the parent's and society's. Thus, in resolving parent-child conflict, an individualistic parent considers the development of internal values and social awareness in the child. For the analytic parent, Newberger states that the focus of reasoning regarding child rearing goes beyond causes and values to consider issues concerned with the larger developmental and relationship process. For analytic parents, resolving parent-child conflict is seen as only one of many processes contributing to the child's overall development. Thus, the goal of an analytic parent's disciplining behavior, is "autonomous

interdependence in the developing reciprocal parent-child relationship."

a. Level of Reasoning in Abusing Parents

Newberger hypothesized that cognitive complexity would predict parent behavior. That is, parents whose reasoning indicated higher level of cognitive development would be capable of greater understanding and more complex interaction with their children. Thus, such parents should resolve conflicts less egoistically, i.e., with greater consideration of both involved parties. The author tested this hypothesis by comparing eight matched abusing and non-abusing parents. As hypothesized, abusing parents were found, in seven of eight cases, to score lower overall than their matched counterparts on level of cognitive development regarding children, parent-child relationship, and the parent role.

However, Newberger also found that, unlike non-abusers, abusing parents did not apply their highest demonstrated level of reasoning consistently across issues. This finding suggested that other factors might be interfering with generalized application of one's highest level of reasoning. The author explained this outcome by noting that cognitive complexity indicates only the capacity for more adaptive behavior. Because within-group comparison of parents with high cognitive complexity revealed that abusers were contending with

more and greater environmental stress in their lives, Newberger speculated that such stress might have prevented these parents from applying their highest available level of reasoning. However, the author did not describe or analyze these moderating variables, parents' cognitions regarding them, or systematically test the effects of either on parenting behavior. She recommended that these be subjects of further research.

Newberger's findings partially support the validity of her method for identifying and analyzing levels of parent reasoning which are implicit in parental functioning and which are implicated in parental dysfunction. While her Parent Awareness manual depends heavily on rater judgment and is very complicated to score, it nonetheless provides a guide for developing simpler methods to identify parent level of complexity regarding childrearing--the cognitive structure which, as noted earlier, has been associated with maladaptive parent coping behavior. In the PCE instrument which is discussed in the study design section, Newberger's measure of Parent Awareness was adapted to measure parent level of reasoning.

C. A Research Model of Stress and Coping

1. A Theoretical Framework

While the authors discussed thus far converge in their findings regarding an important role for cognition

in parenting behavior, none examines the process by which cognition influences parent behavior. As discussed earlier, Lazarus' stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm offers an appropriate theoretical framework in which to systematically view relationships between cognition and behavior, and the temporal order of these variables in coping.

2. A Study Design

Lazarus (1981) recommends studying in life settings rather than in laboratories the processes which underlie coping. He notes that only in the former can stress reactions of the type and severity found in everyday life be found. Not only can such stresses not be reproduced ethically in laboratory settings, but their ecological accompaniments are not available in non-life settings. Lazarus also points out the need for repeated observations of coping over many contexts in order to construct a model of the coping process, i.e., a "working portrait of the stress to which an individual or a class of persons is exposed, modes of coping, and the stability and variation of these processes..."

(p.209)

Wrubel, Benner, and Lazarus (1981) also recommend both normative (interindividual) and ipsative (intraindividual) coping study designs. They summarize the benefits of such designs by stating,

"In this way...we can describe the coping process as it unfolds in various types of stressful encounters; thus not only can we evaluate the stability of the coping process for each person, but we can also attempt to identify the role of the type of encounter and other social and personal factors as influences on the coping process. In addition, we can assess the part played by commitments and beliefs in the coping process, evaluate the effectiveness of each coping episode, and assay coping competence...by examining any individual's overall pattern of effectiveness. Finally, this description and evaluation of coping can also be related to the various categories of adaptational outcome."
(p.93)

3. Needed Instruments

In the work cited above, the authors note that in traditional research on coping there is an absence of appropriate assessment methods for the description and interpretation of coping processes. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) have stressed that where coping is concerned, "process" does not refer to one's usual style of coping, but rather to how one is coping with a specific threat at the moment. Thus, they state, analysis of the transaction between personality and environmental variables, fused as "threat" is required. Describing this dynamic quality of coping requires an instrument which identifies both independent person and situation factors so that transactions between them can be demonstrated. In the PCE study, an attempt was made to develop an instrument which could measure personality and environmental variables so that transactions between these, and their effects on parent coping behavior and the parent-child relationship could be determined.

Chapter 2

THE PCE STUDY DESIGN

A. The Study Question

As discussed in the foregoing review, cognitive factors have been associated with coping behavior in parents confronted with provocative children. In several studies, including the Anger study on which the current PCE study is based, therapy techniques developed from cognitive principles which posit that how one thinks about a stressful situation influences how she will respond to it, seemed to have effected positive change in parents' attitudes and behaviors in conflicts which previously had been resolved abusively. However, the actual role of cognition in influencing such change has not been clarified. That is, the process by which cognition influences transactions between an individual and a stressful environment has not been identified.

Lazarus' (1966) stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm provides a cognitive-phenomenological framework for systematically analyzing such transactions. The PCE study drew on Lazarus' paradigm to describe how parents at risk of abusing children think and act in stressful encounters with their children, and attempted to determine how stressor, cognition, and behavior covary in such encounters. The direction of effects in these relationships was also examined.

B. The Variables of Interest

1. The Social Level of Stress

In the PCE study, the environmental or social stressor which was assumed to trigger parent coping was defined as provocative child behavior. Thus, this social stressor was considered an independent variable. Overall social stress in the parent-child relationship, defined as the parent-child conflict/harmony index, was also considered an independent variable.

2. Cognitive Appraisal

Cognitive appraisal was defined as parent attributions regarding parent-child encounters, and parent level of reasoning regarding certain aspects of these encounters. These two components of cognitive appraisal were considered situational and structural cognitions, respectively. That is, parent level of reasoning was assumed to be a more perduring parent cognition, while anger, child-blaming, and locus of control which were assumed to be more situation-specific indicated parent perceived level of threat in conflict. Both of these components of cognitive appraisal were considered moderating variables.

3. Emotion

Emotion, which Lazarus posits is the consequence of cognitive appraisal and which sets up the "impulse to cope", was not measured directly, but was indicated by parent attribution regarding her own anger level in

parent-child conflict. Anger, along with the other variables of cognitive appraisal, was considered a moderating variable.

4. Parent Coping Behavior

Parent coping behavior which was measured in terms of its adaptiveness was assumed to be the dependent variable.

C. The Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that level of social stress measured both as the overall conflict and harmony index in the parent-child relationship, and as child provocativeness in a specific encounter, would be related to parent coping behavior. However, following the Lazarus paradigm, it was expected that interaction between the objective stressor, parent cognition, and parent coping behavior would be demonstrated. Specifically, it was hypothesized that among parents experiencing greater psychological stress, i.e., those reporting higher anger and child-blaming levels, more external locus of control, and more egoistic level of reasoning, the relationship between child provocativeness and maladaptive parent coping behavior would be intensified.

While the Lazarus paradigm postulates that the relationship between situational and structural components of cognitive appraisal is transactional, the author has indicated that structural cognition precedes

more situation-specific attributions. Responding to Zajonc's (1980) critique of his premise that cognition precedes not only behavior but also emotion, Lazarus (1982) stated that structural cognitions, i.e., "beliefs, expectations, motives, and commitments influence attention and appraisal at the very outset of any encounter"; and that "meaning inheres in the cognitive structures and commitments developed over a lifetime that determine the personal and hence emotional significance of any person-environment encounter" (p.1020). Bandura (1977) and Ellis (1973), as well as Lazarus, have noted that general belief systems influence situational appraisal. Thus, it was expected that the cognitive structure, parent level of reasoning about conflict, would precede parent attributions of perceived level of threat in the situation.

Because the Lazarus paradigm which informed the PCE study posits transactional relationships between all the coping components, the direction of effects of child provocativeness, parent cognition, and parent coping behavior were also of interest.

D. The Type of Study

As discussed in the literature review, Lazarus has asserted that we will never be able to examine the ongoing processes underlying the causation of various adaptational outcomes unless we study these processes as they occur across a wide variety of occasions and within persons. Zigler (1980) has noted that children may

suffer more long term damage from repeated emotional rejection than from isolated incidents of physical abuse. A cross-sectional study based on parents' reports of single incidents of parent-child conflict is not as likely as a repeated observations study to expose such persistent maladaptive parent coping behavior which threatens harm--emotional or physical--to a child. Therefore, unlike most child abuse studies, the PCE study examined potentially abusive parent-child encounters at several points in time. And for comparison purposes, parent cognition and behavior were also observed in harmony encounters. In all encounters, individual as well as group measures were considered.

E. The Sample

1. Description

In the larger Anger study, 59 parents were randomly selected from volunteers solicited through a public and a private child welfare agency providing services for abusing and at-risk parents. In order to reliably examine the coping process in these parents, the PCE study was conducted on a sub-sample of these parents who had reported parent-child conflict in at least three of the eight Anger study interviews. Thus, Anger study controls (n=12), and group treatment subjects who had completed only pre and post tests (n=9) were eliminated. Four dropouts and six parents who did not respond to all major questions in at least three Anger study

questionnaires were also eliminated. In addition, one parent was eliminated because her only child was a newborn who was so much younger than all other children in the Anger study (Average child age was 7).

The sample was 96% female, 66% minority (non-white), and 74% single parents. 70% of the sample parents earned less than \$12,000 annually, and between 33% and 66% were not high school graduates. Thus there was a strong representation of parents with the profile which is often presented in discussions of the feminization of poverty: a poorly educated, single minority mother who is at or near the poverty line. While studying such families may contribute to understanding stress and coping in those at greatest risk not only of abuse and neglect, but also of homelessness and the downward cycle into the so-called "underclass", caution should be exercised in generalizing beyond such groups.

2. Reliability and Validity

The final sample of 27 parents reported 135 weekly conflict encounters across eight interviews. Thus, during this period, the average number of weekly conflict reports per parent was five--providing an ample data base. The size of the sample signals caution in generalizing from findings. However, the fact that research indicates that knowledge of the complex interaction of many factors in abuse is still quite primitive supports the legitimacy of focused

multivariate studies of even small samples.

It should also be noted that the parents who participated in the larger Anger study were an available, motivated, and cooperative group of parents who, whether they had been officially identified as abusers or not, had acknowledged parent-child conflict as a significant problem, and had voluntarily sought help in changing their own maladaptive behavior. Also, because so many interviews took place between a parent and the same therapist, it is likely that a relationship developed between subject and researcher which encouraged candor and self-examination. Sarason et al (1978) have noted greater candor is associated with repeated observation. The fact that many interviews took place in parents' homes may have enhanced candor.

Also, because the parent's task was presented as a learning experience for both the therapist/researcher and the parent, the parent was validated as valued as well as teachable. Thus, the atmosphere was non-judgmental, a factor which should have fostered openness on the part of the parent. The foregoing support reliability and validity in the PCE study where, because of the heavily minority makeup of the sample, possible confounding by cultural differences between sample and interviewers poses a potential threat.

Assessments by therapists indicated that no parents had disabling psychiatric or health (including addictions) problems which might have inhibited their

ability to report cognitions and behaviors which took place in the previous week, or which would have made them physically or psychologically unique from parents in general.

The foregoing characteristics made the Anger study parents appropriate for the PCE study which sought to examine parents' coping processes in potentially abusive parent-child encounters. That is, reliably identifying and analyzing patterns of behavior and cognitions required parent candor and cooperation as well as availability over an extended period.

F. The Data: Reliability and Validity

Another important consideration in selecting a design for the PCE study was the state of the art of knowledge about child abuse. That is, what is known about abuse is so primitive that it was felt that the study, including the development of the study instrument, and interpretation of findings in the full study should be guided not only by theory and previous studies' findings, but just as importantly by discovering what the data itself suggested. Thus, the study was both inductive and deductive, and made use of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Particular attention was given to reliably measuring cognition. The use of naturalistic exploration has been recommended for better understanding of individuals' conceptions. Valid

measurement of individuals' cognitions is best achieved by asking about these directly, allowing subjects to respond open-endedly, rather than by forcing them to answer in narrow, researcher-designed categories (Davison et al, 1983). However, subjects may lack motivation to reveal their attitudes and feelings, or may not be able to indicate systematically and analytically such structural cognitions as their beliefs, values, and motivations. Therefore, while the more naturalistic open-ended interview may provide the opportunity to find out what is salient in the mind of a subject, greater reliability is gained by structuring the interview in the form of a questionnaire (Selitz et al, 1976).

The Anger study questionnaire used in parent interviews, while it allowed parents to respond at length, asked specific, thematic questions. Thus, this semi-structured questionnaire provided cues to recall, and helped to structure parents' reports so that data corresponded to what the investigators were interested in, i.e, behaviors and related cognitions in recent stressful and non-stressful parent-child encounters. As a result, interviews did not vary greatly from session to session or from subject to subject. Thus, the internal consistency of responses could be determined. And, because parents were asked the same questions, in the same order, their responses are comparable.

In establishing the reliability of the data, it must be remembered that there is the danger that asking about a subject's perceptions or attitudes regarding her own or another's behavior may be misleading. Thus, to achieve objectivity regarding the provocativeness of child behaviors which parents reported, a panel of seven judges was used to rate level of provocativeness (Appendix C). It was assumed that there would be consensus about provocativeness between raters and study parents. However, in retrospect, this may have been unwarranted considering possible differences in values and sensitivities regarding child rearing between these two culturally dissimilar groups.

Retrospective reports such as those parents gave in study interviews can suffer from efforts of the subject to reduce cognitive dissonance when she reports on behavior or cognitions which are not congruent with her values, beliefs, etc. However, the Anger study questionnaire inquired about both stressful (conflictual) and non-stressful (harmonious) parent-child interactions, and cognitions regarding these, rather than about "abusive" situations. Also, the researchers were openly interested as much in examples of adaptive as maladaptive parent behavior. The foregoing factors may have reduced parent defensiveness which might otherwise have compromised the reliability of parents' self reports.

To determine whether the parent open ended responses indicating level of parent reasoning could be reliably scored, a panel of six mental health and teaching professionals scored 24 sample responses (Appendix D). High interrater reliability indicated that parent responses could be scored with confidence.

The fact that the questionnaire was reflective and did not sample "in vivo" behavior had advantages as well as the obvious disadvantages of data on behavior which is not directly observed: Namely, the intrusiveness of the researcher on behavior which has often been noted as a drawback of parent-child observational studies was eliminated.

Because nearly all interviews had been tape recorded in the Anger study, verbatim parent reports as well as therapists' briefer written accounts of these were available for analysis. In a pre study for the PCE study, a sample of 12 recorded interviews which represented all four therapists was compared with companion written questionnaires. In all study phases (beginning, middle, and end), and for all therapists, written responses were consistent with taped responses. Thus, except in a few instances where written responses were incomplete or unclear and required corroboration from the taped interview, the written questionnaires were the sole data source for analysis of parent-child interaction in the PCE study.

Chapter 3

THE INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT STUDY

A. The Need for Developing an Original Instrument

The Anger study questionnaire asked about frequency and type of provocative child behavior (level of social stress) as well as parents' subsequent coping behavior and related cognitions. Thus, the questionnaire provided the kind of data needed to test the relationships between stressor, cognition, and coping behavior which Lazarus postulates determine the coping process. As a result, study findings had significance for systematic theory.

However, because the Anger study questionnaire consisted mainly of open-ended responses, the data needed to be coded in order to make it susceptible to measurement and quantitative analysis. As discussed in the literature review, the required coding instrument would have to consider the individualness and subjectiveness of subjects' cognitions. No instrument could be found which measured all the components of Lazarus' stress appraisal-to-coping paradigm. Therefore, a study was conducted on a random sample of five cases for the purpose of developing an appropriate instrument.

B. Design of the Instrument

1. Category Development

Recording units for the PCE instrument development study were parent responses to questions in the

Anger study questionnaire. Units of enumeration were individual parents, and context units examined were:

- A. Parent-child conflict encounters.
- B. Parent-child future hypothetical conflict encounters.
- C. Parent-child conflict avoided encounters.
- D. Parent-child harmony encounters.

Each of the five cases selected for the instrument development study had an average of six weekly reports of parent-child conflict and future hypothetical conflict; five weekly reports of parent-child harmony; five weekly reports of incidents which, despite child provocation, resulted in avoidance of conflict. Thus, in each context unit, an average of 25-30 parent-child encounters were examined.

Since category development was framed by the Lazarus stress appraisal-to-coping paradigm, genotypic categories were:

- Social Stress
- Parent Cognitive Appraisal
- Parent Coping Behavior

a. Social Stress as Child Provocativeness

The following four broad categories of provocative child behavior which could also be classified dichotomously as underactive and overactive (Bell & Harper, 1977) were developed from analysis of 26 specific child behaviors which the instrument study parents and parents in other studies (notably Kadushin

and Martin, 1981) identified as provocative enough to result in parent-child conflict or abuse.

**UNDERACTIVE
(N=12)**

**Deficient
(n=7)**

irresponsible
uncooperative
inconsiderate
unappreciative
lazy
developmental (feeding, toileting)
endangering self

**Bothersome
(n=5)**

crying
whining
hyperactive, noisy
intrusive
asking, begging

**OVERACTIVE
(N=14)**

**Challenging
(n=8)**

insistent
demanding
disrespectful
tantrum
defiant
immoral
disobedient

**Aggressive
(n=6)**

threatened sibling
threatened parent
threatened non-family
destructive
phys aggres sibling
phys aggres parent

1.) Scoring Child Provocativeness

In order to objectively rank these child behaviors on level of provocativeness, seven high school personnel (four guidance counselors, two teachers, one teaching assistant) all of whom were parents, and who reported good relationships with their own children, were asked to score the 26 phenotypic child behaviors from 0 to 5, with a score of 0 indicating non-provocative, and a score of 5 most provocative. These judges' averaged scores resulted in the behaviors being ranked from low to high as noted below. Following each child behavior is the weighted score assigned when rater's rankings were transformed for study analyses.

crying 2.5
 asking, begging 2.5
 developmental (toileting, feeding...) 2.5
 insistent, unappreciative 5
 irresponsible, demanding, lazy 5
 uncooperative 5
 inconsiderate 5
 hyperactive, noisy 5
 intrusive, threatening sibling 7.5
 tantrum, disobedient 7.5
 disrespectful to non-parent 7.5
 disrespectful to parent, 7.5
 reckless, threatening to other 7.5
 defiant 7.5
 moral transgression (lying, stealing, sexual) 10
 destructive 10
 physically aggressive to sibling 10
 threatened parent 10
 physically aggressive to parent 10

b. Parent Cognitive Appraisal

To determine cognitive appraisal, parent responses were probed for three attributions which have been associated with aggression or child abuse: anger, child-blaming, and locus of control in provocative parent-child encounters. These attributions were conceptualized as indicators of parent level of perceived threat in the situation. Responses were also

probed for the cognitive structure, parent level of reasoning which was conceptualized as underlying such attributions.

1.) Scoring Attributions as Indicators of Parent Perceived Level of Threat in Conflict

To score parents on level of anger in a parent-child conflict encounter triggered by a provocative child behavior, responses to the question, "How mad or angry did the child's behavior make you?" were coded. Since responses had already been coded on a 4 point Likert scale in the Anger study, these responses were close ended: "Not at all; somewhat; pretty angry; very angry". To score parent attribution regarding the biameworthiness of the child, parent response to the question, "How unreasonable did you think your child was?" was coded. As with anger, these responses were close ended ("Not at all, etc.) since they had also been coded on a Likert scale in the Anger study.

Parent locus of control was determined by coding parent open-ended responses to questions regarding the cause for both conflict and harmony. In their open ended responses to the question, "Looking back at it, do you think you could have avoided (the conflict)? Why; why not?", parents virtually always identified either the child or themselves, or both, as (a) having done or failed to do something which made the conflict inevitable, or (b) as being capable of doing or

declining to do something that could have averted the conflict. Thus, these responses reflected the "contingencies" which Lefcourt (1982) has defined as locus of control.

Examples of internal locus were responses in which parents said, "The conflict could have been avoided if I had said quietly, 'Please sit down' to the child"; and, "It was unavoidable because I had to teach the child a lesson". Other "internal" attributions were: "It could have been avoided if I had taken him inside and explained why I wanted him to do it"; and, "It could have been avoided if I had specifically warned him more often not to do it". Attributions of external locus were, "It was unavoidable because Jim just has to act out his own thing", and "It could have been avoided if the child had been more considerate"; "...if they had done what I said"; "...if child had only waited until I wasn't busy"; "...if child wanted to work like any normal child".

In some responses, parents indicated that they perceived locus of control to be both internal and external, i.e., to be contingent on both child and parent behavior. For example, they stated that conflict could have been avoided if, (a) "...we had compromised"; "...he had listened, and I had known what his reasons were for doing it"; or (b) "...they hadn't disobeyed, and if I didn't need to show them I was serious".

Parents were also asked if there was a time in the previous week when they and their children got along unusually well, and if so, was there something they or the child--or both--said or did that made this happen. Thus, it was possible to determine parent attribution of locus of control in non-provocative parent-child encounters as well as in conflict.

Attributing cause for harmonious parent-child incidents, some "internal" parents stated that harmony had been contingent on their having done something special for the child, being more attentive, or overlooking some provocation, while "external" parents attributed harmony to the fact that the child had been especially considerate or well behaved, or simply not been around much that week.

a. Weighting Indicators of Parent Perceived Level of Threat

Each of the four Likert scale categories of parent attribution of level of anger, and view of the child's blameworthiness was assigned a weighted score (Not at all angry =0; somewhat angry =2.5; pretty angry =7.5; very angry= 10). The third parent attribution, locus of control, which had only three categories (internal; both internal and external; and external) was measured on a weighted three point scale, with internal locus representing the lowest parent perceived level of threat (score 0); external locus representing the highest perceived level of threat (score 10); and a combination

of these (both internal and external locus) representing the intermediate level of perceived threat (score 5).

2.) Cognitive Structure: Parent Level of Reasoning

a.) Identification

While the Anger study had not deliberately probed level of parent reasoning, parent responses to several questions were codeable on this cognitive structure. Analysis of open ended responses regarding the causes for both conflict and harmony encounters revealed that, in addition to identifying locus of control in the situation and defining parent and child attributes perceived as adaptive, parents spontaneously reasoned about conflict and harmony in ways which could be categorized on level of cognitive development. That is, as egoistic, conventional, or subjective-individualistic as Newberger (1977) has defined these. These definitions are presented in the literature review.

b.) Examples of Parent Level of Reasoning

(1) Egoistic Level

A parent's statement that she liked her response behavior "because she didn't upset herself" was coded as egoistic, the lowest level of parent reasoning. The same was true for a parent who stated she liked what she had done because "It made the children realize that I was upset". Other "egoistic" parents stated that they liked what they'd done because they "didn't give in"; "because it came out my way". Some egoistic parents

stated that they didn't like what they had done because "I took back a threat I had made"; "I didn't like having to drag them out of bed"; " I didn't like having to deal with them at all".

(2.) Conventional Level

Some conventional parents responded that things had gone well between them and their children because "we're all doing what's expected of us"; "because I calmly explained to them what's making me angry"; "because I set a reasonable consequence for any disruptive behavior". Another conventional parent stated that she didn't like her coping response because "A parent shouldn't curse". Another conventional parent stated that she didn't like her response because she hadn't taken into consideration the fact that all kids get excited.

(3.) Individualistic Level

The sole parent who demonstrated individualistic level of reasoning in the instrument development study stated that she liked her response behavior because "It showed that I cared about the child".

(4.) Analytic Level

Analytic thinking, the highest level of parent reasoning, was not represented in the instrument study sample. However, because the analytic level of reasoning shares with the individualistic level concern for the internal life of the child--a major

factor in adaptive parent behavior (Loevinger, 1959)--individualistic and analytic levels of reasoning were merged to represent the highest level of parent cognitive development in the final study, and identified as individualistic.

Newberger (1977) has noted that the reliability of coding analytic level of cognitive development might be compromised by the fact that expressions of such thinking seem to require higher levels of education than do expression of the three lower levels which do not seem to be influenced by verbal competence. Since analytic reasoning had not surfaced in the instrument study sample, and since less than a quarter of the PCE full study sample had more than a high school education, it seemed appropriately cautious to merge this highest level category of parent reasoning with the next highest level, individualistic. When the full study was done, examples of analytic reasoning were rare. Thus, the decision to merge individualistic and analytic levels was supported.

Because only three questions were used to tap level of parent reasoning, this cognitive structure was identified in a limited, suggestive rather than definitive way as parent thinking about conflict and harmony. Responses were scored on a three point Individualistic-Egoistic scale where the lowest score (0) represented the least egoistic, most complex level of reasoning; a score of 5 represented an intermediate

level of complexity or egoism; and a score of 10 represented the least complex, most egoistic level.

c. Parent Coping Behavior

1. Coding

In parent responses to the question, "What did you do (when the child was so provocative)?" coping behavior was identified in situations where parent-child conflict ensued; where such conflict was avoided; and where future hypothetical conflict ensued. In the same way in which the typology of provocative child behaviors was developed, i.e., from instrument study parents' reports and from other parenting studies, 28 parent coping behaviors were identified. The fact that these coping behaviors were categorizable as (a) self management, and (b) child management supported Lazarus' broad definition of coping as changing one's own behavior (self management) or changing the environment (child management).

Further analysis revealed that child management behavior could be made even more specific, i.e., as controlling and non-controlling behavior, with empathy and reciprocity being sub-categories of non-controlling behavior, and punitive and non-punitive being sub-categories of controlling behavior. Discussion of these categories and sub-categories of coping behavior follows, with explanations of how behaviors were rated adaptive or maladaptive.

a.) Parent Self Management

Five active self management behaviors were identified :

Took time out
Relaxed
Assessed the situation objectively
Controlled my emotions, impulses
Substituted positive thoughts

These behaviors were seen as adaptive in that they help the parent to gain control over potentially harmful impulses while not withdrawing from her obligation to resolve conflict between her and her child. Parents who stated that they kept calm or thought the situation over, or discussed it with someone else were coded as active self management, and were rated as adaptive.

Passive self management parent behaviors which were identified included the following:

Ignoring the child
Giving in
Giving up
Leaving the situation entirely

While these passive self management parent behaviors might restrain dangerous physical impulses, they were nonetheless seen as potentially harmful, and thus maladaptive, because they might be experienced as rejection by a child. Also, the passive parent who abdicates her responsibility to resolve the parent-child conflict leaves unresolved a conflict which is likely to

erupt again, and to be exacerbated when the causes of the conflict are not resolved.

Because there was no theoretical or empirical basis on which to base drawing finer distinctions between the behaviors in the sub-categories of self management coping behaviors, these were coded dichotomously only as "active" or "passive".

b. Parent Child Management Coping Behaviors

The 18 child management behaviors which were identified were categorized as empathic; reciprocal; controlling:non-punitive; and controlling:punitive, based on the following definitions:

(1.) Empathic Parent Coping Behavior

Highly adaptive empathic parent behavior in response to a provocative child was defined as behavior which indicated a parent's concern for the child's needs and feelings. When parent response was not primarily disciplinary but rather focused on seeking conflict resolution which considered the child's needs or feelings, it was coded empathic, and rated adaptive.

The following empathic behaviors were identified:

- Helped child to grow from the experience
- Showed affection, caring
- Sought to understand child's feelings, viewpoint
- Helped child; met his needs

For example, a mother who stated that, in a parent-child conflict she "thought about the (provocative) child's unhappy situation, felt differently then about her, and decided to help her rather than punish her", was seen as

empathic. Her behavior was coded as adaptive and seen as constituting no risk of harm.

(2.) Reciprocal Parent Behavior

Reciprocal child management behaviors included parent responses in which the parent had attempted to get the child to change his behavior by offering something in exchange, without subjecting him to risk of physical or emotional harm.

Used humor; cajoled
Explained; reasoned
Bargained; compromised

Reciprocal child management methods were seen as constituting very little, if any, risk. For example, a parent who had tried to reason with a child who had refused to cross the street.

(3.) Controlling/ Non-punitive Parent Behavior

These less adaptive non-punitive, yet controlling techniques were one-sided, based on "pulling rank" on a child:

Was firm; authoritative
Isolated child (moderate)
Threatened to deprive (moderate)
Deprived (moderate)

Controlling, non-punitive power assertive parent behaviors were seen as constituting a moderate level of risk since such discipline, while it is non-punitive, is sometimes associated with constriction and shallowness in children (Rollins, 1979). However, it generally does not subject children to serious harm. In keeping with

the broad definition of adaptiveness in the PCE study, because such non-punitive power assertive discipline is corrective without subjecting the child to serious harm, it was seen as adaptive, albeit less so than empathic or non-power assertive reciprocal behaviors discussed above.

An example of controlling, non-punitive coping which was rated adaptive was when a parent took away toys over which two children were fighting. Thus, a non-controlling "reciprocal" parent who discussed with a provocative child the incorrectness or unfairness of his behavior, and a controlling non-punitive parent who had moderately deprived the child of privileges were coded as more and less adaptive, respectively.

(4.) Controlling/Punitive Parent Behaviors

Maladaptive controlling and punitive child management behaviors included the following:

- Scolded, yelled
- Belittled, cursed
- Threatened to deprive (extreme)
- Deprived (extreme)
- Isolated (extreme)
- Threatened to hit
- Hit, shook, jerked, etc.
- Hit with object

These behaviors had in common the fact that the parent had attempted to control or correct the child forcefully by rejecting, threatening, or physically controlling/hurting. Such parent behavior has been shown to inflict serious emotional or physical harm to children. Because in such responses parents did not

consider the child's feelings or needs, or even the child's motivations for the provocative behavior, such discipline was seen as unlikely to resolve conflict and as having the potential to cause immediate or long range emotional/physical harm. Thus, it was seen as maladaptive.

A parent who responded to a defiant child by threatening to spank him and to deprive him of camp for the entire summer was seen as maladaptive. Another maladaptive response was when a parent took away "everything the children liked". A parent who yelled and cursed was seen as rejecting, and maladaptive, as was a parent who hit a child.

c. Ranking Child Management Behaviors

Unlike parent self management coping behaviors which could be categorized only as active (adaptive) and passive (maladaptive), child management behaviors were not only nominally classifiable as (a) empathic; (b) reciprocal; (c) controlling non-punitive; and (d) controlling punitive, but because there is support in the literature for the relationship between specific kinds of parent child-management behavior and child outcomes, these coping behaviors were scaleable on level of adaptiveness. Thus, a 5 point adaptiveness of child management coping behavior scale was developed, weighted as noted below.

0= no risk; 2.5= low risk; 5= moderate risk
7.5= high risk; 10= extreme risk

TYPE OF CHILD MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR	WEIGHTED SCORE
EMPATHIC	.01
Helped child to grow from the experience Showed affection, caring Sought to understand child's feelings, viewpoint Helped child/gave attention/met needs	
RECIPROCAL	2.5
Used humor; cajoled Explained; reasoned Bargained; compromised	
CONTROLLING NON-PUNITIVE	5
Was firm, authoritative Isolated the child moderately Threatened to deprive moderately Deprived moderately	
CONTROLLING PUNITIVE	7.5
Scolded, yelled Belittled, cursed Threatened to deprive (extreme) Deprived (extreme) Isolated (extreme)	
CONTROLLING/EXTREME PUNITIVE	10
Threatened to hit Hit, shook, jerked, etc. Hit with object	

In the full study, no behaviors were added to those which had been identified in the instrument development study. Thus, as in the case of child behaviors, a

functional typology of parent coping behaviors seems to have been identified in the instrument study.

C. Reliability of Coding With the PCE Instrument

In a pilot test of the PCE coding instrument the author and another experienced clinician--a doctoral candidate who had also been a researcher/therapist in the larger Anger study--independently coded responses to the questionnaire. In this test of the instrument, three randomly selected cases (22 questionnaires) were coded to determine whether the PCE instrument and coding instructions allowed reliable identification of the study variables. Inter-rater reliability, based on percentage of agreement between raters, was found to be 85%. However, when forced choice items and others which did not essentially require rater judgment (age and sex of child; level of parent anger; level of parent child-blaming; how would parent handle situation in future same/different) were eliminated, reliability fell to 72%. The raters attributed their scoring differences to lack of clarity of the coding instructions regarding level of cognitive development. Mechanical error was ruled out by virtue of the fact that raters' scores for non-judgment questions listed above were nearly perfectly correlated.

In a two hour session, the raters jointly developed improved coding directions and re-coded the 22 pilot study questionnaires. Inter-rater reliability on the

second coding was 95%, with reliability of coding of "judgment questions" such as level of parent reasoning improving markedly. Revised coding directions are found in Appendix D.

To further determine the reliability of coding level of parent reasoning using these clarified definitions, a panel of six psychologists and social workers was asked to score 24 open-ended parent responses to the question which probed parent reasoning regarding her own coping behavior in conflict: "What did you like/dislike about how you handled (the parent-child conflict)?" (Appendix D). On 63% of parent responses (n=15) judges were in unanimous agreement about the level of parent reasoning which these represented. On 79% of parent responses (n=19), judges were in agreement at least 80% of the time. Thus, it was only on five parent responses that judges fell below an acceptable reliability level of 80%, indicating that independent judges could reliably code level of parent reasoning from parent open ended responses.

D. Sufficiency and Variability of the Data

Following the instrument reliability study, to determine whether correlations could be made between the coping variables i.e., to determine whether the coping process could be determined, a sample 11 of randomly selected session #1 questionnaires was analyzed by the

author. The analysis indicated that the data was variable enough so that correlations between these coping variables could be determined.

Based on the findings of the pre-studies discussed above, it was concluded that the Anger study questionnaire provided data which was sufficient in quantity and variability, and that the PCE instrument which was developed on samples of that questionnaire could reliably code this data so as to make explicit and measurable the variables which Lazarus postulates comprise the coping process. Also, because the instrument collected similar types of data in several observations, comparisons across time could be made. As a result, it was possible to not only describe stress and coping variables but also to determine their stability and correlates, and to examine their temporal order which might suggest the direction of causality in the coping process. The foregoing questions were analyzed in three interrelated studies--the descriptive, correlational, and temporal order studies which follow.

Chapter 4

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STRESS AND COPING IN AT-RISK PARENTS

A. Introduction

In the descriptive study, social stress in 27 at risk parents was described from two perspectives: (a) overall stress defined as the conflict-harmony index in the parent-child relationship; and (b) immediate stress defined as child provocativeness which triggered the need for coping in specific parent-child encounters.

In addition to social stress, psychological stress measured as parent cognitive appraisal, and parent coping behavior were described. Stability of these stress and coping variables was also determined by observing these indicators across time, and where possible across situations. In the studies which follow the descriptive study, relationships and temporal order of these coping variables were analyzed.

B. Describing Social Stress

Among the following five measures which were used to determine level of social stress the first three refer to overall stress in the parent-child relationship; the last two refer to the immediate stressor, level of child provocativeness.

1. Sheer frequency of weekly provocative and non-provocative encounters.
2. Relative frequencies of the most and least provocative encounters, i.e., conflict and harmony.
3. Conflict/harmony index (CHI).

4. Level of provocativeness of child behavior.

5. Type of provocative child behavior.

While, as discussed in the study design section, reliability was good on all study measures, all could not be considered strictly objective because of the lack of independent observers. This is especially important to consider in the case of measuring social stress which Lazarus describes as the objective trigger to the coping process. Thus, measurement of social stress in the parent-child relationship is seen more as an approach to such objectivity.

Regarding social stress defined as child provocativeness, as noted earlier, child behaviors were ranked by a group of white middle class professionals who reported good relationships with their children. In none of these characteristics did raters represent the majority of the study sample which was largely minority women living at or near poverty, and reporting chronic conflict with children. As a result, it cannot be said with certainty that what the raters considered provocative matched the views of the sample parents. Thus, there may be limitations to the validity of this measure of social stress when applied to poor, minority, or at risk parents.

Other features of measurement in the study included the use of both group and individual measures to

determine whether group trends were representative of individual trends. Also, because of the lack of an external standard such as a control group, parent scores were compared relatively to each other as lower, intermediate, and higher levels of the stress and coping variables.

1. Results: Social Stress

a. Overall Social Stress as Frequency of Provocative and Non-Provocative Parent-Child Encounters

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 1, in about 60% of the 216 interviews parents reported a weekly conflict encounter. The same was true for frequency of a weekly parent-child harmony encounter. However, incidents where conflict had been avoided with a provocative child were reported in only 32% of all interviews.

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 2, individual parent data generally reflected group trends. When individual parents were compared, 78% of the parents reported a conflict encounter in at least four of their eight interviews; 74% reported a harmony encounter in at least four interviews; and only 33% reported a conflict avoided encounter in at least four interviews. Thus, individual parents reported a weekly conflict avoided encounter less than half as often as they did a weekly conflict or harmony encounter.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY OCCURRENCE AND TYPE OF
ENCOUNTER: PROVOCATIVE (CONFLICT, CONFLICT AVOIDED),
OR NON-PROVOCATIVE (HARMONY)
(n=648)

Encounter Occurrence	Encounter Type					
	Provoc: Conflict		Non-Provoc:			
	n	%	Conflict Avoid		Harmony	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	135	63	70	32	128	59
No	81	37	146	68	88	41
Total	216	100	216	100	216	100

Table 2

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY
TYPE AND FREQUENCY OF ENCOUNTER REPORTED
(N=27)

Encounter Type	Frequency				Total	
	< 4		> 4		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Conflict	6	22	21	78	27	100
Harmony	7	26	20	74	27	100
Conflict Avd	18	66	9	33	27	100

b. Stability of Frequency of Provocative
and Non-Provocative Encounters

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 3, while frequency of weekly non-provocative (harmony) reports remained virtually stable across the two study periods, there were fewer

weekly provocative (conflict and conflict avoided) reports in the later study period. While the overall differences between provocative and non-provocative frequencies in the two study periods were not large, they suggested some improvement in parent-child relationships over time.

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 3B, the initial tendency of individual parents to report intermediate/higher frequency on conflict was virtually reversed in the later study period. This statistically significant difference (Chi Square= 4, df=1, <.05), reflected the group pattern of decreasing weekly conflict between these parents and their children.

In contrast to this change across time in frequency on weekly conflict, the initial tendency of the majority of individual parents to report lower frequency on conflict avoided and harmony encounters remained stable across the study periods. Thus, for individual parents, frequency of weekly conflict avoided and harmony encounters remained stable while conflict encounters diminished significantly over time.

Table 3
NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY TYPE (CONFLICT, CONFLICT AVOIDED, HARMONY) AND BY STUDY PERIOD (EARLIER/LATER)
(n=333)

Study Period	Type of Encounter							
	Conflict		Confl Avoid		Harmony		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	75	56	7	53	63	49	175	53
Later	60	44	3	47	65	51	58	47
Total	135	100	70	100	128	100	333	100

Table 3B

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY FREQUENCY ON WEEKLY CONFLICT AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=27)

Frequency: Later Study Period	Frequency: Earlier Study Period		
	Lower (0-2)	Intermed/Higher (3-8)	Total n %
Lower	5	12	17 63
Intermed/Higher	4	6	10 37
Total	9	18	27 100

Chi Square= 4, df=1, <.05

c. Overall Social Stress as Relative Frequency of Conflict and Harmony: Conflict to Harmony Ratio

Because conflict was seen as representing the greatest intensity of social stress, and harmony the least, these encounter types were defined as extremes on an overall social stress continuum. To determine parent

proneness toward either end of this high stress-low stress continuum, the relative frequencies of weekly conflict and harmony encounters were sought. This "conflict-to-harmony" ratio was determined by dividing the number of conflicts by the number of harmony encounters reported. Thus, a parent who reported more weekly conflict than harmony encounters received a score greater than 1, and was seen as tending toward being conflict prone. A parent who reported more harmony than conflict encounters received a score of less than 1, and was seen as tending toward being harmony prone.

1.) Group Data

Dividing the group frequency on conflicts (n=135) by group frequency on harmony encounters (n=128) yielded a group conflict-to-harmony ratio of 1.1, indicating that for the group a weekly conflict encounter was only slightly more likely (10%) to be reported than a harmony encounter.

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 4, the majority of parents (59%) fell in the lower conflict-to-harmony ratio category, indicating that they experienced more harmony than conflict, or near equal measures of these.

Table 4

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY
CONFLICT-TO-HARMONY RATIO
(n=27)

Conflict-to-Harmony Ratio				
	Lower (.5-1.16)	Intermediate (1.17-1.83)	Higher (1.84-2.5)*	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	16	8	3	27
%	59	30	11	100

* Range= .50-2.5 (one parent fell outside the upper range with a score of 5.

d. Stability of Conflict-to-Harmony Ratio
Across Time

To determine whether there was a change across time in the high stress-low stress ratio in parent-child relationships, conflict-to-harmony ratios were compared in the earlier and later study periods.

1.) Group Data

When the frequencies presented in Table 5 for conflict and harmony were compared in the earlier and later study halves, the group conflict-to-harmony ratios were 1.2 and .92, respectively, indicating that in the later period the group reported less weekly conflict than harmony with their children.

Table 5

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER:
(CONFLICT, HARMONY) AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=263)

Encounter Type	Study Period			
	Earlier n	%	Later n	%
Conflict	75	54	60	48
Harmony	63	46	65	52
Total	138	100	125	100

(Conflict-to-Harmony Ratio: Earlier Period= 1.2; Later
Period= .92)

2.) Individual Data

When individual parents were scored on conflict-to-harmony ratio in the earlier and later study periods, more parents had scores indicating lower conflict-to-harmony ratio in the later period than in the earlier period. Just missing significance level (Chi Square=2.78, df=1, <.10), this difference which reflected the group shift to lower conflict-to-harmony ratio in the later study period suggested positive change in parent-child relationships.

e. Overall Social Stress as Conflict/Harmony Index (CHI)

To gain a picture of overall level of social stress experienced by these at-risk parents, an index of social stress was developed: The conflict-to-harmony ratio discussed above was multiplied by the sheer frequency of

conflict. It was felt that considering the impact of the sheer frequency of conflict enhanced the conflict-to-harmony ratio measure so that the intensity as well as the relativity of stress was described. For example, while parents reporting three weekly conflicts and three weekly harmony encounters would have conflict-to-harmony ratios similar to parents with eight conflicts and eight harmony encounters, the latter would actually have greater intensity of social stress overall.

1.) Individual Data

Findings presented in Table 6 indicate that only 15% of parents experienced higher overall level of social stress as CHI during the study. Thus, for the majority of these at-risk parents, the parent-child relationship was neither exclusively nor intensely conflictual.

Table 6

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY OVERALL LEVEL OF SOCIAL STRESS
AS CONFLICT/HARMONY INDEX (CHI)
(N=27)

	Conflict/Harmony Index			
	Lower (1.5-6.3)	Intermediate (6.4-11.2)	Higher (11.3-16+)*	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	16	7	4	27
%	59	26	15	100

* Range=1.5-16 (One parent index of 25 which was far outside the upper limit is included in the Higher Level category.)

f. Stability of Overall Level of Social Stress
as Conflict/Harmony Index

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 7, when the conflict-to-harmony ratio was multiplied by the sheer frequency of conflict in the earlier and later study periods, the resulting indices were 90 and 55, respectively. Thus, group score on this index of social stress was reduced over time.

Table 7

GROUP OVERALL LEVEL OF SOCIAL STRESS AS
CONFLICT/HARMONY INDEX (CHI),
BY STUDY PERIOD

Study Period	Conflict to Harmony Ratio	x	Frequency of Conflict	=	Conflict and Harmony Index
-----	-----		-----		-----
Earlier	1.20		75		90
Later	.92		60		55

2.) Individual Data

More parents scored at the lower level on CHI in the later study period than did in the earlier study period, thus reflecting the group trend. However, shifts by individual parents which resulted in this decrease over time were not significant (Chi Square=1.27, df=1).

g. Immediate Social Stress as
Level of Child Provocativeness

1.) Measuring Child Provocativeness

Provocative child behavior has been reported in other studies as well as spontaneously identified by PCE

parents as the trigger to the coping process.

Therefore, this factor was selected as a measure of social stress in specific parent-child conflict. As discussed in the study design section on scoring, to achieve reliability on the level of provocativeness of child behavior, a panel of seven educators and child welfare professionals who were also normal parents was employed to develop a provocativeness scale. These raters scored all child behaviors as being at least minimally provocative. Thus, in the descriptive study no behavior received a score of less than 2.5 which represented the lowest level of provocation. Child behaviors and their provocativeness scores are presented in the study design section.

(a.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 8, approximately half of all reported child behaviors were scoreable as intermediate or higher level of provocativeness, while the other half were scoreable at the lower level.

(b,) Individual Data

When grouped and individual data (Tables 8, 8B) were compared, it was seen that 85% of the parents encountered the intermediate or higher level provocations which made up about half of all child behaviors, while only 15% of the parents encountered the lower level behaviors which made up the other half. Thus, the majority of parents who encountered conflict with a child had typically encountered provocation on at

least the intermediate level.

Table 8

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY
LEVEL OF CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS
(n=135)

	Level of Child Provocativeness			Total
	Lower (2.5-5)	Intermediate (5.1-7.6)	Higher (7.7-10)	
N	65	35	35	135
%	48	26	26	100
Range=2.5-10				

Table 8B
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY
AVERAGED LEVEL OF CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS IN CONFLICT
(n=27)

	Level of Child Provocativeness			Total
	Lower (2.5-5)	Intermediate (5.1-7.6)	Higher (7.7-10)	
N	4	19	4	27
%	15	70	15	100
Range= 2.5 - 10				

h. Stability of Social Stress
as Child Provocativeness

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 9, when social stress was measured as level of child provocativeness in conflict encounters, the group was confronted with higher levels of provocation in conflict encounters which took place in the later study period.

2.) Individual Data

In the later study period a third of the parents shifted from a tendency to report lower level of child provocation to one of reporting intermediate/higher level. For these parents, child behavior became more provocative over time, just missing significance level (Chi Square = 3.6, df=1, <.10).

Table 9

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY
LEVEL OF CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=135)

Level of Child Provocativeness

Study Period	Lower (2.5-5)		Intermediate (5.1-7.6)		Higher (7.7-10)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	42	56	16	21	17	23	75	100
Later	23	38	19	32	18	30	60	100

Range= 2.5-10

j. Immediate Social Stress as Type of Provocative
Child Behavior In Conflict, and In Conflict
Avoided Encounters--A Qualitative Measure

1. Group Data

As indicated in Table 10, about as many underactive as overactive child behaviors were reported in conflict. However, when conflict was avoided, twice as many underactive as overactive child behaviors were reported. These 2 types of parent-child encounters also differed in the fact that only in conflict avoided encounters were vague child behaviors (e.g., annoying, a nuisance)

reported as having triggered the need for parent coping. These encounters also differed in the mean number of child behaviors reported in an encounter: in conflict the group mean was 1.4; in conflict avoided, it was 1.

Table 10

NUMBER OF PROVOCATIVE CHILD BEHAVIORS BY
TYPE OF ENCOUNTER (CONFLICT, CONFLICT AVOIDED)
AND BY TYPE OF BEHAVIOR (UNDER/OVERACTIVE)
(N=264)

Type of Child Behavior

Type of Encounter	Underactive:				Overactive:				Non-		Tot	
	Defic n	%	Bother n	%	Challg n	%	Aggres n	%	Speci n	%	n	%
Conflict	61	32	31	16	57	30	41	22	-	-	190	100
Conf Avd	19	26	22	30	10	13	11	15	12	16	74	100

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 10A, 89% (n=24) of the parents reported both underactive and overactive child behaviors across all conflicts, while only 54% (n=12) did so across all conflict avoided encounters.

Table 10A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER
(CONFLICT, CONFLICT AVOIDED), AND BY TYPE OF
CHILD BEHAVIOR (UNDER/OVERACTIVE)
(N=27)*

Type of Child Behavior

Type of Encounter	Only Overact		Only Underact		Over and Underact		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conflict	2	7	1	4	24	89	27	100
Confl Avoid*	7	32	3	14	12	54	22*	100

* Since 4 parents did not report conflict avoided encounters in either study period, and one parent reported only non-specific behavior, the sample in conflict avoided was n=22.

2. Summary of Findings About Social Stress

Judging by three measures of overall social stress defined as the frequency, ratio, and index of conflict and harmony, the parent-child relationship was characterized as much by harmony as conflict. And, over time this relationship seemed to improve as harmony reports remained stable and conflict reports decreased. However, while these converging findings indicated that parents experienced declining levels of overall social stress in the later study period, increasing child provocativeness--an alternate measure of social stress--suggested the opposite. For individual parents, increase in the level of child provocativeness in the later study period nearly reached significance level (Chi Square= 3.6, df=1, <.10).

When the specific type of provocative child behavior in conflict was examined, it was found that such behaviors were nearly as likely to be underactive as overactive. That is, to be below parent expectations as to be beyond parent tolerance. However, when parents were able to avoid rather than encounter conflict, differences were found in the type and level of provocativeness of child behavior. When conflict was avoided, the child had usually been less provocative (i.e., more deficient, bothersome, or annoying than challenging or aggressive) than when conflict ensued. And, only in conflict avoided encounters did parents

report provocative behavior in vague terms such as "annoying", "a nuisance". Conflict and conflict avoided encounters also differed in that in a conflict encounter a parent was more likely to have been confronted with multiple child behaviors.

C. Psychological Level of Stress

1. Cognitive Appraisal

a. Parent Attributions of Threat/Challenge

It was not possible to measure parents on the universe of possible cognitions which might indicate parent appraisal of threat/challenge in parent-child encounters, or on all possible related deeper cognitive structures. Instead, parents were measured on three "situational" attributions which have been related to aggression generally and which have been recommended for study of abuse.

Selected situational attributions (hereinafter referred to as attributions) regarding conflict were: severity of parent anger; severity of parent view of the child as blameworthy; and parent belief about locus of control in the situation. Parents were scored on these attributions based on responses to the following questions:

How angry or mad did your child's behavior make you? (Severity of parent anger)

How unreasonable did you think your child was? (Severity of parent child-blaming)

Could conflict have been avoided? Why or why not? (Externality of parent locus of control)

Following the Lazarus paradigm, parents who fell at the lower end of scales developed to measure attributions were seen as perceiving the provocative situation as a challenge, while those who fell at the higher end of such scales were seen as experiencing the situation as a threat. The greater the experience of threat, the greater was the level of stress assumed to be. How these scales were developed is discussed in the study design section.

b. Cognitive Structure

The cognitive structure selected to represent a more perduring element of parent cognitive appraisal was parent level of reasoning about conflict and harmony encounters. This cognitive structure was indicated by parent score on an individualistic-egoistic scale (I-E Score). This scale was based on Newberger's (1977) measure of level of parent reasoning, or level of cognitive development, which she defined as Parent Awareness, and which is discussed in the literature review. Open ended responses to the following questions were scored on the I-E scale:

Was conflict avoidable? Why or why not?

What did you like/dislike about how you handled the conflict?

When parent and child got along unusually well, was there something you or the child did or said to make this happen?

Similar to social stress, cognitive appraisal was measured at both group and individual levels. And, as with social stress, stability of cognitive appraisal was analyzed by comparing scores in the earlier and later study periods.

2. Results

a. Parent Attribution of Threat/Challenge in Parent-Child Conflict 1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 11, in the majority of conflict incidents, parents reported either higher or lower anger, higher or lower child-blaming, and higher (external only) or lower (internal only) locus of control. There were far fewer intermediate level reports on these attributions regarding the situation. Thus, conflict encounters tended to be perceived by the group unambiguously as either threatening or challenging.

2.) Individual Data

However, as indicated in Table 11A, when individual parent scores were averaged across the study period, the majority of parent scores indicated intermediate level of anger, intermediate or higher level of child-blaming, and higher level (external) locus of control. Thus, most parents typically appraised conflict situations as threats rather than challenges. The strong group frequencies on lower (challenge) levels of the situational appraisal attributions (Table 11) were accounted for by only small groups of parents.

Table 11

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY
PARENT PERCEIVED LEVEL OF THREAT AS ATTRIBUTIONS
REGARDING CONFLICT
(n=135)

Attribution	Level of Perceived Threat							
	Lower		Intermed		Higher		Total	
-----	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Severity Anger	60	44	30	22	45	34	135	100
Severity Ch-blame	55	41	22	16	58	43	135	100
Externality Loc of Contrl	49	41	11	9	59	50	119	100

* parents did not respond to the locus of control questions in 16 conflict encounters.

Table 11A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY PARENT LEVEL OF PERCEIVED
THREAT AS ATTRIBUTION IN CONFLICT
(n=27)

Attribut	Level of Perceived Threat							
	Lower (01-3.3)		Intermed (3.4-6.6)		Higher (6.7-10)		Total	
-----	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Severity Anger	3	11	16	59	8	30	27	100
Severity Ch-blame	2	7	12	44	13	48	27	100
External Locus	7	26	6	22	14	52	27	100

Range = .01 - 10 on individual parent scores averaged across the study period.

b. Stability Over Time of Parent Level of Perceived Threat in Conflict

The stability of parent anger, child-blaming, and locus of control was determined by comparing scores in the earlier and later study periods. And, because parents had been scored on locus of control in harmony encounters as well as in conflict, it was also possible to determine the stability of this attribution across situations.

1.) Stability of Parent Anger Over Time

a.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 12A, in conflict encounters, group frequencies on intermediate/ higher level of anger increased very little--about 10%--in the later study period.

b.) Individual Data

The trend was for most individual parents to report intermediate/higher levels initially and to retain these levels over time, with only a few initially lower anger parents shifting to higher levels. The slight increase in anger level in individual parents was not statistically significant, suggesting that parent perception of threat measured as attribution about her anger arousal was stable over time.

2.) Stability of Child-Blaming Over Time

a.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 12B, the strong losses at the intermediate level of parent child-blaming were

reflected as gains more or less equally at both lower and higher levels in the later study period. Thus, the direction of group change on parent child-blaming level over time was ambiguous.

b.) Individual Data

When individual parent child-blaming levels were compared in earlier and later study periods, the ratio of parents reporting lower to intermediate/higher level changed only slightly, and change was not statistically significant. Thus, when measured as child-blaming, parent level of perceived threat in conflict also appeared to be stable in individual parents.

3.) Stability of Locus of Control Over Time

a.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 12C, while the frequency of conflict encounters in which parents reported lower external locus of control remained unchanged, there was a slight shift from higher external level to intermediate (dual) level in the later study period.

b.) Individual Data

In the later study period, there was an apparent decrease in individual parent tendency to attribute the cause of conflict externally, i.e., to the child only. However, change was not statistically significant, suggesting that, similar to anger and child-blaming, this cognitive indicator of parent level of perceived

threat was stable in individual parents.

Table 12

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY PARENT PERCEIVED
LEVEL OF THREAT AS ATTRIBUTION IN CONFLICT, AND BY
STUDY PERIOD

A. Level of Anger
(n=133)*

Study Period	Lower		Intermed		Higher		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	36	49	14	19	24	32	74	100
Later	23	39	16	27	20	34	59	100

*In 2 conflict encounters, parents did not respond to the anger level question.

B. Level of Child-Blaming
(n=133)*

Study Period	Lower		Intermed		Higher		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	27	36	17	23	30	41	74	100
Later	25	42	4	7	30	51	59	100

*In 2 conflict encounters, parents did not respond to the child blameworthiness question.

C. Level of Locus of Control
(n=119)*

Study Period	Lower		Intermed		Higher		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	28	41	5	7	35	52	68	100
Later	21	41	6	12	24	47	51	100

*In 16 conflict incidents, parents did not respond to the locus of control question.

c. Stability of Locus of Control Across Situations

As indicated previously in Table 12C, in conflict encounters 52% (n=14) of parents typically attributed locus of control externally (i.e., to the child only). In contrast to this, as indicated below in Table 13, in harmony encounters 66% (n=18) of parents typically scored at the intermediate level, attributing locus of

control dually, i.e., to both the child and themselves.

Thus, it appeared that under stress-free conditions parents were less likely to view the situation as an externally located threat, but rather as one to which both parent and child had contributed.

To examine this difference further, individual parents were compared on locus of control in conflict and harmony. As indicated in Table 13A, parent differences on locus of control in conflict and harmony were highly significant (Chi Square= 8.3, df=1, <.005). That is, individual parents were significantly more likely to attribute locus of control internally or dually in non-stressful encounters (harmony) than in stressful ones (conflict).

Table 13

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY EXTERNALITY
OF LOCUS OF CONTROL IN HARMONY
(n=27)

Externality of Locus of Control

	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	5	18	4	27
%	19	66	15	100

Table 13A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY EXTERNALITY
OF LOCUS OF CONTROL AND BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER
(CONFLICT, HARMONY)
(n=27)

Externality Locus/Harmony	Externality Locus/Conflict		Total
	Lower/Intermed (.01-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	
Lower/Intermed	12	11	23 (85%)
Higher	1	3	4 (15%)
Total	13	14	

Chi Square = 8.3, df=1, <.005

d. Cognitive Structure:
Level of Parent Reasoning in Parent-Child
Encounters

1.) The Questions

To determine the stability of parent level of reasoning across time, I-E score was compared in conflicts which took place in the earlier and later study periods. Also, because level of reasoning was analyzed in both conflict and harmony encounters, it was possible to compare its stability across stressful and non-stressful situations. And, because parent reasoning regarding two different questions (cause of conflict, and self appraisal of coping behavior) was analyzed in conflict encounters, the stability of parent reasoning regarding conflict could be examined across issues.

2.) Measurement

Parent I-E scores were scaled from lower to higher level of maladaptiveness. A higher scoring parent was categorized as egoistic, and therefore as most maladaptive. A lower scoring parent was categorized as

individualistic, and therefore as least maladaptive.

And an intermediate scoring parent was categorized as conventional, and therefore as moderately maladaptive. Definitions and examples of these levels are found in the study design section.

3.) Results

a.) Parent Level of Reasoning About Cause for Conflict

To determine a parent's I-E score on reasoning regarding the cause for conflict, her scores were averaged from responses in all interviews to the question, "Was conflict avoidable...why or why not?"

(1) Group Data

As indicated in Table 14, parent responses regarding cause for conflict indicated egoistic level of reasoning three times more often than they did individualistic and conventional levels of reasoning combined.

(2) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 14A, the majority of individual parents showed a tendency to reason at egoistic level when discussing the cause for conflict. Thus, the strong egoistic trend seen in group data was reflected in individual parent trends.

Table 14

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF PARENT
REASONING (I-E SCORE) ON CAUSE FOR CONFLICT
(N=117)*

I-E Score				
	Individ (.01-3.3)	Convent (3.4-6.6)	Egoist (6.7-10)	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	7	23	87	117
%	6	20	74	100

Range: .01-10

* Parents did not respond to the cause for conflict question in all conflict encounters.

Table 14A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF PARENT
REASONING (I-E SCORE) ON CAUSE FOR CONFLICT
(N=27)

I-E Score				
	Individ (.01-3.3)	Convent (3.4-6.6)	Egoist (6.7-10)	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	1	4	22	27
%	4	15	81	100

b.) Stability of Level of Reasoning
Across Situation

To determine the stability of parent level of reasoning across stressful and non-stressful situations, parent I-E score on the cause for conflict question, "Was the conflict avoidable...why or why not?", was compared with her I-E score on the cause for harmony question, "When you and your child along well, was there something you or the child said or did that made this happen?"

(1) Group Data

As indicated in Table 15, the group reasoned less egoistically and more conventionally in harmony than in conflict. Reasoning at the individualistic level regarding either type of encounter was nearly negligible.

(2) Individual Data

Individual parents tended to reason at higher (individualistic/conventional) levels regarding the cause for harmony more often than they did regarding conflict, with differences just missing significance level (Chi Square = 3, df=1, <.10).

Table 15

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS* BY LEVEL OF PARENT REASONING (I-E SCORE), AND BY TYPE OF ENCOUNTER (CONFLICT, HARMONY)

Type of Encounter	Individ (.01-3.3)		I-E Score Convent (3.4-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conflict	7	6	23	20	87	74	117*	100
Harmony	3	2	42	33	83	65	128*	100

Range: .01-10

* Parents responded to the cause for conflict/harmony questions regarding 117 and 128 encounters, respectively.

c.) Stability of Level of Reasoning About Conflict Across Time

(1) Group Data

As indicated in Table 16, when group I-E scores on conflict were compared in the earlier and later

study periods, the trend was toward more egoistic reasoning in the latter.

(2) Individual Data

Individual parent reasoning about the cause for conflict remained stable across both study periods. There were no statistically significant differences in individual parent I-E scores.

Table 16

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF PARENT REASONING IN CONFLICT (I-E SCORE), AND BY STUDY PERIOD

Study Period	Individ (.01-3.3)		Convent (3.4-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	3	5	16	24	47	71	66	100
Later	4	8	7	14	40	78	51	100

d.) Stability of Level of Reasoning about Harmony Across Time

(1) Group Data

As seen in Table 17, when group I-E scores on parent reasoning regarding the cause for harmony were compared in the earlier and later study periods, there was a reduction in egoistic reasoning and an increase in conventional reasoning. Also, where there had been no evidence of individualistic reasoning about parent-child harmony in the earlier study period, by the later period there was a slight indication of this. This was in contrast to the group pattern of parent

reasoning regarding conflict where egoistic reasoning increased over time, and conventional reasoning decreased (Table 16).

(2) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 17A, individual parent tendency to reason regarding harmony at higher (individualistic/ conventional) rather than lower (egoistic) level was stronger in the later study period, with I-E score differences in these two periods just missing level of significance (Chi Square=3.6, df=1, <.10).

Table 17

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF PARENT REASONING REGARDING CAUSE FOR HARMONY (I-E SCORE), AND BY STUDY PERIOD (n=128)

Study Period	Individ (.01-3.3)		I-E Score Convention (3.4-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Earlier	-	-	16	25	48	75	64	100
Later	3	5	26	41	35	54	64	100

Range= .01 - 10

Table 17A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF PARENT
REASONING REGARDING CAUSE FOR HARMONY (I-E SCORE), AND
BY STUDY PERIOD
(N=24)*

I-E Score Later Study Period	I-E Score Earlier Study Period				Total	
	Indiv/Convention (.01-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		n	%
-----	n	%	n	%	n	%
Indiv/Conv	1	4	8	43	9	38
Egoistic	2	8	13	54	15	62
Total	3	13	21	87	24	100

Chi Square= 3.6, df=1, <.10

Range = 1.3-10

* Three parents who did not report harmony in both study periods were not considered.

e.) Stability of Level of Reasoning
Across Issues

To determine the stability of parent reasoning from yet another perspective, I-E scores were examined in two different issues related to the same situation. I-E scores on responses to two distinct conflict questions, "Was conflict avoidable...why or why not?", and "What did you like/dislike about how you handled it?", were compared. Response to the former question was coded as an indicator of level of parent reasoning regarding the cause for conflict; response to the latter as an indicator of level of parent reasoning regarding her own coping behavior.

(1) Group Data

As indicated in Table 18, when I-E scores were compared in parent reasoning regarding cause for

conflict, and reasoning regarding parent's own coping behavior, the group reasoned at higher levels about their own coping behavior than about the cause for conflict between them and their children.

(2) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 18A, individual parent tendency to reason at individualistic/conventional level rather than at egoistic level was significantly greater when parents evaluated their own coping behavior than when they attributed the cause for conflict (Chi Square = 4, df=1, <.05). Thus, parent level of reasoning in conflict varied with the issue under consideration.

Table 18

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY PARENT LEVEL OF REASONING
(I-E SCORE) AND ISSUE IN CONFLICT ENCOUNTERS

Conflict Issue	I-E Score						Total	
	Individ (.01-3.3)		Convent (3.4-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Cause	7	6	23	20	87	74	117	100
Pt Evaluation	4	3	42	33	80	63	126	100

Table 18A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY PARENT LEVEL OF REASONING
(I-E SCORE), AND ISSUE IN CONFLICT ENCOUNTERS
(n=27)

I-E Score: Pt Evaluation	I-E Score: Cause for Conflict			Total
	Indiv/Convent (.01-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)	
Indiv/Convent	4		4	8 (30%)
Egoistic	0		19	19 (70%)
Total	4		23	27 (100%)

Chi Square = 4, df=1, <.05

f.) Stability of Parent Level of Reasoning
About Her Own Coping Behavior Across
Time

(1) Group Data

As indicated in Table 19, similar to the case with parent level of reasoning regarding the cause for conflict, group I-E scores indicating parent level of reasoning regarding her own coping behavior remained about twice as likely to be egoistic as conventional/individualistic across time.

(2) Individual Data

Individual parent scores on level of reasoning about their own coping behavior reflected group findings in that they did not differ significantly across the two study periods.

Table 19

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF
PARENT REASONING WHEN EVALUATING HER COPING
BEHAVIOR (I-E SCORE), AND BY STUDY PERIOD

Study Period	I-E Score: Parent Evaluation						Total	
	Individ (.01-3.3)		Convent (3.4-6.6)		Egoist (6.7-10)		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Earlier	1	1	25	35	46	64	72	100
Later	3	6	17	31	34	63	54	100

3. Summary of Findings About Psychological
Level of Stress as Cognitive Appraisal

a. Attributions in Conflict: Challenge or Threat?

When threat was measured as parent report or anger,

child-blaming, and locus of control, most parents characteristically perceived conflict more as a threat than a challenge. And when individual parent data was analyzed, it appeared that parent attributions of severity of anger, severity of child-blaming, and externality of locus of control which tended to indicate parent perception of conflict as more threatening than challenging, were stable across time, indicating that these parents tended to consistently perceive such conflict as more threatening than challenging.

Statistically significant differences in locus of control across conflict and harmony situations (Chi Square=8.3, df=1, <.005) suggested that under stress-free (harmony) conditions, parents were more likely to attribute the cause of such an encounter to both themselves and the child. This was in contrast to conflict encounters where parents were far more likely to attribute cause i.e., exclusively to the child. Thus, while as noted above, locus of control as an indicator of parent perceived level of threat did not vary with time, it varied strongly with the stressfulness of the situation.

b. Parent Level of Reasoning About Parent-Child Encounters

In the conflict encounters in which I-E score was determined from parent responses regarding the cause for conflict, the strongly egoistic trend in parent

reasoning was stable across time. Parent level of reasoning varied significantly across issues: when discussing the cause for conflict, parents were significantly more likely to reason egoistically than they were when they evaluated their own coping behavior (Chi Square=4, df=1, <.05).

However, when I-E scores on cause for stressful (conflict) and non-stressful (harmony) encounters were compared parent level of reasoning varied, with egoistic reasoning being greater in conflict, just missing significance level (Chi Square=3, df=1,<.10). And while only one parent achieved an overall I-E score which indicated a tendency to reason at the individualistic level regarding conflict, four parents did so in harmony encounters.

D. Describing Parent Coping Behavior

1. Introduction

Lazarus has noted the need to go beyond simply describing coping behavior to considering its adaptiveness. Thus, parent coping behavior was not simply described, but was scored on potential for harm to the child, and compared on this attribute in three types of parent-child encounters: conflict, conflict avoided, and future conflict.

2. Measuring Parent Coping Behavior

To describe parent coping in the face of child provocation, behavior was described at both individual

and group levels, and stability determined across time and situations. Parent responses about their coping behavior were weighted and scored as lower maladaptive, intermediate maladaptive, and higher maladaptive, based on what is known about the effects of specific types of parent behavior on children. Scoring is more fully discussed in the study design section.

3. Results

a. Adaptiveness of Parent Coping Behavior in Parent-Child Conflict

1.) Group Data

To determine adaptiveness of parent coping in conflict, responses were coded to the question, "What did you do (when you and your child did not get along)?" As indicated in Table 20, in half of all conflict encounters, parents responded with higher level of maladaptiveness.

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 20A, the higher level of maladaptive behavior reported in half of all conflicts was attributable to a commensurately sized group of parents (52%), while the lower level of maladaptiveness reported in 17% of conflict encounters was attributable to a very small group (7%). Thus, intermediate and higher levels of maladaptiveness were more typical in the coping behavior of these at-risk parents.

Table 20

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR IN CONFLICT
(n=135)

	Level of Maladaptiveness			
	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	23	45	67	135
%	17	33	50	100

Range = .01-10

Table 20A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR IN CONFLICT:
(N=27)

	Level of Maladaptiveness			
	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	Total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	2	11	14	27
%	7	41	52	100

Range = .01 - 10

b. Stability of Coping Behavior Across Time:
in Conflict Encounters

1.) Group Data

As seen in Table 21, when group data on adaptiveness of coping in conflict was compared across study periods, it appeared that parent coping became less maladaptive over time. However, gains at the intermediate level came from losses at the lower as well as the higher end of the maladaptiveness spectrum. Thus, while some group variability in coping over time was suggested, whether parent adaptiveness improved overall was ambiguous.

2.) Individual Data

Individual parent tendencies were nearly reversed in the later study periods. That is, where 58% of parents had reported higher level of maladaptiveness in the earlier study period, in the later period 62% reported lower or intermediate level. However, differences between scores in these two time periods were not at significance level.

TABLE 21

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=135)

Study Period	Level of Maladaptiveness						Total	
	Lower (.01-3.3)		Intermed (3.4-6.6)		Higher (6.7-10)		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Earlier	15	20	19	25	41	55	75	100
Later	8	13	26	43	26	43	60	100
Range= .01-10								

c. Adaptiveness of Parent Future Intended Coping Behavior: Group and Individual Data

Responding to the question, "How would you handle a similar conflict situation if it came up again?", parents described coping behavior which they planned to use when confronted with similar child provocation in the future.

As indicated in Tables 22 and 22A, parent intention to respond with lower and intermediate level of maladaptive behavior in future hypothesized conflicts occurred more than twice as often as intention to

respond with higher level of adaptiveness. This was in contrast to parent coping with similar child provocativeness in actual past conflict. In actual past conflict, both group and individual data indicated similar frequencies on lower/intermediate and higher level of maladaptive coping behavior (Table 20).

Table 22

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT INTENDED FUTURE COPING BEHAVIOR
(N=105)

	Level of Maladaptiveness			
	Lower (01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	28	37	40	105
%	27	35	38	100

Range= .01-10

Table 22A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT INTENDED FUTURE COPING BEHAVIOR
(N=27)

	Level of Maladaptiveness			
	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4=6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	total
	-----	-----	-----	-----
N	8	10	9	27
%	30	37	33	100

Range= .01-10

d. Stability of Coping Behavior: Future Conflict

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 23, when maladaptiveness of future intended coping behavior was compared in the

earlier and later study periods, lower/intermediate level increased slightly while higher level decreased slightly.

2.) Individual Data

The numbers of individual parents typically reporting lower/intermediate and higher levels of maladaptive coping behavior were identical in both study periods. 68% of parents consistently reported intent to cope less maladaptively with similar child provocation in the future.

Table 23
NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT INTENDED FUTURE COPING BEHAVIOR
AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=105)

Study Period	Level of Maladaptiveness						Total	
	Lower (.01-3.3)		Intermed (3.4-6.6)		Higher (6.7-10)		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Earlier	12	21	22	39	23	40	57	100
Later	16	33	16	33	16	33	48	100
Range=.01-10								

Table 23A
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT INTENDED FUTURE COPING BEHAVIOR,
AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=23)*

Level Maladptv Later Study Period	Level of Maladaptiveness Earlier Study Period		Total	
	Higher/Intermed (.01-3.3)	Lower (6.6-10)	n	%
Higher/Intermed	12	3	15	(68%)
Lower	3	4	7	(32%)
Total	15	7	22	(100%)

Chi Square=0

Range = .01=10

* 4 of the 27 parents who did not respond to the "future coping" question were not considered.

e. Adaptiveness of Coping Behavior: Conflict Avoided

To score them on maladaptiveness of coping behavior when they managed to avoid conflict with a provocative child, parents' answers were coded on the question, "Was there a time when things could have gone wrong (between you and your child) and you did or said something, or even thought something, which helped head it off? What was this?"

As noted earlier (Table 1), parents reported 70 parent-child encounters in which they managed to avoid conflict, despite child provocativeness. In 79% (n=55) of these conflict avoided encounters, parents specifically described their coping behavior in terms of child management--the technique which parents had reported in all conflict and future conflict encounters. However, in 21% (n=15) of conflict-avoided encounters, parents reported using only self management behavior (e.g., substituted positive thoughts; controlled my emotions, impulses; took some time out; ignored him). In order to achieve comparability on maladaptiveness of coping behavior in all three encounter types, only conflict avoided encounters in which parents reported child management behaviors were considered (n=55).

1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 24, in 91% of encounters where child provocation did not lead to parent-child

conflict, parent response was at lower/intermediate level of maladaptiveness.

2.) Individual Data

As indicated in Table 24A, when conflict was avoided, 90% of parents reported coping behavior which was scored at lower/intermediate level of maladaptiveness. This trend toward adaptiveness in individual parents reflected the adaptive trend seen in group data.

Table 24

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR WHEN CONFLICT WAS AVOIDED
(n=55)

	Level of Maladaptiveness			Total
	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	
N	33	17	5	55
%	60	31	9	100

Range = .01-10

Table 24A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS
OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR WHEN CONFLICT WAS AVOIDED
(N=22)*

	Level of Maladaptiveness			Total
	Lower (.01-3.3)	Intermed (3.4-6.6)	Higher (6.7-10)	
N	10	10	2	22
%	45	45	10	100

Range = .01 - 10

* parents who did not report child management coping behavior were not considered.

f. Stability of Coping Behavior: Conflict Avoided 1.) Group Data

As indicated in Table 25, some group change across

time was seen as reports of lower level of maladaptiveness increased in conflict avoided encounters in the later study period.

2.) Individual Data

Of the 22 parents who reported using child management behavior to avoid conflict with a child during the 8 interview study period, only 55% (n=12) did so in both earlier and later periods. Therefore, only these 12 individual parents' scores on coping in conflict-avoided encounters could be compared in the two study periods.

In the earlier and later study periods, respectively, 50% and 42% of this subgroup of parents who managed to avoid conflict with a provocative child reported lower/intermediate level of maladaptiveness in child management coping behavior. Change across time was not significant. Thus, in this sub group coping behavior was stable.

Table 25

NUMBER OF ENCOUNTERS BY LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR WHEN CONFLICT WAS AVOIDED, AND BY STUDY PERIOD
(n=55)*

Study Period	Level of Maladaptiveness						Total	
	Lower (.01-3.3)		Intermed (3.4-6.6)		Higher (6.7-10)		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Earlier	14	54	10	38	2	8	26	100
Later	19	66	7	24	3	10	29	100

Range = .01-3.3

* Only conflict avoided encounters where parents reported child management coping behaviors were considered.

g. Comparison of Parent Coping Means Across
Encounter Types

In the foregoing descriptions of parent coping behavior it appeared that parents differed in level of adaptiveness in the three types of encounters. To determine whether these apparent differences were statistically significant, analysis of the variance in coping means in these encounters was conducted.

Because matched groups were being compared, residual effects had to be considered. Thus, ANOVA for randomized block design, rather than for group design was employed (Edwards, 1960). The number of subjects differed in analyses of the three encounter types, with $n=27$ in conflict, and future conflict, and $n=22$ in conflict avoided. Therefore, for comparability among the groups, analysis of the variance was conducted with $n=22$. As indicated in Table 26, the $F(2,42)$ value of 13.8 exceeded the critical value for significance at $<.005$. Thus, the null hypothesis that the adaptiveness means in the three encounter types were equal was rejected, and it was concluded that adaptiveness did differ significantly in these encounters.

Table 26
COMPARISON OF PARENT LEVEL OF MALADAPTIVENESS OF
PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR IN THREE TYPES OF PARENT-CHILD
ENCOUNTER: CONFLICT, FUTURE CONFLICT, CONFLICT AVOIDED
($n=22$)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F
Between groups	88	2	44.13	13.8
Within groups	116	65	1.78	
Residual	134	42	3.19	

4. Summary of Results on Parent Coping Behavior

When individual parent coping-in-conflict scores were averaged across the study period, results indicated that individual coping behavior was more or less stable over time, and tended to be moderately adaptive. 41% of the parents demonstrated higher level of maladaptive coping, while about half of the sample demonstrated a capacity for at least reciprocity and non-punitiveness (intermediate maladaptiveness).

Group and individual scores on maladaptiveness of parent intended coping behavior when confronted with future provocative child behavior similar to that experienced in actual conflict indicated that such "ideal" future coping behavior was stable across time and more adaptive than parents' actual coping in conflict. In conflict avoided encounters parents, whose behavior patterns were also stable, tended to use less maladaptive coping behavior than they did in either actual or future conflict.

Another difference in parent coping was that in conflict and future conflict, where children were more provocative than in conflict avoided encounters, parents virtually always described their coping behavior solely in terms of child management. On the other hand, in 21% of conflict avoided encounters they reported only self management behaviors (e.g., taking time out, controlling my impulses, ignoring the child).

Chapter 5

THE CORRELATION STUDY

A. The Questions

In the correlation study, an attempt was made to determine relationships between (a) overall level of social stress, defined as the conflict and harmony index (CHI), (b) more immediate level of social stress defined as child provocativeness in parent-child conflict, and (c) adaptiveness of parent cognition and coping behavior in such conflict.

B. Measures

The measures used to determine relationships between the foregoing variables were those which are presented in the descriptive study.

C. Results

1. Overall Level of Social Stress Measured as Conflict and Harmony Index (CHI), Related to Child Provocativeness, Parent Cognition, and Parent Coping Behavior

While the relationships between CHI and both child provocativeness ($r=.08$) and parent coping behavior ($r=.26$) were positive, these were not statistically significant. And, as indicated in Table A, relationships between CHI and parent cognitive appraisal measured as both parent attribution indicating perceived level of threat, and cognitive structure indicating parent level of reasoning about conflict, were weak.

The foregoing suggested that there was no

relationship between overall level of stress measured as conflict and harmony index, and either child provocativeness, parent coping behavior or cognitive appraisal in a specific parent-child conflict. Thus, parents under greater social stress defined as more conflict than harmony with a child were not more likely to confront more provocative children or to report greater anger, child-blaming, external locus of control, or egoistic reasoning regarding conflict. Nor did these more socially stressed parents respond to provocation with more maladaptive coping behavior.

Table A

OVERALL SOCIAL STRESS AS CONFLICT AND HARMONY INDEX (CHI)
RELATED TO PARENT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL
(n=27)

Relationship	r
CHI x Pt Anger	-.15
CHI x Pt Child-Blaming	.13
CHI x Pt Locus of Control	.10
CHI x I-E Score/Cause for Conflict	-.02

a. Interactive Effects

To determine if there were combined effects of CHI and parent cognitive appraisal in conflict which affected parent coping behavior, CHI was fused with each of the cognitive appraisal variables, and the effects of these typologies on coping means compared. Thus, it was possible to determine if, as posited by Lazarus, as a transactional unit, social and psychological stress

had a distinctive effect on the dependent variable, parent coping behavior. Median scoring was used to place parents in higher or lower categories of CHI and cognitive appraisal, and group coping means were compared using ANOVA.

As seen in Table A-1, mean coping differences were statistically significant only among CHI/I-E Score groups, indicating that the fused effects of this measure of overall social stress and parent level of reasoning regarding conflict were related to parent coping behavior ($F(3,23) = 7.72, <.01$).

That is, when higher overall level of stress, defined as more conflict than harmony in the parent-child relationship, was joined by higher egoistic parent reasoning about a particular conflict, parent coping behavior was the most maladaptive (Mean=7.89). However, when either higher or lower overall level of stress was fused with less egoistic reasoning, the result was the least maladaptive coping behavior. In both instances, the group coping mean was 5.5. Thus, not only were the positive aspects of coping, i.e., lower overall level of stress, less egoistic reasoning, and less maladaptive coping related, but even when parents reported higher levels of overall stress, level of reasoning seemed to make a difference in their coping behavior.

Table A-1

ANOVA GROUP MEANS ON MALADAPTIVENESS OF PARENT COPING
WHEN OVERALL LEVEL OF STRESS AS CONFLICT AND
HARMONY INDEX (CHI) AND PARENT COGNITIVE
APPRAISAL WERE FUSED
(n=27)

Groups	F (3,23)
Hi/Lo CHI X Pt Anger	.37
Hi/Lo CHI x Pt Child-Blaming	.27
Hi/Lo CHI x Pt Locus of Control	.07
Hi/Lo CHI x Pt I-E Score/Cause Conflict	7.72

2. Social Stress Measured as Child Provocativeness, Related to Parent Coping: Testing a Stress-Related Hypothesis

In the descriptive study it was found that adaptiveness of parent coping behavior differed significantly in three types of parent-child encounter: conflict, future conflict, and conflict avoided ($F(2,42)=13.8, <.05$), with parents reporting less maladaptive behavior in future than in actual conflicts, and reporting the least maladaptive behavior when conflict was avoided with a provocative child. Also, the parent cognitions, locus of control and level of parent reasoning (I-E Score) were significantly more maladaptive in stressful (conflict) than non-stressful (harmony) encounters. These findings suggested that social stress measured as child provocativeness might be associated with adaptiveness of parent cognition and coping behavior. The following correlational analyses were performed to determine if these relationships were statistically significant.

a. Social Stress as Child Provocativeness
Related to Parent Cognitive Appraisal

As indicated in Table B, among the three "threat" attributions, only the relationship between child provocativeness and severity of parent child-blaming came near statistical significance ($r=.36$, $df=1$, $<.10$). Also, parents who were confronted with more provocative children were also significantly more likely to reason egoistically about the situation ($r=.38$, $df=1$, $<.05$). Thus, there appeared to be some association between the stressor and parent cognitive appraisal.

Table B

PARENT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL RELATED TO LEVEL OF SOCIAL
STRESS MEASURED AS CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS IN CONFLICT
($n=27$)

Relationship	r
Severity Child Provoc x Severity Pt Anger	.17
Severity Child Provoc x Severity Pt Child-Blaming	.36+
Severity Child Provoc x Extern Pt Locus of Control	.07
Severity Child Provoc x Maladptv Pt I-E Score/Conflict Cause	.38*

* $<.05$ + $<.10$

b. Cognitive Appraisal Related to Parent Coping Behavior

As indicated in Table B1, only the correlation between severity of anger and maladaptiveness of coping behavior reached moderate level ($r=.33$, $<.10$). Nearly reaching statistical significance, this positive correlation suggested that, of all the cognitive variables, only parent anger might be directly associated with adaptiveness of parent coping behavior.

Table B1

PARENT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL
RELATED TO MALADPTIVENESS OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR
IN CONFLICT
(n=27)

Relationship	r
Severity Pt Anger x Maladptv Pt Coping Behav	.33+
Severity Pt Child-blaming x Maladptv Pt Coping Behav	.08
Extern Pt Locus of Control x Maladptv Pt Coping Behav	-.07
Maladptv Pt I-E Score/Conflict Cause x Maladptv Pt Coping Behav	.20

+ $<.10$

As indicated in Table B2, the relationship between child provocativeness and maladaptiveness of parent coping behavior was positive in all three types of encounter. However, it was very weak in conflict encounters ($r=.02$). It was moderate in future conflict ($r=.21$) where parents reported intended behavior response to child provocations which were similar to those reported in actual conflict encounters. The relationship was strongest and statistically significant in conflict avoided encounters ($r=.39$, $df= 25$, $<.05$)

Table B2

LEVEL OF SOCIAL STRESS MEASURED AS CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS, RELATED TO MALADAPTIVENESS OF PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR IN THREE TYPES OF PARENT-CHILD ENCOUNTER (n=27)+

Relationship	r
Severity Child Provoc/Conflict x Maladapt Pt Coping Behav/Conflict	.02
Severity Child Provoc/Future x Maladapt Pt Coping Behav/Future	.21
Severity Child Provoc/Conflict Avoid x Maladapt Pt Coping Behav/Conflict Avoid	.39*

* $<.05$

+ n=22 in Conflict Avoided encounters because all parents did not respond in at least three interviews.

To test the hypothesis that parent cognitive appraisal would moderate the relationship between child provocativeness and parent coping behavior, this relationship was controlled on parent cognitive appraisal of the situation as threat/challenge, and on parent level of reasoning about the cause for conflict. Median scoring was used to dichotomize the sample as higher and lower level control groups.

As indicated in Table B3, when controlled on the indicators of parent cognitive appraisal, the relationship between child provocativeness and parent coping behavior did not reach level of statistical significance. Thus, the Lazarus hypothesis that cognitive appraisal would moderate the relationship between stressor and actual coping behavior was not supported.

Table B3

LEVEL OF CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS RELATED TO PARENT COPING
BEHAVIOR, CONTROLLED ON PARENT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL
(n=27)

Original Relationship $r=.02$

Control Variable	Level	
	Higher > 5.72	Lower < 5.72
Severity Pt Anger		
	r= .13	r= -.01
	n= (13)	n= (14)
Severity Pt Ch-Blaming	> 6.50	< 6.50
	r= .04	r= .13
	n= (14)	n= (13)
Extern Pt Loc of Control	> 6.67	< 6.67
	r= -.13	r= .18
	n= (11)	n= (16)
Maladptv Pt I-E Score	> 8.75	< 8.75
	r= -.12	r= .03
	n= (13)	n= (14)

To determine if there were fused effects of child provocativeness and parent cognitive appraisal which might affect parent coping behavior, means on coping behavior were compared in groups formed on a new typological variable, child provocativeness/parent cognitive appraisal. The sample was dichotomized as higher and lower levels of each variable based on placement above or below median scores.

As indicated in Table B4, when child provocativeness was fused with any of the four variables of cognitive appraisal, differences in parent coping means were not statistically significant. However, an interesting pattern emerged: In three of the four analyses, the lowest means, i.e., most adaptive coping behaviors, were among parents reporting higher child provocativeness and more adaptive parent cognitive appraisal. On the other hand, the highest coping means, i.e., the least adaptive parent behavior, were among parents who, despite lower child provocation, reported less adaptive cognitive appraisal. These results, while not statistically significant, are consistent with other study findings which suggest that the positive aspects of cognition go together with positive coping behavior.

Table B4

**ANOVA of Group Means on Parent Coping Behavior When
Child Provocativeness and Parent Cognitive
Appraisal Were Fused
(n=27)**

Fused Variable	F(3,23)	Lowest Coping Mean	Highest Coping Mean
Ch Provoc x Pt Anger	.77	Hi Provoc x Lo Anger	Lo Provoc x Lo Anger
Ch Provoc x Pt Ch-Blaming	.33	Hi Provoc x Lo Blaming	Lo Provoc x Hi Blaming
Ch Provoc x Locus of Control	2.59	Hi Provoc x Extern Locus	Lo Provoc x Extern Locus
Ch Provoc x Level of Reasoning	2.84	Hi Provoc x Lo Egoistic	Lo Provoc x Hi Egoistic

3. Effects of Cognitive Appraisal on Relationship Between Anger and Parent Coping Behavior

To test the moderating effect of cognition on the relationship between emotion and actual coping behavior which Lazarus posits, the relationship between anger--a cognition about an emotion--and coping behavior was controlled on the other three cognitive appraisal variables.

As indicated in Table C, the original relationship was strengthened in all control conditions. Among parents who blamed children more severely, higher anger was associated with more maladaptive coping behavior.

Among parents with more internal locus of control and among those who reasoned less egoistically about conflict, lower anger was associated with less maladaptive coping behavior. The latter results which support Lazarus' assertion that an observable emotion alone is not sufficient to predict actual coping behavior, but that cognition influences the outcome, were also consistent with findings reported earlier that the positive aspects of cognition and coping behavior go together.

Table C

SEVERITY OF ANGER RELATED TO MALADAPTIVENESS OF PARENT
COPING BEHAVIOR, CONTROLLED ON COGNITIVE APPRAISAL
(N=27)

Original Relationship = .33, $p < .10$

Control Variable	Level	
	Higher >6.50	Lower <6.50
Child-Blaming		
	r= .49**	.17
	n= (14)	(13)
Externality of Locus of Control	>6.67	<6.67
	r= .26	.43*
	n= (11)	(16)
+Level of Reasoning	>8.75	<8.75
	r= .22	.65**
	n= (13)	(14)

+ Higher I-E Score indicated more egoistic reasoning.

4. Intercorrelations of Cognitive Appraisal Variables

As indicated in Table D, intercorrelations between cognitive appraisal variables were not statistically significant, suggesting that the variables which had been selected to indicate parent perceived level of threat, and parent level of reasoning about conflict were not a unified construct.

Table D

INTERCORRELATIONS OF COGNITIVE APPRAISAL VARIABLES IN CONFLICT ENCOUNTERS

Relationship	r
Severity Pt Anger x Maladapt Pt I-E Score/Conflict Cause	-.22
Severity Pt Child-blaming x Maladapt Pt I-E Score/Conflict Cause	.12
Extern Pt Locus of Control x Maladapt I-E Score/Conflict Cause	.17
Severity Pt Anger x Severity Pt Child-blaming	.18
Severity Pt Anger x Extern Pt Locus of Control	-.27
Severity Pt Child-blaming x Extern Pt Locus of Control	.03

5. Demographic Variables Related to Stress and Coping

a. Levels of Social Stress

As indicated in Table E, overall level of social stress measured as conflict and harmony index was not significantly related to any of the demographic variables. However, social stress measured as child provocativeness in a specific parent-child conflict was significantly related to parent level of education ($r=.50, <.01$). Child provocativeness was not significantly related to any of the other demographic variables.

b. Cognitive Appraisal

Parent anger level was significantly related only to ethnicity, indicating that minority parents were less likely to report higher anger in conflict ($r=-.40, <.05$). Parent child-blaming was not significantly related to any of the demographic variables. However, locus of control was related near significance level with income ($r=-.36, <.10$), indicating that lower income parents were more likely to attribute the cause of conflict to themselves.

Parent level of reasoning was significantly related only to parent level of education ($r=-.50, <.01$), indicating that less educated parents tended to reason more egoistically about the cause for conflict.

c. Coping Behavior

Maladaptiveness of coping behavior was related only

to marital status, where it nearly reached level of statistical significance ($r = -.34, < .10$), indicating that single parents were more likely than married parents to respond to a provocative child with maladaptive behavior.

Table E

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES RELATED TO STRESS AND COPING
(n=27)

Demog	Overall Stress	Child Prov	Anger	Child Blame	Locus Contrl	Level Reason	Cop Beh
Educ	-.08	-.50**	-.10	-.30	-.04	.38*	.23
Ethnic	-.18	.05	-.40*	.03	.18	-.28	-.24
Income	.14	-.03	.25	-.23	-.36+	.15	-.04
Marital Status	.26	-.15	-.28	-.09	-.10	-.15	-.34+

D. Discussion of Results of Correlation Study

1. Overall Level of Social Stress and Coping

Overall level of social stress, defined as the parent-child conflict-harmony index (CHI) was not directly related to the coping variables. However, because the PCE study examined only one measure of overall stress in the parent-child relationship, other criteria of stress in this relationship would need to be identified, and their effects on coping determined to state more certainly whether a generally stressful parent-child relationship directly affects parent coping behavior. Also, the fact that the conflict-harmony index was based on parent self reports, indicates that it might be important to develop a more objective method

of determining the frequency of conflict and harmony between parents and children.

2. Stress, Coping, and Cognition

While the overall level of social stress was not directly related to coping, parent level of reasoning about the cause for conflict seemed to affect this relationship such that less egoistic parents experiencing similarly stressful parent-child relationships over the study period tended to cope more adaptively. Since, as stated earlier, parent level of reasoning was a limited measure of what is clearly a complex cognitive structure, this finding should be seen as tentative until further research strengthens and validates this measure.

When the results of the descriptive study suggesting that social stress defined as child provocativeness might be associated with parent coping behavior were tested in the correlation study, no direct relationship was found between this stressor and parent coping behavior. Nor did cognitive appraisal seem to moderate the relationship as hypothesized. However, the cognitions child-blaming and level of reasoning were significantly related to child provocativeness; the cognition anger was significantly related to coping behavior; and fused effects of child provocativeness and parent cognitive appraisal did affect parent coping.

While differences in coping means were not statistically significant, there was a trend which suggested that the positive aspects of level of parent reasoning, child-blaming, and anger go together with more adaptive coping behavior.

The fact that the relationship between anger and parent coping behavior was strongly moderated, at statistically significant levels, by all of the cognitive appraisal variables, also supported the study hypothesis that cognition and coping behavior are associated. And because in two of the three conditional analyses, the positive aspects of cognition and coping variables were associated, a more specific interpretation was supported as it had been in the analyses discussed above: the positive aspects of cognition and coping behavior go together.

3. Some Cautions About Interpreting Findings About Stress and Coping Relationships

The nature of the study question required measuring a large number of variables in this small sample. Thus, caution is indicated in attributing social significance to relationships which were found statistically significant. Also, since most correlations are only moderate, they still leave a considerable portion of relationships to be explained. For example, while the correlation of .49 found among higher child-blaming parents for the relationship between anger and coping is considered moderately strong in social science research

(Cohen, 1988), it still leaves half of the relationship between anger and coping behavior to be explained. On the other hand, when one considers that it would be unreasonable to expect any single factor to explain such complex behavior as coping, factors which seem to explain nearly 50% of a relationship should be given serious, albeit cautious, consideration.

4. Demographics and Coping

a. Education Level

The demographic variables most strongly related to aspects of coping were parent level of education, and ethnicity. The moderate correlation between education level and parent level of reasoning ($r=.38$) supports other research which suggests that education and level of reasoning may be related (Newberger, 1977). However, the direction of effects would still need to be determined by further research. For example, to what degree is dropping out of school a result of less complex thinking ability. Or, does leaving school prematurely inhibit the development of more mature level of reasoning. The relationship between level of reasoning and adaptiveness of parenting behavior which the PCE study and a number of other studies have suggested indicates the worthwhileness of such exploration.

Unlike the foregoing, the direction of effects between child provocativeness and level of parent

education was not ambiguous: parent education clearly preceded child provocativeness since no parent was in or left school during or close to the study period. The strong correlation ($r=.50$) between these variables suggests that parents with insufficient schooling may tend to foster more provocativeness in children.

b. Anger and Ethnicity

The finding that minority parents, i.e., non-white, were significantly less likely to report higher anger ($r=-.40$) is one which must be cautiously interpreted. The fact that all of the interviewers were white might have inhibited minority parents who wished to be viewed in a positive light by "outsiders". Parents may have minimized reports of negative feelings towards their children who, as indicated by the low correlation between child provocativeness and ethnicity ($r=.05$), were no less likely to be provocative than white children. Were the study to be replicated, probing parents' anger reports more fully might eliminate ethnic reality as a possible confounder.

Chapter 6

THE TEMPORAL ORDER STUDY

A. Introduction

Because the PCE study was longitudinal, based on data collected in eight interviews, it was possible to conduct cross lagged correlations (Cook & Campbell, 1979) in which correlation coefficients between two variables of interest were compared in three waves of measurement in order to determine whether increase in one variable was a stronger predictor of increase in the other.

B. The Method

To determine temporal order in coping, cross correlations were performed in three waves of measurement to see if one variable in a relationship was a stronger predictor of the other. The first wave of measurement was Time 1 x Time 2; the second wave, Time 2 x Time 3; and the third wave, Time 1 x Time 3. Cook and Campbell (1979) assume that relative magnitude of the cross correlations is a dependable indicator of the relative strengths of A----->B and B----->A.

The standard for attributing greater strength in a particular direction was that the median correlation coefficient found in the three waves of measurement be higher in that direction.

In selecting the three observations to be used in the cross correlations, an attempt was made to represent earlier, middle, and later study period interviews.

That is, the objective was that at Time 1, parent data should be from her first, second, or third interview; at Time 2, from her fourth or fifth interview; and at Time 3, from her sixth, seventh, or eighth interview.

As indicated in Table F, this objective was achieved: 96% of Time 1 parent data represented earlier stage interviews; 78% of Time 2 parent data represented middle stage interviews; and 89% of Time 3 data represented later stage interviews. In the few instances where data not strictly represent a given time period, the sequence of the data was never violated. For example, if a parent's Time 1 data did not represent interviews 1, 2, or 3, it always represented an interview (e.g., # 4, 5) which preceded her Time 2 data, which in turn preceded her Time 3 data.

Table F

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL DATA SETS BY DESCRIPTIVE STUDY PERIOD
AND TEMPORAL ORDER STUDY PERIOD
(n=27)

Temp Order Study Period	Descriptive Study Period							
	Earlier Interviews		Middle Interviews		Later Interviews		total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1	26	96	1	4	-	-	27	100
2	5	18	21	78	1	4	27	100
3	-	-	3	11	24	89	27	100

C. Results

1. Social Stress Measured as Child Provocativeness, Related to Parent Coping Behavior

As indicated in Table G, in two of the three types of parent-child conflict encounters, (conflict and future conflict), while not statistically significant, the median scores indicated that the direction of effects was stronger from parent coping behavior to child provocativeness. Only in the conflict avoided encounter where the median score was statistically significant, was the direction of effects from child provocativeness to parent coping behavior.

2. Social Stress Measured as Child Provocativeness, Related to Parent Cognitive Appraisal

As indicated in Table H, the direction of effects was stronger from parent I-E score, child-blaming, locus of control, and anger to child provocativeness. Except for locus of control, the median correlation coefficients which indicated direction of effects were at or near statistical significance. Thus, the temporal order suggested was from cognitive appraisal to social stress measured as child provocativeness. That is, child provocativeness was dependent on parent cognitive appraisal of an inherent threat in the situation as well as on parent level of reasoning about the cause for conflict.

3. Cognition and Emotion

As indicated in Table J, when the relationship

between anger--a cognition about an emotion--and the other purely cognitive variables was analyzed, while median correlation coefficients were not statistically significant, the dominant direction of effects was from cognition to anger. This suggested that anger level was dependent on a parent's assessment of threat in, and her level of reasoning about, conflict.

4. Cognitive Structure and Parent Level of Perceived Threat Indicated by Situational Attributions in Conflict

It had been hypothesized that parent level of reasoning (I-E score), because it represented a more structural parent cognition, would precede the other more "situational" parent attributions (anger, child-blaming, locus of control).

As indicated in Table K, while median correlation coefficients were not statistically significant, the direction of effects was stronger from I-E score to both anger and locus of control, and was ambiguous between I-E score and child-blaming. Thus, the dominant direction of effects was from structural cognition to situational attribution, indicating that level of parent reasoning may influence whether a parent perceives a stressful situation as threat or challenge.

5. Cognitive Appraisal and Parent Coping Behavior

As indicated in Table L, the direction of effects in the relationships between the four cognitive

appraisal variables and parent coping behavior varied. Anger and locus of control preceded parent coping behavior while parent coping behavior preceded child-blaming and parent level of reasoning (I-E Score). While not statistically significant, the direction of effects in the relationship between parent coping behavior and child-blaming and level of reasoning about the cause for conflict suggested that parents might offer post hoc justifications for their behavior.

Table G

TEMPORAL ORDER: SOCIAL STRESS AS CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS
RELATED TO PARENT COPING BEHAVIOR IN THREE TYPES OF
PARENT-CHILD ENCOUNTER

Child Provocativeness x Pt Coping Behavior/Conflict
(n=27) (r=.02)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Cop Bh/Conflict	.02	.03	.08	.03
Pt Cop Bh x Ch Provoc/Conflict	.21	.29	.21	.21

Child Provocativeness x Pt Coping Behavior/Future
(n=27) (r=.21)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Cop Bh/Future	.18	-.06	.21	.18
Pt Cop Bh/Future x Ch Provoc	.36+	.09	.22	.22

Child Provocativeness x Pt Coping Behavior/Conflict Avoid
(n=27) (r=.39)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Cop Bh/Cflt Avoid	.47*	.15	.56**	.47*
Pt Cop Bh/Cflt Avoid x Ch Provoc	-.15	.06	+.15	.06

*<.05 **<.01

Table H

TEMPORAL ORDER: SOCIAL STRESS AS CHILD PROVOCATIVENESS
RELATED TO PARENT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL IN CONFLICT

Child Provocativeness x Pt Level of Reasoning (I-E Score)
(n=27) (r=.38*)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x I-E Score/Conflict	.16	.04	.23	.16
I-E Score/Conflict x Ch Provoc	.24	.51**	.42*	.42*

Child Provocativeness x Pt Child-Blaming
(n=27) (r=.36+)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Child-Blame/Confl	.17	.04	.35+	.17
Pt Child-Blame/Confl x Ch Provoc	.07	.51**	.36+	.36+

Child Provocativeness x Pt Anger
(n=27) (r=.17)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Anger/Conflict	.11	.19	.17	.17
Pt Anger/Conflict x Ch Provoc	.19	.49*	.37+	.37+

Child Provocativeness x Pt Locus of Control
(n=27) (r= .07)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Ch Provoc x Pt Locus/Conflict	.11	.06	.11	.06
Pt Locus/Conflict x Ch Provoc	.12	.35+	.09	.09

**<.01 <.05 + <.10

Table J

TEMPORAL ORDER: PT ANGER RELATED TO PT COGNITIVE
APPRAISAL IN CONFLICT

Pt Anger x Pt Level of Reasoning (I-E Score)
(n=27) (r=-.22)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt I-E Score x Pt Anger	-.17	.07	-.22	-.17

Pt Anger x Pt I-E Score	.07	-.08	.10	.07

Pt Anger x Pt Child-Blaming
(n=27) (r=.18)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt Child-Blame x Pt Anger	.04	.17	.18	.17

Pt Anger x Pt Child-Blame	.17	.03	.03	.03

Pt Anger x Parent Locus of Control
(n=27) (r= -.27)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt Locus x Pt Anger	-.32+	-.21	-.27	.27

Pt Anger x Pt Locus	-.21	-.27	-.13	.21

Table K

**TEMPORAL ORDER: PT LEVEL OF REASONING RELATED TO
ATTRIBUTION IN CONFLICT**

Pt I -E Score x Pt Anger
(n=27) (r= -.22)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt I-E Score x Pt Anger	-.17	.07	-.22	-.17
<hr/>				
Pt Anger x Pt I-E Score	.07	-.08	.10	-.08

Pt I-E Score x Pt Locus of Control
(n=27) (r=.17)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt I-E Score x Pt Locus	.21	.28	.23	-.23
<hr/>				
Pt Locus x Pt I-E Score	.04	.20	.06	.06

Pt I-E Score x Pt Child-Blaming
(n=27) (r=.12)

	Cross Correlations			
	Time 1 x Time 2 -----	Time 2 x Time 3 -----	Time 1 x Time 3 -----	Median r -----
Pt I-E Score x Pt Child-Blame	.06	-.13	.12	.12
<hr/>				
Pt Child-Blame x Pt I-E Score	-.12	-.15	.08	-.12

Table L

TEMPORAL ORDER: PT COGNITIVE APPRAISAL RELATED TO PT
COPING BEHAVIOR IN CONFLICT

Pt Anger x Pt Coping Behavior
(n=27) (r=.33)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Pt Anger x Pt Coping Behav	.36	.33+	.59**	.36+
Pt Cop Behav x Pt Anger	.32+	.36+	.33+	.33+

Pt Locus of Control x Pt Coping Behavior
(n=27) (r= -.07)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Pt Locus of Control x Pt Cop Behav	-.15	-.13	-.12	.13
Pt Cop Behav x Pt Locus of Control	.08	-.19	.02	.08

Pt I-E Score x Pt Coping Behavior

(n=27) (r=.20)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Pt I-E Score x Pt Cop Behav	-.04	.03	-.10	.04
Pt Cop Behav x Pt I-E Score	.34	-.11	.20	.20

Pt Child-Blaming x Pt Coping Behavior
(n=27) (r=.08)

	Cross Correlations			Median r
	Time 1 x Time 2	Time 2 x Time 3	Time 1 x Time 3	
Pt Child-Blaming x Pt Cop Behav	-.05	.06	.13	.06
Pt Cop Behav x Pt Child-Blaming	.17	-.07	.08	.08

+ <.10 * <.05 **<.01

D. Summary of Findings Regarding Temporal Order in the Stress to Coping Process

Table M

Temporal Order of Stress and Coping Variables in Parent-Child Conflict

Relationship of Interest	Correlat Study r	Dominant Direction of Effects
Child Provoc	.02	Pt Cop Beh--->Child Provoc/Confl
x	.21	Pt Cop Beh--->Child Provoc/Fut
Pt Cop Behav	.39*	Pt Cop Beh<---Child Provoc/Avoid#
Child Provoc	.17	Pt Anger----->Child Provoc #
x	.36+	Pt Ch-Blame----->Child Provoc #
Pt Cog Apprais	.38*	Pt I-E Score---->Child Provoc #
	.07	Pt Loc Control-->Child Provoc
Pt Cog Apprais	.33+	Pt Anger----->Pt Cop Beh #
x	.07	Pt Loc Control---->Pt Cop Beh
Pt Cop Behav	.20	Pt I-E Score<-----Pt Cop Beh
	.08	Pt Ch-Blame<----- Pt Cop Beh
Pt Cognition	.18	Pt Ch-Blame----->Pt Anger
x	-.22	Pt I-E Score----->Pt Anger
Pt Emotion	-.27	Pt Loc Cntrl----->Pt Anger
Structural Cognit	-.22	Pt I-E Score----->Pt Anger
x	.17	Pt I-E Score----->Pt Loc Contrl
Situational Cognit	.12	Pt I-E Score... ..Pt Ch-Blame

Median correlation coefficient was at or near statistical significance.

....Direction of effects was ambiguous

* <.05 + <.10

E. Discussion of Temporal Order Study Results

Based on higher median correlations in two of the three encounter types, parent coping behavior was found to precede child provocativeness. All four cognitive appraisal variables--anger, child-blaming, locus of control, and level of reasoning--also preceded the

immediate social stressor child provocativeness.

Unlike those between coping behavior and child provocativeness, correlations were statistically significant between three of the four cognitive variables and child provocativeness. Thus, cognitive appraisal seemed to be a stronger antecedent to child provocativeness than was parent coping behavior.

These findings supported perspectives in which stressful parent-child encounters are viewed as transactional rather than linear events. That is, where understanding the event requires stretching the frame of reference beyond the specific encounter to consider the influential role of prior parent thinking and behavior on subsequent child behavior.

Higher median correlations suggested that all four indicators of cognitive appraisal also preceded the emotion anger. While not at statistically significant levels, these correlations supported cognitive theories such as Lazarus' which posit that cognition precedes emotion. When this finding was combined with the finding that anger preceded coping behavior at near significance level ($r=.36, <.10$) the temporal order which Lazarus posits for the coping process was supported. That is, cognition preceded emotion which preceded actual coping behavior.

Chapter 7

DISCUSSION

A. Points About the Study Background and Design, and Implications

1. The Type of Study, Questions, and Data Base

Because it was based on actual, rather than hypothetical parent-child conflict, the PCE study offered an opportunity for a realistic picture of stress and coping in at-risk parents. An index of conflict and harmony provided a measure of overall social stress in the parent-child relationship. And in-depth exploration of parent cognitions and behaviors gained a view of how parents coped with a specific social stressor, child provocativeness, in discipline encounters. The fact that child provocativeness, and related parent cognition and behavior were observed in varying contexts and at several points in time made it possible to determine the stability and temporal order of these coping variables.

Considerable reliability between tapes of verbatim client-researcher dialogue, and the briefer researcher summary of client responses to the semi-structured thematic questionnaire which provided the data base for the study indicated that efficiency was not gained at the expense of accuracy. However, having the tapes to refer to enriched the data by providing details and examples regarding the variables of interest. Thus, the use of both taped verbatim dialogue and researchers' briefer summaries of this appears to be a meaningful combination for social work research on clinical issues.

2. Some Methodological Considerations

a. Generalizing the Results

While knowledge about the dynamic quality of coping, notably the role of cognition, was gained by this transactional view of person and environment, there are certain characteristics of the study which should be considered when evaluating findings. Most importantly, while the PCE study parents were a cooperative and highly motivated group, they were also heavily minority (66%), poor, and virtually all female. Because of this skewness, generalizability to the population of at-risk parents which has consistently been identified as heterogeneous (Berger, 1980) is limited.

b. Cultural Diversity

There is a growing body of research which indicates that parent-child relationships vary with cultural factors, and that communication between different cultural or ethnic group members regarding such issues may be confounded by non-shared values and understandings (De Vore & Schlesinger, 1987). Green (1982) has stressed the need for attention to the way language is used to identify a problem, as well as to client-oriented criteria to determine whether outcomes are satisfactory. Because findings were based on measures which were developed on white middle class parents whose ethnic reality may differ in many respects

from poor minority parents', cultural as well as socioeconomic differences must be considered as possible confounders. For example, when interpreting the finding that minority parents reported less anger than white parents, the validity of "higher/lower anger" as symbols shared by both minority and white cultures for similar emotions could be questioned in the absence of additional probing.

Cultural diversity should also be considered regarding the study measure of adaptiveness of disciplining behavior. Consideration of the potentially different social realities of minority and white families, what is adaptive--what works--to prepare children for life may differ. However, given the numerous cultural groups and sub-groups in the United States, Berger's (1980) suggestion that until such diverse child rearing norms and their effects on children are better understood it might be wiser to define abuse without reference to cultural context but rather to view cultural context as an independent variable. This was the case in the PCE study.

Consideration of ethnic reality also prompts caution regarding the candor of minority parents who reported lower anger than the white group. One must consider the possibility that minority parents may have wished to present themselves in a more favorable light when they believed their adequacy as parents was being

judged by a white middle class "outsider". However, there is some evidence that this threat may have been reduced since parents acknowledged difficulties in child rearing, voluntarily sought help, and were consistent in keeping their appointments with interviewers over an eight week period. Such motivation and cooperative behavior is usually accompanied by candor (Sarason et al, 1978).

To strengthen reliability and validity in research involving non-majority samples, Bowman (1983) has recommended strategies such as using indigenous interviewers, or consulting with representatives of the sample community when developing questions and measures. Input from, and involvement of the cultural community represented in the sample should not only strengthen reliability as distance between researchers and respondents is narrowed, but it should also strengthen validity as measures are less open to question on cultural grounds. Bowman has also pointed out that selecting study questions relevant to minority communities may depend on such real involvement of those communities.

c. Size of Effects

Another limitation to be noted is the fact that a large number of variables were studied in this small sample of 27 parents. Thus, while a correlation between two variables might be statistically significant, the

size of the group in which these were measured should also be considered when deciding whether the relationship can be considered socially significant.

d. Validity of Cognitive Measures

Because the measure level of reasoning was based on a limited number of questions, findings should be seen as suggestive rather than definitive. Also, coding parent level of reasoning led to a serendipitous finding which suggested that more attention should be paid in professional education to understanding this cognitive structure. All clinicians who were approached to do the reliability test on this measure were not knowledgeable enough to code this cognition. Those finally selected for the task were all at least master's level clinicians with 5-15 years of experience. As reported in the study design section, reliability was strong among this group of psychologists and social workers. Whether less experienced coders could perform the task reliably should be considered in similar studies.

The scope of the PCE study limited to three the number of attributions which indicated parent perceived level of threat in parent-child conflict: anger, child-blaming, and locus of control. In future studies these should be increased, or supplanted by other attributions which have also been associated with aggression and abuse. For example, parent cognitions regarding corporal punishment (Kadushin & Martin, 1981),

and retaliatory norms (Feshback, 1980). Also, additional exploratory questions might have given a more instructive picture as to why some parents reported greater anger, child-blaming, or lack of control in the disciplining situation.

B. Findings and Implications

1. Typologies of Child Provocativeness and Parent Coping Behavior

The full study revealed no additional genotypic categories of provocative child behaviors or parent coping behaviors beyond those noted in the instrument which was developed on a sample of five cases. These typologies also reflect patterns in provocative child behavior and parent coping responses which have been reported by other authors. For example, similar to Kadushin and Martin's (1981) findings, all provocative child behaviors reported were normal behaviors. And by further describing provocative child behaviors as challenging/aggressive and deficient/bothersome, the PCE study expands on broad descriptions such as Bell and Harper's (1977) over and underactive dichotomy.

The fact that all parent coping behaviors were codeable as either self management or child management supported Lazarus' broad definition of coping as self management versus managing the environment. The PCE study expanded on this description by presenting some evidence that whether parents selected one or the other coping technique might be associated with the

stressfulness of the situation when this was defined as child provocativeness. Parents were more likely to respond with self management techniques when children were less provocative.

Analysis of reported parent coping behaviors indicated that these could also be scaled from empathic to punitive, i.e., as indicators of risk to a child. Therefore, parent coping behaviors were not only described, and dichotomized on self/other focus, but their adaptiveness was also measured. Thus, the PCE instrument appeared to offer a useful tool with which to identify parent as well as child behaviors for hypothesis testing in clinical and research settings.

2. Stress Related to Coping

a. Social Stress Measured as Conflict and Harmony Index (CHI)

In the descriptive study, systematic measurements repeated in eight interviews brought to light the shifting and variable rather than static patterns in two measures of social stress: (a) overall social stress defined as parent conflict and harmony index, and (b) specific stress defined as child provocativeness.

Regarding the former, parents were as likely to report harmony as conflict in a given week, and harmony reports remained stable over time while conflict reports decreased significantly in the later study period (Chi Square = 4, $df=1$, $<.05$). Thus, it was concluded that relationships between these parents and

their children could not be described as continuous, unrelieved struggle which might be stereotypically associated with being "at-risk".

It was also found that cognition--specifically parent level of reasoning--interacted with overall level of stress in the parent-child relationship to affect coping behavior. In the presence of higher overall social stress, more egoistic parents coped least adaptively, while in the presence of either lower or higher overall social stress, less egoistic parents still coped most adaptively. These statistically significant coping differences between more and less egoistic parents supported the findings of several studies in which parent complexity of reasoning was associated with adaptiveness of child rearing behavior.

As participants in the larger Anger study, all parents had received cognitive-behavioral treatment targeted at reducing anger and/or learning to cognitively restructure provocative situations with children. Thus, the possible role of treatment was suggested in diminished parent-child conflict indicated in lower CHI scores in the later study period despite increased child provocativeness. (Chi Square = 3.6, $df=1$, $<.10$).

Nomellini and Katz (1983) have reported temporary worsening of child behavior when at-risk parents who received cognitive-behavioral treatment improved in

their disciplining responses. These authors have offered as an explanation the possibility that a child may have to increase her acting out in order to gain the attention of a parent who has developed better coping behavior.

In the temporal order study, it was suggested that child provocativeness was dependent on parent coping behavior. Thus, an implication of the paradoxical negative effect on child provocativeness of positive parent change indicated by diminished conflict would be to anticipate possible temporary escalation by children of parents whose improvement in therapy results in less negative attention to the child. At-risk parents may need help not only to decrease negative attention but also to learn ways to increase positive attention. In the face of increased child provocativeness treated parents might otherwise question the effectiveness of treatment and prematurely discontinue use of their newly acquired more adaptive coping behaviors.

b. Social Stress Measured as Child Provocativeness

The finding that conflict was as likely to be associated with under as overactive child behavior reflected Bell and Harper's (1977) conclusion that parents are likely to respond when either upper or lower limits to acceptable child behavior are reached.

However, findings in the descriptive study suggested that how parents respond may be influenced by the type

and/or number of provocative child behaviors. In conflict avoided encounters, where parents were confronted with fewer and less provocative child behaviors their coping behavior was significantly more adaptive than in conflict or future hypothesized conflict encounters where they were confronted with a greater number, and more provocative child behaviors in a typical encounter ($F(2,42) = 13.8, <.01$).

The finding that multiple, more provocative child behaviors were more likely than single, less provocative behaviors to be associated with conflict than with conflict avoided encounters corresponds with a common sense interpretation: Novaco (1976) has suggested that multiple provocations may be "the straw that breaks the camel's back", as an aggressive response is triggered.

Kadushin and Martin (1981), whose study is discussed in the literature review, have also noted the role of the provocative child in abuse, and have recommended helping children in at-risk homes to alter their own behavior. In the PCE study, while child provocativeness was not directly related to parent coping behavior, when it was fused with parent cognitive appraisal the most adaptive coping behavior was among parents reporting more adaptive cognitions in the face of more provocative child behavior. The least adaptive behavior was among parents reporting less adaptive cognitions in spite of less provocative child behavior. While correlations were not statistically significant,

this pattern suggested that cognitions about child provocation might be more strongly related to parent coping behavior than was child behavior alone.

3. Direction of Effects: Child Provocativeness, Parent Cognitive Appraisal, and Parent Coping Behavior

Study findings that child provocativeness was dependent on parent cognition and behavior casts a somewhat different light on the association between child and parent factors noted above. In three of the four analyses involving child provocativeness and parent cognitive appraisal, child provocativeness was dependent on parent cognition. Also, although it is not a significant relationship, and too much reliance cannot be placed on it, there is the suggestion that less adaptive parent behavior fosters more numerous and severe child provocative behaviors rather than the other way around. This finding supports that of George and Main (reported in Belsky, 1980) in which, by the age of 18-35 months, abused toddlers were already showing more physical aggression toward peers and caregivers in daycare than matched controls.

Thus, seeing child provocativeness as a "trigger" to an abusive event, as in studies cited in the literature review, might be oversimplifying what is actually a transactional parent-child event in which current and distal parent cognition and behavior influence child behavior more strongly than the other

way around.

Thus, in assessing treatment needs in suspected or founded abuse cases, an implication would be for broadening the scope of the investigation to explore the parent-child relationship before and after the abusive event rather than limiting focus to a more truncated view where child provocativeness appears to be the starting point in the event. Understanding the cycle of abuse as one in which parental punishment tends to accelerate ongoing coercive child behaviors (Patterson, 1971) might help parents to monitor their own escalating behaviors in parent-child conflicts. Helping parents to see the relatedness to a specific abusive event of their own current and distal cognitions and behavior as parents might support more structural change in that role.

4. Child Provocativeness, Anger, and Coping

Because, as discussed in the literature review, anger has often been associated with abusive parent behavior, the relationship between the parent cognition about this emotion, and parent coping behavior was of particular interest.

In the PCE study, among more severe child-blaming parents, severity of anger and maladaptiveness of coping behavior were strongly related ($r=.49, <.01$), indicating that parents who viewed a provocative child as more intentional or unjustified responded to

child provocativeness with more severe anger and more maladaptive coping. This supported Dix and Grusec's (1985) finding that parent child-blaming was related to abuse.

Finding that "intentional" child provocation was more likely to elicit an aggressive parent response, Feshback (1980) hypothesized that abusing parents experience their child's non-compliance as a threat to their own self esteem which then elicits anger directed toward the child. While they were not statistically significant relationships, the fact that in the PCE study child-blaming preceded anger, and anger preceded coping behavior, supports examining the hypothesis that such a temporal order might explain the pathway from child-blaming to abuse.

The relationship between anger and coping behavior ($r=.33, <.10$) was also strengthened when controlled on cognitive appraisal: Among parents who reported greater internal locus of control, $r=.43, <.05$, and among those who reported less egoistic level of reasoning about conflict, $r=.65, <.01$. The finding that more adaptive cognition, lower anger, and more adaptive coping behavior were moderately to strongly associated reflected study findings discussed earlier which suggested the association of the positive aspects of coping.

In addition to the finding in the correlation study

that the relationship between anger and coping behavior was moderated by cognitive appraisal, in the temporal order study it was found that anger--the cognition about parent emotion--was dependent on all the cognitive appraisal variables. While the individual correlations are not statistically significant, the overall trend involving cognitive appraisal, emotion (the "impulse to cope"), and actual coping behavior supports Lazarus' postulate that while emotion is the product of cognitive appraisal, observed emotion is not sufficient to predict coping behavior.

a. Clinical Implications of the Role of Anger

Novaco (1976) has demonstrated that cognitive-behavioral techniques which include client self-monitoring of cognitions can effect lower anger levels and more adaptive behavior. Tavris (1982) has also made the case for helping clients to understand and control their anger rather than simply giving vent to it. She has noted how the latter could be particularly dangerous when the target is a child.

Helping at risk parents to become aware of their perhaps "silent" assumptions and their belief systems regarding children and parenting would seem to be a first step towards the development of more adaptive parent cognitions which might in turn moderate anger so that coping behavior might be more adaptive.

Identifying such cognitions clinically should also add

to the limited sample of cognitions presented in the PCE study to enrich further study regarding the relationship between parent thinking, emotion, and behavior.

5. Child Provocativeness and Attributional Bias in Locus of Control

Of the three situational attributions indicating parent perceived level of threat, only locus of control was measured in both provocative and non-provocative encounters. This cognition varied across these contrasting contexts, with parents being significantly more likely to attribute locus of control more adaptively, (i.e., to themselves or to both the child and themselves) in non-provocative harmony encounters than they did in provocative conflict encounters (Chi Square=8.30, df=1, <.005). Thus, this parent attribution appeared to be associated with the stressfulness of a situation when this was defined as child provocativeness.

When parents discussed conflict involving a provocative child, their tendency to report external locus of control indicated that they did not recognize their own contribution to the situation. Ickes and Kidd (1981) have reported that in conflict between closely related individuals, actor tends to attribute conflict to stable negative traits of other, and to externalize responsibility for negative events. The authors interpret this bias as ego-defensiveness which is

likely to be greatly enhanced in conflict because conflict poses such a threat to self esteem. Actors tend to overlook mutual causality in conflict, "underestimating the extent to which their own behavior causes the conflict style of their partner" (p.284).

a. Clinical Implications of Locus of Control

In the larger Anger study and other studies discussed in the literature review, there is empirical support for the use of cognitive restructuring to improve parent attitudes and behaviors toward children. Training in this method might help increase parent awareness of possible attributional bias regarding responsibility for conflict, and help them to reality test this. If, as a result of recognizing their own contribution as well as the child's, parents perceive conflict less defensively, they may also respond more adaptively.

6. Child Provocativeness and Parent Level of Reasoning

a. The Role of Psychosocial Stress

When parent level of reasoning was compared in conflict and harmony encounters, these at-risk parents tended to reason differently, offering more egoistic reasons for conflict than for harmony. These differences in parent level of reasoning just missed significance level ($\text{Chi Square}=3, \text{df}=1, <.10$). Thus, potential for higher level of reasoning under less stressful circumstances, i.e., when children were not

provocative, was suggested in these at-risk parents.

Newberger (1977) has reported a similar discrepancy in abusing parents' highest available and actual levels of reasoning demonstrated in the parent-child relationship. She has proposed as an explanation of this "depressed" rather than undeveloped thinking the influence of both psychological and social stress. While the author notes that compared to non-abusers in her sample, abusing parents were experiencing more "overwhelming environmental stressors", she does not describe these. Yet such information would seem to be critical to understanding why parents do not utilize their highest possible level of reasoning.

As stated in the study design section, consideration of all environmental factors which might influence parent level of reasoning and coping behavior in conflict was beyond the scope of the PCE study. However, in analyzing the relationship between overall and immediate social stress in the parent-child relationship the study provides a model for analyzing the effects of other environmental stressors such as those noted above on how parents reason in parent-child transactions which might escalate to abuse.

Rosenberg and Repucci (1982) found that abusers differed significantly in the numbers of life stressors experienced in the previous year from non-abusers who were also experiencing difficulties with a child. Thus,

the cumulative effects of poverty, overcrowding, domestic violence, racism, unemployment, and illness might be fruitfully analyzed. Noting that inadequate role preparation, status inconsistency, and role conflict may disturb the homeostatic balance needed for "goodness of fit" between environmental demands and coping, Panzer (1983) has pointed out that psychosocial factors can also be obstacles to adaptive coping.

Equally important as identifying and examining the effects of environmental and psychosocial stressors on cognition and coping, the role of supports which alleviate stress and contribute to more adaptive coping is an often overlooked line of clinical inquiry. The ecomap (Hartman, 1970) provides an efficient clinical tool for such inquiry. Making graphic the presence/absence, intensity, and nature of relationships between stressors and supports reveals a client's ecosystem. Discussing related cognitions may help clients recognize how their own thinking may be affecting critical relationships and suggest loci of intervention. Demonstrating to clients how cognitive restructuring, for example, might improve these relationships is enhanced by the visual, hands on nature of this collaborative cognitive tool.

b. The Role of Parent Focus on Self Versus Child

In addition to differing on level of reasoning across stressful and harmonious contexts, parents also

differed significantly on this cognitive structure across conflict issues, i.e., when reasoning about (a) the cause for conflict, and (b) their own coping behavior (Chi Square=4, df=1, <.05). These differences in parent level of reasoning regarding a similar context suggested that level of reasoning regarding conflict was associated with parent focus.

When parents responded to the question "What did you like/dislike about your response (to the child provocation)", they were significantly more likely to respond with conventional/individualistic reasoning than when they discussed the cause for conflict (Chi Square=4, df=1, <.05). That is, when parents focused on themselves rather than on the child, whom they typically held responsible for conflict, they reasoned less egoistically. The fact that in conflict, parents were not globally ego defensive might be seen as an expansion of Ickes and Kidd's (1980) explanation that in conflict between closely related people, victim becomes ego defensive. However, because it was not fully explored in the PCE study, whether parents are actually less defensive when considering their own actions than a child's in the same conflict is a question for further study.

c. Clinical Implications of Level of Reasoning

In addition to differing significantly across contexts and issues, level of reasoning significantly

moderated the relationship between parent anger and coping behavior, and interacted with overall level of stress to affect coping behavior. In all of the foregoing, more adaptive level of reasoning was associated with more adaptive coping. Parent level of reasoning about conflict was also significantly related to child provocativeness ($r=.38, <.05$) and preceded it in time, suggesting that maladaptive parent understanding of children and child rearing--whether inadequately developed or inhibited by stress--may actually foster provocative child behavior.

The implication of the foregoing findings about level of reasoning would be to develop and offer parents techniques which enhance development of this cognitive structure or which allow parents to apply existing adequate cognitions about children, child-rearing, and the parent-child relationship. Helping parents to examine deeply held beliefs related to parenting, of which they may not necessarily be aware, and which may not be deliberately reflective or rational, might be a step toward helping them to gain control over these.

As noted in the literature review, several authors have noted the need to assess client level of cognitive development in order to develop interventions (e.g., paradox) which might help clients move to a more satisfying and adaptive level of thinking and behavior. Selman (1971) and Rosen (1985) have reported the impact of interpersonal problem solving training on enhancing

parents' understanding of children, child rearing, and the parent-child relationship. Urbain and Kendall (1980) found that specific interventions to develop level of parent reasoning not only increased perspective taking in parents but also improved parent behavior toward children. These authors point out that fostering cognitive development in at-risk parents might assure that their compliance with caseworkers would not simply be out of fear of consequences (egoistic) but because the more perspective-taking parent valued the parent-child relationship and wanted to fulfill a valued personal and social role. McGillicuddy-De Lisi (1982) has pointed out another advantage of cognitive treatments in that beliefs may be more open to change than educational level or number of children when attempting to alter family dynamics.

Assessment of parent coping from a cognitive developmental perspective should also help therapists to truly begin "where the client is at". For example, interpreting parents' inability to observe their own maladaptive behavior as a function of low level of cognitive development (i.e., inability to see another's perspective), rather than "resistance" might suggest more fruitful interventions such as helping clients to discover their inaccurate maladaptive beliefs and expectancies. Assessing such cognitive deficiency as developmental rather than as defensive denial and projection suggests education rather than confrontation

which, as practice wisdom shows, too often results in clients feeling misunderstood and threatened. Also, positive feedback to parents about any "good" intentions indicated by their thinking if not their actual behavior, might enhance self esteem and increase hopefulness about the prospect for change.

7. Parent Coping Behavior

a. Capacity and Application

When individual parent coping behavior scores were averaged across the study period, it was found that while only 7% of the parents demonstrated a capacity for empathic discipline in conflict, 41% demonstrated the highest levels of maladaptive behavior. However, the other half of the group demonstrated a capacity for at least reciprocity and non-punitiveness represented by behaviors scored at the intermediate level of adaptiveness. Thus, this group of at risk parents was not monolithic in their coping behavior when coping with a provocative child resulted in conflict, making a fair showing of at least moderate adaptiveness. However, because of the lack of a control group, it was not possible to determine whether they differed from normal parents in this.

Significantly more adaptive coping in future hypothetical conflict than in actual conflict suggested that these parents had higher ideals about how they would--or perhaps "should" respond to a provocative

child than their actual behavior with children indicated. When faced with an actual child provocation, parents were not always able to apply their capacity for more adaptive behavior. This discrepancy between parent potential and performance reflected study findings discussed earlier regarding discrepancies in parent capacity and application of both level of reasoning, and attribution of locus of control in parent-child interactions.

b. Clinical Implications of Coping Behavior Findings

If assessment of parent coping repertoire indicated a paucity of adaptive disciplining alternatives, an implication would be for parent training which might include education in child development, modeling by parent aides or therapists, support from self-help groups where parents can learn from other parents. However, when clinical exploration with abusing or at-risk parents indicates greater capacity for adaptive behavior than their current maladaptive behavior suggests, the implication would be for selecting interventions based more on developing than "teaching" parenting skills. That is, on helping parents with strategies and techniques to retain emotional and cognitive control so that their capacity for adaptive coping is available in stressful parent-child encounters.

Determining which parents might benefit from either

level of intervention requires expanding clinical assessment to identify coping behavior across several contexts in order to gauge parents' actual coping behavior repertoires. Limiting assessment to only the most stressful parent-child encounters (e.g., abuse) where the most maladaptive parent behaviors surface could be misleading about treatment needs. And, as noted earlier regarding identifying cognitions, purely negative assessments might undermine a parent's self esteem and courage to risk change.

8. Child Provocativeness, Parent Level of Education, and Parent Coping

Lower parent education level was associated with more egoistic level of parent reasoning, and predicted greater provocativeness in children. McGillicuddy De-Lisi's (1980) study of beliefs and parenting behavior in 120 families also demonstrated that parent education level was related to parental beliefs about child development states and processes. Brunnuell et al (1981) have suggested a pathway from parent education level to abuse in their finding that level of education was significantly related to level of cognitive complexity which was the strongest predictor of abuse, neglect, or mistreatment. These authors reported that mothers with less than 12 years of education were less adaptive than those with more education.

Because it is a frequent cause of premature school leaving by females, teen pregnancy is clearly a critical

target of efforts to focus resources on identifying and removing obstacles to school completion. The PCE finding that lower parent education level was positively related to, and preceded child provocativeness which can trigger an abusive disciplining cycle also supports the need to develop and offer preventive services accessible to student parents and their children.

C. Directions for Further Research

1. Increasing Reliability and Validity in Coping Measures

Throughout the foregoing discussion of study findings, recommendations were made for strengthening replications of the current study. In addition to these, other related research questions and approaches might be considered. For example, because measuring cognition is subject to all the threats to reliability and validity attending projective instruments, considering the potential influence of intelligence and speech and language ability, as well as one's reference groups (e.g., sex, age, ethnicity, and social roles) is an important research task. Additionally, determining whether all parents are equally capable of thinking about thinking, and whether such metacognition is necessary for successful cognition-probing in cognitive treatment or research would seem to be a fundamental question.

Clearly, parent thinking in a disciplining encounter is more complex than the limited selection of

PCE study cognitions indicates. Therefore, there is a need to identify other cognitions and classes of cognitions (e.g., denial, projection) related to such stressful events. Further research might also illuminate pre-existing factors such as parent histories or dispositions to determine how these might constitute "psychological liabilities" in the face of child provocation. For example, how might perfectionist introjects or a history of child abuse influence the way a parent perceives and responds to a provocative child. Further development of coping typologies--the fusion of coping variables which was performed in a limited way in the PCE study--suggests research technology for viewing such transactional phenomena in coping.

2. Child Effects of Parent Coping

Child effects of parent coping patterns in diverse groups is also a critical area for research. Given the growing tendency among better educated men and women to delay parenting, as well as that of poorer men and women to become parents earlier, the effect of developmental stage on parent cognition and coping behavior, and how this affects children might be examined as well as the effects of cultural variables noted earlier.

Like many studies, the PCE study based its measure of adaptiveness of parent coping behavior on child effects reported in the literature. Such findings are often based on short term observation. Perhaps

longitudinal, intergenerational studies which span several levels of a family cycle, might offer more relevant views of child outcomes, and also reveal how outcomes are modified by post-childhood influences as well as by parent cognition and behavior in child rearing years.

3. Cognitive "Inoculation" ?

While authors such as Parke (1978), Garbarino (1976), and Bronfenbrenner (1979) have described societal attitudes, customs, and laws which foster abusive parenting behavior, how these structures are translated into such behavior is as yet unclear. Certainly, not all parents in child-hostile societies are abusive. Berger (1980) has reviewed research which seems to rule out environmental stress alone as a major intervening variable. The intervening role of cognition which was suggested in a limited way in the PCE study as well as in other studies cited might be examined specifically in relation to how parents translate broader, societal attitudes into abusive behavior. Whether particular cognitions "inoculate" more adaptive parents against noxious societal attitudes would be an interesting question for such studies.

D. Applicability of Study Findings for Social Work Practice

The content of the PCE study can be seen as having special significance for social work in that it

corresponds to several criteria which Tripodi (1974) has identified as necessary for the application of research to social work practice. These include relevance of content, strategic value, location value, and engineerability. How the PCE study corresponds to these criteria and to social work values and goals is discussed in this section.

1. Relevance of Content

Rapidly increasing reporting rates have overwhelmed Child Protective Services (CPS), which is as criticized for removing too many children as it is for not removing others who are later badly, even fatally abused. Dissatisfaction with CPS is often cited as a reason professionals avoid reporting harmful parent behavior and choose instead to "protect" a child whose reactive behavior allows them to refer her to juvenile justice or mental health agencies for "correction" or "treatment" (Hoekstra, 1984). Indeed, the majority of reportable cases are not known to CPS (National Council of Child Abuse and Neglect, 1987). Developing better targeted and more feasible casework techniques for assessing and modifying maladaptive parent coping behavior is critical to increasing confidence in the only agency whose primary goal is to protect maltreated children from re-abuse while families receive needed help.

As the dominant profession in child welfare, social work has a major responsibility in such agencies for

assuring the safety of abused and at risk children. However, altering the broad environment, i.e., stressful sociocultural, economic, and political factors which have been associated with abuse, is generally beyond the capacity of the caseworker/therapist. This constraint, plus the fact that 78% of identified abused children remain in, or are returned to their homes (Kadushin & Martin, 1981), results in intervention efforts being typically limited to the micro level, with casework counseling being the most frequently offered service.

A common goal of casework counseling with all clients has been helping them to cope with current problems while enhancing future coping ability. However, as astute as social workers' assessments of abusers' needs to become adaptive current and future problem solvers have been, these have not been matched with equally apt techniques for promoting such coping.

Because the PCE study content addresses the foregoing realities and needs in the field of child welfare, specifically in the area of abuse, it corresponds to Tripodi's criteria of relevance for social work practice. In his words, it represents what is done currently or what could be done in the daily work of social workers.

2. Strategic Value of Study Findings

Social work theorists define coping as transactions which take place at the interface of person and

environment. Theoretical changes in social work accompanied the introduction of systems theory which illuminated the nature of the interface (Hearn, 1969). However, as Meyer (1983) has pointed out, these changes have not been translated into intervention prescriptions. Germain and Gitterman (1980) have addressed this gap by presenting a life model based on an ecological perspective in which the social worker attempts to promote and harness the adaptive capacities of individuals for "goodness of fit" at the interface. Recently, Brower (1988) has cautioned that more specific description of the processes involved in how we interact with our environment is required before such ecological models of social work can be used to generate practice principles.

Because the Lazarus stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm which underlies the PCE study describes psychological processes which underlie transactions between people and environments, it can provide a theoretical structure for developing other hypotheses on which to build the profession's knowledge base about what takes place at that interface--the unique social work domain. And because Lazarus emphasizes the importance of the objective as well as the psychological level of stress, the paradigm permits developing hypotheses which consider the effects on coping of not only personality factors, but also objectively stressful environments resulting from poverty, illness, racism, to

name just a few of the realities which social work clients endure.

Lazarus' postulate that in coping, such environmental stressors transact with personality factors can be seen as parallel to the social work conceptualization of coping as a psychosocial event. However, Lazarus more specifically identifies cognition as the tool which links the polarities of person and environment. Because PCE study findings provide some evidence for this linking role for cognition, they suggest testable hypotheses regarding transactions at the interface of person and environment. Thus, the study has what Tripodi refers to as strategic value for social work practice.

3. Location Value and Engineerability of Study Findings

The PCE study findings which support other studies pointing in the direction of the importance of cognition in coping provide a useful perspective for practice. That is, viewing abuse as maladaptive coping behavior which is influenced by maladaptive cognition helps a clinician to "locate" problems and potential solutions. And, because findings also correspond to Tripodi's criteria of "engineerability" in suggesting HOW coping variables can be identified and manipulated in practice settings, they can be described as useable as well as useful.

3. Correspondence of Study Findings with Social Work Values and Goals

The PCE data gathering instruments required collaboration with clients in order to define the stressor, to identify stress-associated thoughts and feelings, to examine these critically, and to assess the adaptiveness of coping response. Thus, these instruments enhanced client involvement and control over the defining and treatment process. Such technology operationalizes the social work value of client self-determination, of helping clients to help themselves.

Such client activating casework models as the Task Centered approach (Reid & Epstein, 1972) are based on a similar view of the client as a scientist, as a hypothesis-testing individual whose cognitive skills are trained in the treatment session, but whose actual work takes place outside the session as she applies these skills. Such self-activated behavioral changes not only improve current functioning, but also enhance future coping. Because technology such as the cognitive-behavioral PCE instruments can be utilized in such models to help clients distinguish between helpful and obstructive cognitions and learn how these influence behavior, they support such client empowerment, a basic social work goal.

4. Creating the Needed Cognitive Shift in Social Work

Fisher (1979) has discussed the appropriateness of cognitive perspectives and interventions in social work. He notes that there is growing evidence--empirical, conceptual, and experiential--that cognitive variables must be considered when attempting to understand human social functioning. And promising results continue to be reported for cognitive approaches which, as discussed earlier, have strong correspondence with social work perspectives. However, as Tripodi (1974) points out, encouraging practitioners to apply even the most compelling research results may require amplification, i.e., indications of why and how such new knowledge should be used.

Helping social work practitioners themselves to make the needed cognitive shift in which cognitive methods are valued along with more traditional methods (e.g. psychodynamic, behavioral, systems) is a challenge for social work educators, researchers, agency directors and trainers. Those who wish to successfully introduce cognitive methods to practitioners must first clarify the need for such methods. Acquainting students and staff with studies which support the efficacy of cognitive techniques could be enhanced by actively involving students and staff in studies which test such approaches. The larger Anger study on which the PCE study is based was just such an enterprise in which faculty and students collaborated in the design and

execution of a cognitive-behavioral study, and in which students functioned as both researchers and therapists.

Of the four students, two wrote cognitively based doctoral dissertations on the experience.

Pointing out the longstanding recognition of cognition as an important element in problem-solving--the focus of casework--and the similarity of cognitive technology (e.g., collaboration, exploration, reflection, clarification, education) to that of more familiar social work models may also help practitioners to integrate these newer techniques into existing frameworks.

By the same token, comparison of cognitive and more traditional technology in the light of other new social work knowledge and perspectives should also be undertaken. A good model for such critical analysis is that presented by De Vore and Schlesinger (1987) who compared several social work models on their responsiveness to ethnic and cultural diversity. Earlier in this section, recommendations were made for improving on the current study and related studies in this regard.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. The Question

Successful outcomes have been reported in the treatment of abusing and at-risk parents with techniques based on principles such as those developed by Lazarus which posit the influential role of cognition on coping behavior in response to stress. Other developments in parenting research also indicate the role of cognition in adaptiveness of parent behavior. However, the process by which stress, cognition, and coping behavior are related is not yet clear.

B. The Design

Critical incidents of parent coping in provocative encounters with their children which were reported but not analyzed in the larger Anger study permitted a rich view of the coping process. Observations over eight interviews made it possible to reliably describe stress and coping in 27 at-risk parents whose demographic profiles typically matched that associated with the so-called "feminization of poverty".

C. Some Limitations

The fact that 66% of the sample were minority group parents (non-white) limits generalizing to the more heterogeneous population of at-risk parents. And, because study measures were based on middle class white samples, the question of their validity with poor

minority parents is still an open question. Also, the number of variables relative to the size of the sample, as well as the generally moderate sized correlations signal caution in interpreting findings. Thus, readers are advised to view results less as "findings" than as guides for developing coping hypotheses.

D. The Variables and Relationships of Interest

Following the Lazarus stress-appraisal-to-coping paradigm, relationships between the social stressor and parent cognitive appraisal of the situation were analyzed, and the relationship of each of these respective social and psychological levels of stress to actual coping behavior studied. The role of anger--an emotion often associated with abuse--was also examined in relation to these stress and coping variables. And, finally, the temporal order of these components of the coping process was analyzed.

E. The Hypotheses

The major study hypothesis was that level of social stress would be related to maladaptiveness of parent coping behavior, and that parent cognitive appraisal would moderate this relationship. It was also hypothesized that cognition would influence emotion, defined as parent cognition of anger; and that this emotion would influence actual coping behavior.

F. Results

When overall level of social stress was measured as the conflict and harmony index (CHI) in the parent-child relationship, it was found that this relationship could not be described as continuous unrelieved struggled, and that the relationship seemed to improve over the study period as conflict declined despite increasing child provocation. The paradoxical role of treatment on children's increased efforts to seek parental attention was suggested as a possible interpretation since temporary escalation of acting out behavior has been found in the children of parents whose coping behavior improved in treatment.

These at-risk parents were not found to be monolithic in their cognitions or coping behavior, but rather to vary in adaptiveness with the stressfulness of the situation when stress was defined as child provocativeness. There were indications that the positive aspects of child provocativeness, parent cognition, and parent coping behavior went together. However, the temporal order study suggested that child provocativeness was dependent on parent cognition and behavior rather than the other way around. The conclusion was that abuse might be more realistically viewed as a transactional rather than linear event. That is, an encounter which, while it may be immediately triggered by provocative child behavior, is more dependent on preceding parent thinking and behavior.

A statistically significant relationship between
anger and parent coping behavior, and the influence of
cognitive appraisal on this relationship was
demonstrated. Also, while all relationships were not
statistically significant, the pathway which Lazarus
posits regarding cognition, emotion, and coping behavior
was supported when the sequence of cognitive
appraisal---> anger---> coping behavior was suggested.

G. Implications for Practice, Research, and Education

Based on the findings noted above which lent some
support to the primacy of cognition in the coping
process, attention in treatment and research not only to
parent behavior but also to parent cognition, notably
anger and level of reasoning was recommended. Citing
reports of their effectiveness in other studies, it was
suggested that cognitive techniques, including cognitive
restructuring, anger control, and interpersonal problem
solving might help parents apply more adaptive thinking
and behavior in stressful parent-child encounters.

Discrepancies between capacity and application
of adaptive behavior and thinking found in the PCE and
other studies were explained by the possibility that
stress may have inhibited parent application of their
highest capacities. The implication was for fuller
clinical assessment of parent coping behavior
repertoires and level of reasoning before assuming the
need for parent "training" in these. Parents with more

adaptive capacities than their maladaptive behavior and thinking indicate might actually need help in overcoming environmental stressors (e.g., marital discord, illness, unemployment, poverty, difficult child). The use of tools such as the ecomap to reveal such stressors as well as potential sources of support was recommended.

The correlation between lower parent education level and higher child provocativeness as well as more egoistic parent reasoning, supported other research findings indicating the need to develop and make readily available preventive services for teen parents at risk of premature school leaving.

Applicability of PCE study findings for social work practice was noted, based on relevance of study content, and usefulness for locating client problems and suggesting specific intervention hypotheses. While correspondence of study content and findings with social work values and goals was also noted, the need for educators, agency directors, and trainers to amplify findings so that practitioners are encouraged to apply and test these was noted. The "hands on" approach to learning cognitive theory and technology demonstrated by involvement of student/researchers in the larger Anger study on which the PCE study was based was recommended as a model for student and practitioner training.

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APPENDIX A

Anger Study Questionnaire

194

(Research Number)

REPORT OF PARENT-CHILD ENCOUNTER

We would like to talk with you about your actual experiences with your children. We would like to ask you about two things:

A. One, was there a time during the last week when you and your child (or any of your children) just did not get along? Two, was there a time during the last week when you did get along? Let's start with when you did not get along....

1. Which child? _____
2. What happened? _____

3. How unreasonable did you think your child was? Let me give you some choices... Would you say...

Not at all	Somewhat, very little	Pretty unreasonable	Very unreasonable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(OMIT "unreasonable" IF PRIOR ANSWER "Not at all.")

4. How angry or mad did the child's (unreasonable) behavior make you?

Not at all Mad	Somewhat mad	Pretty mad	Very mad
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. What did you do?

6. Looking back at it, could you have avoided it?
(IF NO) Why do you think it could not have been avoided?

(IF YES) How might it have been avoided?

7. Once you were in it, what did you like about the way you handled it?

8. What didn't you like about the way you handled it?

9. How would you handle it, or something similar, if it came up again?

B. Was there a time during the last week when you and your child (or any of your children) got along unusually well? _____

1. Which child? _____

2. (IF YES) Was there something you did or maybe said or maybe thought to make things go well? Please tell me about it.

3. How about the child? Was there something he or she did or said? Please describe this.

C. Was there a time during the past week when things could have gone badly and you did something, or said something, or maybe even thought something that helped head it off? What was this?

APPENDIX B

Sample DemographicsPARENT EDUCATION
(N=27)

	%	n
< 2 years h.s.	33	(9)
3-4 years h.s.	33	(9)
Post high schl	22	(6)
No response	11	(3)
total	100	(27)

MINORITY STATUS
(N=27)

	%	n
Non-minority (White)	37	(10)
Minority		
Black	41	(11)
Hispanic	15	(4)
Other	7	(2)
total	100	(27)

SEX OF PARENT
(n=27)

	%	n
Female	96	(26)
Male	4	(1)
total	100	(27)

MARITAL STATUS
(n=27)

	%	n
Single	74	(20)
Married	26	(7)
total	100	(27)

INCOME LEVEL
(N=27)

	%	N
<\$12000 annum	70	(19)
\$12000-30000	19	(5)
>\$30000	4	(1)
No response	7	(2)
total	100	(27)

APPENDIX C

PARENT-CHILD ENCOUNTER STUDY INSTRUMENT

Client I D _____
 TX group _____
 Rater _____

1
 2
 3
 4 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 5 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

WAS CHILD PROVOCATIVE ? (if NO, go to P.6)
 Missing Questionnaire

7
 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 10 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 11 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 13 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 14 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 15 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 16 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 17 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

AGE and SEX of Child.
 F Birth--3years
 M " "
 F 4 to 6 years
 M " "
 F 7 to 9 years
 M " "
 F 10 to 12 years
 M " "
 F 13 to 18 years
 M " "

PROVOCATIVE CHILD BEHAVIORS (Note ALL behaviors)

Aggressive:

22 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 23 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 24 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 25 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 26 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 27 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 28 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 29 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 30 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 31 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 32 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ defiant
 ___ demanding
 ___ tantrum
 ___ destructive
 ___ disrespectful to parent
 ___ disrespectful to other
 ___ threatened parent
 ___ threatened sibling
 ___ threatened other
 ___ physically aggressive to parent
 ___ physically aggressive to sibling

33
 34 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ OTHER aggressive behavior/target _____

Non-Aggressive:

37 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 38 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 39 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 40 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 41 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 42 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 43 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 44 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 45 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 46 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 47 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ irresponsible
 ___ inconsiderate
 ___ uncooperative
 ___ unappreciative
 ___ non-productive, lazy
 ___ disobedient
 ___ intrusive into prnt's relat (with spouse,etc)
 ___ insistent
 ___ crying
 ___ whining, complaining
 ___ hyperactive, noisy

48 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 49 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 50 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 51 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 52 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ developmental (feeding, toileting, etc)
 ___ moral transgres (lying,stealing,disapproved sex
 ___ endangering own health, safety; reckless
 ___ asked for things Pt.did not want her to have
 ___ OTHER non aggressive behaviour _____

53
 54 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ Non-spec behavior (annoying;upset;embaras,etc

WHERE did this behavior take place?

57 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 58 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 59 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 60 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

___ home
 ___ school
 ___ in public
 ___ unknown

61 How UNREASONABLE was child seen by parent?

- 62 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 63 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 64 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 65 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 66 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

68 How ANGRY did parent state she was?

- 69 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 70 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 71 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 72 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 73 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

75 PARENT RESPONSE TO CHILD PROVOCATION (note ALL)

- 76 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 77 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

78 SELF MANAGEMENT/passive:

- 79 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 80 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 81 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 82 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 83 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

85 SELF MANAGEMENT/active:

- 86 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 87 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 88 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 89 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 90 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 91 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

93 CHILD MANAGEMENT/non-punitive:

- 94 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 95 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 96 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 97 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 98 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 99 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 100 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 101 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 102 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

104 CHILD MANAGEMENT/punitive:

- 105 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 106 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 107 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 108 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 109 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 110 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 111 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 112 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

114 EMPATHIC PARENT RESPONSE:

- 115 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 116 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 117 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 118 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 119 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

121 IF THERE WAS A CONFLICT, DID PARENT SEE IT AS AVOIDABLE?
 122 NR
 123 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 124 NO (check below)
 YES (check below)

125 WHO or WHAT did parent see as responsible?
 126 NR (go to P.4 or P.5)
 127 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 Parent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 Child
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 Other person
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 Situation itself

131
 132 If CHILD was responsible, WHY?
 133 EGOISTIC Parent Reason

134 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

153
 154 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8| CONVENTIONAL Parent Reason,

158 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8| INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTICAL Parent Reason.

162
 163 If PARENT was responsible, WHY?
 164 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8| EGOISTIC Parent Reason.

170
 171 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8| CONVENTIONAL Parent Reason.

175 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8| INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTICAL Parent Reason

182
183 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

WHAT DID PARENT LIKE ABOUT HER RESPONSE ?
___NR (go to line 208)

187
188 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|
189 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

EGOISTIC Parent Reason.

194
195 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

CONVENTIONAL parent reason.

199
200 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTICAL parent reason.

208
209 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

WHAT DID PARENT DISLIKE ABOUT HER RESPONSE ?
___NR (go to page 5)

212
213
214 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

EGOISTIC parent reason.

219
220 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

CONVENTIONAL parent reason.

224
225 |1|2|3|4|5|6|7|8|

INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTIC parent reason

301 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 DID PARENT AND CHILD GOT ALONG UNUSUALLY WELL? 203
302 AGE and SEX of Child. (If NO, go to page 7)

303 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F Birth--3years
304 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
305 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 4 to 6 years
306 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
307 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 7 to 9 years
308 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
309 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 10 to 12 years
310 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
311 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 13 to 18 years
312 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "

313 WHAT DID PARENT SEE AS HER OWN CONTRIBUTION?
315 not specified
316 EGOISTIC parent reason.
317

322 CONVENTIONAL parent reason.
323

326 INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTIC parent reason.
327

WHAT DID PARENT SEE AS CHILD'S CONTRIBUTION?

334 not specified
335 EGOISTIC Parent Reason.
336

358 2,3,4,5,6,7,8: CONVENTIONAL parent reason

353 INDIVIDUALISTIC/ANALYTIC parent reason.
354 4,5,6,7,8:

361 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 WAS THERE A TIME WHEN PARENT HEADED OFF TROUBLE?
 362 (if NR/NO you are finished)

363
 364
 365

SOURCE of Parental Stress:

366 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ Child behavior (check below)
 367 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ Other stressor (check on p.8)

368
 369

AGE and SEX of Child.

370 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F Birth--3years
 371 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
 372 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 4 to 6 years
 373 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
 374 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 7 to 9 years
 375 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
 376 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 10 to 12 years
 377 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "
 378 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 F 13 to 18 years
 379 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 M " "

380

CHILD BEHAVIOR

381

Aggressive

382 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ defiant
 383 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ demanding
 384 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ tantrum
 385 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ destructive
 386 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ disrespectful to parent
 387 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ disrespectful to other
 388 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ threatened parent
 389 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ threatened other
 390 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ physically aggressive to parent
 91 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ physically aggressive to sibling
 392 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ physically aggressive to other
 393 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ OTHER aggressive behavior/target _____

394

Non-aggressive:

395 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ irresponsible
 396 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ inconsiderate
 397 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ uncooperative
 398 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ unappreciative
 399 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ non-productive, lazy
 400 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ disobedient
 401 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ intrusive into parent's other relationships (spec
 .)
 402 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ crying
 403 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ insistent
 404 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ whining, complaining
 405 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ hyperactive, noisy
 406 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ developmental (feeding, toileting, etc.)
 407 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ moral transgression) lying, stealing, disapproved
 408 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ child endangering own safety, health; reckless
 409 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ child wanted thing Pt. didn't want her to have
 410 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ OTHER non-aggressive child behavior _____

411

412 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ Non-specific child behavior (annoying, upsetting)

413

WHERE DID THIS CHILD BEHAVIOR TAKE PLACE?

414 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ home
 415 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ school
 416 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 ___ in public

421
 422- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 423 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 424 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 425 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 426 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

OTHER STRESSOR
 ___ money
 ___ time
 ___ other personal relationship
 ___ health
 ___ OTHER non-child stressor _____

429
 430
 431 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 432 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 433 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 434 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 435 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 436
 437

PARENT RESPONSE TO CHILD OR OTHER STRESSOR
 SELF MANAGEMENT/passive:
 ___ ignored completely
 ___ withdrew (as opposed to "took time out")
 ___ gave in
 ___ gave up
 ___ OTHER self management/passive _____

438 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 439 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 440 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 441 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 442 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 443 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 444

SELF MANAGEMENT/active:
 ___ took some time out
 ___ relaxed myself
 ___ assessed situation objectively
 ___ controlled my emotions, impulses
 ___ substituted positive thoughts
 ___ OTHER self management/active _____

445
 446 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 447 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 448 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 449 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 450 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 451 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 452 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 453 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 454 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 455

CHILD MANAGEMENT/non-punitive
 ___ got someone else's help
 ___ used humor, cajoled
 ___ explained, reasoned
 ___ bargained; compromised
 ___ was firm; authoritative
 ___ isolated child (moderate)
 ___ threatened to deprive (moderate)
 ___ deprived (moderate)
 ___ OTHER child management/non-punitive _____

456
 457 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 458 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 459 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 460 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 461 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 462 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 463 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 464 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 465 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 466

CHILD MANAGEMENT/punitive
 ___ scolded, yelled
 ___ cursed, belittled
 ___ threatened to deprive (extreme)
 ___ deprived (extreme)
 ___ isolated (extreme)
 ___ threatened to hit
 ___ hit, shook, jerked...
 ___ hit with object
 ___ OTHER child management/punitive _____

467
 468 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 469 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 470 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 471 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 472 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 473

EMPATHIC
 ___ sought to understand child's feelings, viewpoint
 ___ helped child/ gave attention/ met needs
 ___ showed affection, caring
 ___ helped child to gain/grow from the experience
 ___ OTHER empathic response _____

474 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

AMBIGUOUS parent response _____

475
 476
 477
 478
 479
 480

APPENDIX D

Ranking Child Behaviors

Dear Colleague,

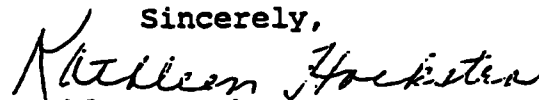
For a reliability test of an instrument I have developed for my doctoral dissertation, I am asking your help in scoring child behaviors which parents have reported in my study.

If you would like to help, please score from 1 to 5 the behaviors which are listed on the following page. Give the least provocative behaviors a score of 1; the most provocative, a score of 5. Score behaviors you believe to be between these extremes at 2, 3, or 4.

Please indicate your occupation and your own children's ages.

Thank you for your very valuable help!

Sincerely,


Kathleen Hoekstra

CHILD BEHAVIORS: PROVOCATIVENESS RATING

- moral transgression (e.g., lying, stealing, sex)
 crying, whining, complaining
 physically aggressive to parent
 physically aggressive to sibling
 asked for things parent didn't want to give
 irresponsible
 inconsiderate
 uncooperative
 disobedient
 intrusive (e.g., into parent relationship)
 demanding
 destructive
 non-productive, lazy
 developmental (eating, toileting, etc.)
 insistent
 endangering own safety; reckless
 hyperactive, noisy
 unappreciative
 defiant
 threatened parent
 threatened sibling
 threatened other
 disrespectful to parent
 disrespectful to other
 tantrum

Your

occupation _____

Your children's ages _____

APPENDIX E**RELIABILITY OF SCORING RESPONSES**
ON PARENT LEVEL OF REASONING

For coding these parent reasons for why conflict occurred with a child, or for how it could have been avoided, please apply the following operational definitions. These definitions are based on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, Selman, and C. Newberger.

Egoistic

Egoistic parent reasoning is a projection of parent's experiences, needs, and wants. The egoistic parent brings a single perspective to bear in parent-child encounters, namely her/his own equilibrium and comfort. Such parents do not consider the needs, wants of the child; they do not conceive of the child as having a psychological life. They see the child as something which is either a source of pleasure or pain...which is seen as good when it is the former, bad when it is the latter. Controlling the child ensures the parent's pleasure and lack of pain.

Conventional

A conventional parent considers more than simply her/his own needs, etc. They consider the parent-child relationship, and see it in terms of mutual cultural or traditional social role obligations. However, such parents only conceive of the child's and their own psychological states and needs in a stereotypical way. Thus, parent and child behaviors are judged in terms of fairness, rightness and wrongness as such traits are societally determined. As a result, parent-child interactions are viewed from the standpoint of societal rules, conventions. Also, because children are conceived stereotypically, as a class having similar characteristics based on age, sex, for example, unique child characteristics are not recognized.

Individualistic

Interactive parents recognize the uniqueness of individual children. They believe it is important to understand parent-child interactions from the child's unique perspective as well as from the parent's and from society's. An interactional parent is concerned with the development of internal values (not simply conventional ones) and social awareness in the child.

APPENDIX E 1

1. The child just had his mind set on getting what he wanted.	E	C
2. If I don't hit him, he won't stop.	E	C
3. I don't like to, but I have to intervene when they fight.	E	C
4. He won't stop, even if I try.	E	C
5. She forces me to give in.	E	C
6. I didn't want to let her have her way.	E	C
7. He didn't respond to my many previous attempts to talk about his behavior.	E	C
8. I could have tried to understand this particular child.	E	C
9. I could have compromised.	E	C
10. I was hurting and I wanted to hurt back.	E	C
11. I could have let them exercise to get their anger out.	E	C
12. I shouldn't have taken them down to the street (where the kids got into a fight).	E	C
13. They were just tired.	E	C
14. He's old enough (7 years) that I shouldn't have to lock the bedroom door to keep him from jumping on the beds.	E	C
15. I could have told him how frightened I really was, and how relieved I was to see him when he came home.	E	C
16. I could have just sat down and talked with him about the behavior.	E	C
17. He (age 5) just wanted to climb out onto the fire escape out curiosity.	E	C
18. I could have rushed her to the bathroom when I saw her wrinkle up her face (indicating child had to go to the toilet).	E	C
19. This is just the child I'm dealing with.	E	C
20. He's not listening to me, and I don't know his reasons for doing it.	E	C
21. I could have warned him more often not to break things.	E	C
22. It was unavoidable given my personality and the child's habit.	E	C
23. Kids just don't think when they're excited.	E	C
24. Mine was justifiable anger.	E	C

* Thanks for your help!!

APPENDIX F

Parenting and Disciplining Training ProjectConsent Form

We are a group from Columbia University who are working together with the Children's Aid Society to help parents and children get along better with one another. This program gives parents the chance to talk with us about any problems they may be having with their kids, particularly those problems that make the parent angry or upset. We would then work on figuring new ways of handling these problems.

We would like you to participate. We feel that we can help you because this kind of service has been helpful to other people in the past. Also the kinds of things that we find work for you may help other parents with similar problems.

If you decide not to take part or to discontinue once you've started, there will of course be no loss in any of the services or benefits you are receiving from the agency. Whatever information you give us will be held in strictest confidence so that no person could be identified by those outside the agency or our group. We will be meeting with you once a week for 45 minutes for some eight or nine weeks. In two of those meetings we will want to get some information from you that will allow us to see how effective we have been in helping you.

We'll be trying out different ways of thinking about, or dealing with the children. That way we can find out what seems to work out best. With some of you, it would be helpful to talk now, and then return in about two months, to see how things are going naturally, without our seeing you in between. We also want to make these decisions as fairly as we can about how to work with you. Therefore we're using a kind of lottery where nobody has any advantage over anybody else. We would like to pay you for the time you're giving us at the rate of \$10 each time we meet.

If you wish further information, you may call 280-4335 or write to Professor Martin Whiteman, Columbia University School of Social Work, 622 W. 113th St., New York, NY 10025.

I have read the above form and agree to participate.

 Signature

 Date

APPENDIX G

Suggested Correspondences Between the Structural Cognitive-Developmental Stage Sequences
of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Selman, and Levels of Parental Awareness

Piaget Logical Stages	Kohlberg Moral Stages	Selman Perspective-taking Stages	Newberger Parental Awareness Levels
Intuitive pre-operational		Egocentric or undifferentiated perspective	
Transitional pre-operational/concrete operational	Obedience and punishment	Subjective or differentiated perspectives	
Consolidated concrete operational	Instrumental egoism and exchange Good-boy approval oriented	Self-reflective or reciprocal perspectives	Egoistic parental conceptions
Transitional concrete/early formal operational	Authority-rule and social order oriented	Third person or mutual perspectives	Conventional parental conceptions
Consolidated formal operational	Social contract legalistic orientation	Societal or in-depth perspectives	Subjective individualistic parental conceptions
	Moral principle orientation		Analytic parental conceptions

Newberger, Carol Moore. Parental Conceptions of Children and Child Rearing: A Structural-Developmental Analysis. University Microfilms, 1978, p.130

APPENDIX H

A Developmental Map of Parental Awareness

Issues	Parental Awareness Level			
	I. Egotistic	II. Conventional	III. Subjective-Individualistic	IV. Analytic
I. Developmental Influences	either/or passive recipient or impervious to experience	filtering or processing experience	interaction of child and environment	interacting systems--different levels of influence
II. Subjectivity	thoughts and feelings a projection of parental experience	how children think and feel	how this child thinks and feels	introspective psychological self-system
III. Personality	concrete and physicalistic	"type" of child--affective characteristics	stable emotional individuality	psychological self-system in continual process
IV. Communication and Trust	in order to achieve desired aims	verbal sharing as equal exchange and fulfilling role obligations	non-verbal as well as verbal sharing--reciprocal emotional exchange	process of discovery of self and other
V. Resolving Conflict	to achieve parental comfort	fairness and obligation	communication and compromise	identifying origins to achieve understanding
VI. Discipline and Authority	instrumental control or helplessness resignation	considering intentions to instill values	addressing causes to develop personal awareness and values	flexible methods to facilitate process of growth
VII. Meeting Needs	what parent does to ensure desirable outcome	emotional needs--different needs for different types of children	needs learned individually through child	psychological need systems--deep needs and more superficial needs
VIII. Learning and Evaluating Parenting	experience teaches--parenting evaluated by parental effort and child product	standard of parenting from external sources--parenting evaluated by conformity to standard	relativity of standards--contribution of the child to parental learning--parenting evaluated by quality of relationship and of child's development	process of self-awareness and growth of parent and child in the relationship

Newberger, Carol Moore. Parental Conceptions of Children and Child Rearing: A Structural-Developmental Analysis, University Microfilms, 1978, p. 132