1998

The Relative Influence of Internal Resources, External Resources, and Social Support on Parenting Stress

Angela Cecelia Rodger
Portland State University

THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Angela Cecelia Rodgers for the Master of Science in Psychology were presented February 12, 1998, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:

[redacted]
Ellen Skinner, Chair

[redacted]
Nancy Perrin

[redacted]
Beth Green

[redacted]
Eileen Brennan
Representative of the Office of Graduate Studies

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL:

[redacted]
Roger Jennings, Chair
Department of Psychology

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Angela Cecelia Rodgers for the Master of Science in Psychology presented on February 12, 1998.

Title: The Relative Influence of Internal Resources, External Resources, and Social Support on Parenting Stress.

This study examined the relationship of three different kinds of resources important to parenting to the degree of stress experienced by 58 mothers of small children who completed a questionnaire distributed through kindergarten classes in three public schools, and through three Head Start centers. Parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving were examined as internal resources. Income level and stability and neighborhood characteristics were examined as external resources, and perceived available social support, which is both internal and external, was also examined. Interrelationships between the resources were predicted, as well as the unique contribution of each type of resource in predicting parenting stress. It was also proposed that income would moderate the effect of internal resources and of social support on stress.

Parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving were highly related to each other and to stress, but did not interact in predicting stress. They were thus aggregated into a single internal resource variable. Income stability, neighborhood problems, and perception of neighborhood support were not related to stress and did not interact with income level in predicting stress. Income level was thus the sole external resource variable used in subsequent analyses. Each of the three kinds of resources had unique effects on parenting stress over and above the effect of

the other two. Income and internal resources had an additive effect, but did not interact in predicting parenting stress. While not significant, the test for an interaction between income and social support was borderline and interpretation suggested that the effect of social support on stress might be reduced when income is low. Small sample size, limited variance on income, and a self-selection bias resulting in a sample of fairly high functioning mothers with only mild deficiencies in resources, limit the generalizability of findings.

The need for research that examines the effects of all three kinds of resources, so that the effects of financial resources on parenting stress may be examined in relationship to other resources, was discussed.

THE RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF INTERNAL RESOURCES, EXTERNAL RESOURCES, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON PARENTING STRESS

by

ANGELA CECELIA RODGERS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
PSYCHOLOGY

Portland State University
1998

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(Continued)

PAGE

LIST OF TABLES

PAGE

LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE

The Relative Influence of Internal Resources, External Resources, and Social Support on Parenting Stress

Introduction

One of the most central tasks of parenting is learning to deal effectively with stress. Parenting produces strains in every area of one's life. Marital relationships must be reorganized and often change in quality. The parent-child relationship involves sacrifice in meeting the high needs and demands of a dependent person. This can be greatly exacerbated if there are any difficult child characteristics, or medical problems. Parenting infringes on the amount of time available to invest in relationships with friends while, at the same time, the need for social support increases. Relationships with relatives, especially one's own parents, may be the source of conflict around ideas of what constitutes good parenting. Parenting may be the source of emotional triggers related to one's own, less than optimal, childhood history. Finding time alone, in which to relax and reflect, also becomes increasingly difficult. Finally, stress is often generated by the increased need for finding and maintaining adequate financial resources while the restrictions of one doing so also increase.

In a society where parents receive little public assistance or support in dealing with the many strains inherent in their roles as providers and caretakers, the availability of internal and external resources becomes extremely important in buffering the amount of stress experienced with such strains. Reducing the stress that parents experience is important because it has a detrimental effect on quality of

parenting. The most extreme form of poor quality parenting is child maltreatment. Parents who have physically abused their children often report higher levels of distress than parents who haven't abused their children (Lahey, Conger, Atkeson, & Treiber, 1984; Mash & Johnston, 1990; Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991). While most people may be inclined to think of child abusers as psychopathological individuals, research has never successfully produced or established a psychopathological profile of such perpetrators and only one out of ten cases of child abuse involves parental psychopathology (Ammerman, 1990). Rather, a plethora of evidence points to the fact that the majority of child maltreatment occurs due to "vulnerable individuals facing overwhelming stress with insufficient resources" (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1995).

Child maltreatment and less severe forms of parental dysfunction thus occur when stresses outweigh supports, or, to say it another way, risk factors outweigh protective factors (Belsky, 1980; 1984; Belsky & Vondra, 1989). Protective factors include the availability of internal and external resources for alleviating and coping with the many strains of parenting. Personal variables, such as personality and psychological characteristics, might be said to comprise the internal resources for parenting while contextual variables, such as material resources, comprise the external resources. Other resources, such as one's support system or perception of support, might be considered as both personal and contextual. A debate over the relative importance of these different types of resources persists in research on the determinants of parenting as well as in the political arena where programs and policies addressing parents needs are formed (Parton, 1985).

Some say that personality and psychological characteristics of the parent are the core, most influential factors predicting parental stress and quality of parenting, due to their direct effect as well as their role in determining the extent to which other variables may enter in or have an effect (Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Pianta, Egeland & Erickson, 1989). Those who interpret findings in this way argue that personal variables such as a lack of social skills, low self-esteem, or emotional immaturity and instability, lead to inadequate social networks, poor marital relationships, and unemployment.

Others contend that the social context has the stronger, and more pervasive influence, such that current trends in the economy and the decline of social services lead to increased poverty and deteriorating neighborhoods, conditions under which people experience chronic strains, depression, and low self-esteem, all of which are associated with stress in parenting. It can be further assumed that children raised in such conditions develop less than optimally, often growing up with greater tendencies themselves towards depression, low self-esteem, a lack of education, and having children at a very young age, all risk factors for poor parenting. In light of this, it is no surprise that one of the most highly replicated findings in the research on child maltreatment is that poverty is strongly associated with abuse and neglect (Pelton, 1978; Whipple & Webster-Stratton, 1991; Zuravin, 1989).

Those who assert that contextual factors have the dominant influence on parenting propose broad, community based programs, or changes in national policies such as widespread, subsidized child care, longer paid parental leave, or even a guaranteed minimum income. Some of these kinds of interventions exist, but are very restricted and benefit a very limited number of people. Most interventions are directed at individuals. And while there are undoubtedly some successes resulting from such

interventions, it would seem that more broad based interventions might have more broad based results. At the least, such interventions merit more attention and effort than they have thus far been allotted.

It is understandable that interventions aimed at changing personal variables are prevalent. The major structural changes that seem to be required for addressing the social context, particularly to reduce poverty, are difficult for most to envision, let alone procure. Yet the fact that poverty has a strong association with stress and with maltreatment cannot be ignored, particularly by researchers. And the more understanding that is gained about the relationship between external resources and internal resources and their influence on insulating parents from the experience of excessive stress, the more equipped psychologists, social workers, and policy makers will be to promote and design effective interventions and supports for those having difficulty parenting. For these reasons, the present study was conducted. It's intent was to unravel, in some small way, the complexity of relationships between factors contributing to the stress of parenting. It was expected that the results would emphasize the need for designing societal interventions that more adequately support the process of caregiving.

A Theoretical Framework

With such a vast literature, and a wide variety of research on the determinants of parenting stress and behavior, it may be useful to provide a framework for the discussion of the literature that follows. The relationship between internal and external resources and parenting strains and stress is neither simple nor, necessarily, direct. Some insight into these relationships might be gained by applying knowledge from the research on stress and coping to the literature on the determinants of

parenting and child maltreatment. Clarification and operationalization of the terms and constructs used within the current study are also necessary.

Studies on stress in parenting have defined terms differently. In some cases strain has been defined as an objective stressor, such as an event or life condition. In other cases it has been defined as the psychological experience of distress. The same is true for the construct of stress. In the coping literature (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Skinner & Wellborn, 1992) the importance of delineating the difference between objective stressors and subjective stress is noted. People with similar strains in their lives may experience very different levels of subjective stress depending on their coping abilities and repertoires. In the current study, Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) definitions of strain and stress are adopted. Strains are defined and referred to as objective chronic stressors, such as ongoing hassles, problems, and difficulties, as well as discrete, stressful life events, in the context of parenting. Stress is herein defined as the subjective, psychological and emotional experience of distress in a parent's encounters with these problems, difficulties, and events.

Pearlin and Schooler (1978) also provide a definition of resources: "Resources refer not to what people do, but to what is available to them in developing their coping repertoires" (p. 5). More specifically, *internal resources* are considered to be the personal attributes that people draw upon in dealing with the strains in their environment. In the context of parenting, such strains may be child behavior problems, or a lack of time alone or with one's friends or spouse. Internal resources helpful to such strains might be the psychological maturity that enables one to empathize with and respond to the child, to form warm, nurturing, reciprocal relationships with peers, and to recruit assistance in childcare from others. *External resources* are found outside of the individual, in the social context of the family, the

community, or the culture. Such resources as the money to hire a baby-sitter, or knowing a friend or relative who is willing to help with childcare, or to lend a caring and understanding ear as a parent vents the frustration of dealing with a persistent behavior problem, would be useful in dealing with the strains of parenting.

Though not directly examined in this study, the relationship between resources and coping strategies is important for understanding and interpreting the relationship between resources and stress. Lazarus and Folkman's process model of stress and coping (1984) provides a useful framework for understanding this relationship and how it might effect an outcome of stress. In this model, stress results when the demands of a situation are appraised as threatening (primary appraisal) and as exceeding one's resources and coping abilities (secondary appraisal). In the context of parenting, a lack of resources increases a person's vulnerability to the experience of stress when faced with the strains of parenting such that different individuals with different resources will experience different levels of stress despite similar strains. This is so because of variability in the coping repertoire (i.e., availability of coping strategies) of different parents. Effective coping responses are important in avoiding or minimizing the stressful impact of the strains of parenting. But development and use of such responses depend on the availability of resources. The relationship between resources, strains, coping strategies and stress as described above is illustrated in Figure 1.

The process model of stress and coping suggests that the availability of resources may play a role at every point in the coping process. First of all, the availability of resources could decrease the number of potential objective stressors, or strains associated with parenting. For instance, a parent who has the psychological resources to be sensitive and responsive to her child is more likely to facilitate the

child's secure attachment to her, which could then result in more consistent and less demanding child behavior. Likewise, the financial resources to hire a baby-sitter, or even a nanny, would provide some relief to the parent from having to attend to the constant demands and needs of a small child, alleviating this common strain of parenting. Next, the demanding situations that naturally occur in parenting a small child may be interpreted as less threatening with the availability of sufficient resources (primary appraisal). And if a situation is appraised as threatening, resources play an important role in determining one's coping repertoire for dealing with it (secondary appraisal). The effectiveness of the coping strategies that are employed will then influence the level of stress experienced. A lack of resources might also have a direct effect on parenting stress, particularly if it limits one's ability to provide necessary material goods.

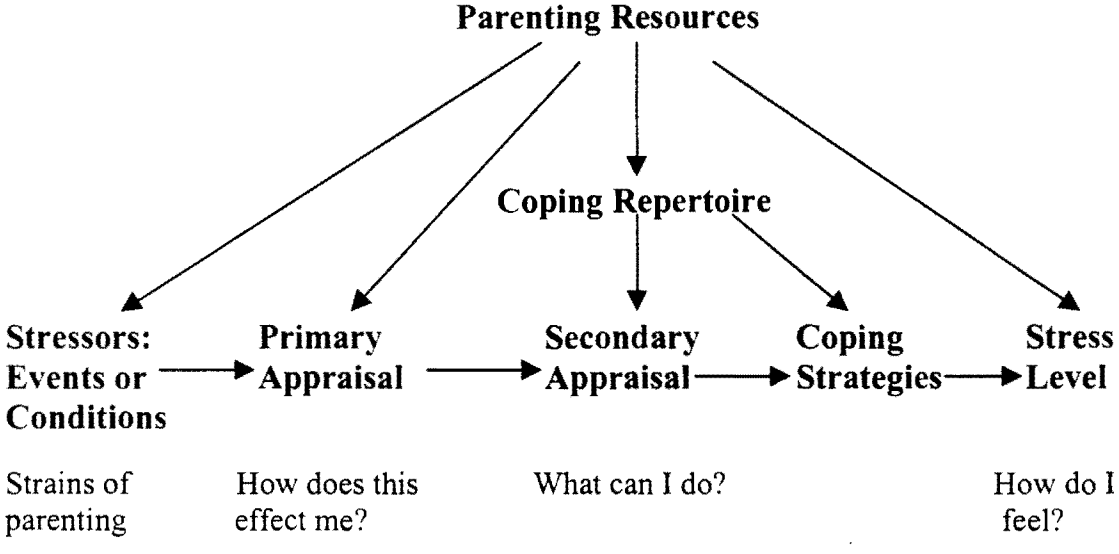

Figure 1: The influence of parenting resources in the stress and coping model.

Within the framework of this model, then, it can be seen how important resources are for ameliorating the strains and stress of parenting. The model has been used effectively by Knussen and Sloper (1992) for discussing the risk and resistance factors that determine the amount of stress experienced by parents of children with a disability. The model has also been adapted by Hillson and Kuiper (1994) into a stress and coping model of child maltreatment. While the model is not tested in the current study, it does provide a useful framework for discussing the relationship between resources and parenting stress as evidenced in the literature.

Literature Review

Evidence from three bodies of literature will be examined in discussing and reviewing the influences of resources on parenting stress. Since parenting stress is linked so strongly with child maltreatment, studies and reviews examining the determinants of maltreatment provide some insight into the relationship between resources and the severe stress that often results in maltreatment. There is a smaller body of literature directly examining variables influencing parenting stress, which will also be discussed. However, the operationalization of stress in these studies varies considerably, making it difficult to draw comparisons or make generalizations. Another difficulty with interpreting these studies is that quite often the measures of stress include both objective and subjective components. For instance, the Parenting Stress Index (PSI, Abidin, 1995) is a clinical assessment tool with several subscales that measure a combination of objective strains and subjective stress related to parental factors (e.g., depression, parental health) and child factors (e.g., demandingness, adaptability). The PSI is commonly used as a measure of parenting stress in research. For example, in the following review of the literature, the PSI is

used as the measure of stress in almost every study. For this reason, it is impossible to delineate between objective and subjective stress in the discussion of the literature.

The current study, however, strives to separate these components and examines the predictive value of resources on subjective stress. As was discussed, resources may influence the level of subjective stress by either reducing the amount of objective stressors (strains), or by mediating their effect through the provision of a larger repertoire of coping strategies.

Finally, some literature on the determinants of the quality of parenting, including nonabusive parenting, also provides useful information because it is generally assumed that as parenting stress increases, the quality of parenting declines. Jay Belsky, who has written two comprehensive analyses of the research on child maltreatment (1980, 1993) in which he acknowledges the role of personal and social resources as well as parental stress in the etiology of maltreatment, has also written two discussions on the determinants of parenting (Belsky, 1984; Belsky & Vondra, 1989). In these discussions, Belsky cites Bronfenbrenner's (1977, p. 517) quotes of his graduate school mentor, Walter Fenno Dearborn ("Bronfenbrenner, if you want to understand something, try to change it.") and of Goethe ("What is the most difficult of all? That which seems to you the easiest, to see with one's eyes what is lying before them."). By juxtaposing these statements, Belsky justifies the fact that he draws heavily from the literature on child maltreatment in his discussions. He asserts that the determinants of parenting go largely unnoticed until parental dysfunction reveals the mechanisms of influence on parental behavior. Parental behavior may not readily or appropriately be manipulated. But child maltreatment might be considered a change from more normal parenting practices and thus provide a kind of "natural experiment" for examining the factors that influence parental function, or, in this case, dysfunction.

Since the seminal work of Bronfenbrenner (1977), it is generally acknowledged that parental and family functioning are influenced by the interaction of numerous variables from all of the systems in which families are embedded. This is particularly evident in the review articles on the etiology of child maltreatment. Individual studies on maltreatment, parenting stress, and the determinants of parenting, however, largely continue to focus on main effects and the examination of one or two variables. Main effects of the variables examined in the current study will be discussed first, followed by a discussion of the more revealing studies examining a variety of variables and their interactions.

Internal Resource Variables

A wide array of personal variables has been examined in the research for their effects on parenting behavior and on parenting stress. One variable receiving a lot of attention has been parenting competence or self-esteem. The influence of this variable will be reviewed and investigated in the current study along with another personal variable which has only recently begun to spark a lot of interest - the internal working model of caregiving.

Parenting Sense of Competence/Self-Esteem. Self-esteem and a sense of competence in parenting are often discussed and measured as the same construct (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Mash & Johnston, 1983). For instance, Mash and Johnston (1983, 1989) use a Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC, Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978 as cited by Mash & Johnston, 1983) to measure parenting self-esteem. They describe parenting self-esteem as "encompassing both perceived self-efficacy as a parent and the satisfaction derived from parenting" (1989, p. 167). In other literature, parenting self-esteem is regarded as a parental cognition that has been found to have a significant effect on parental behavior. Parents lacking confidence in

handling child behavior problems are overly sensitive of and more ineffective in handling difficult child behavior (Bugental, 1987; Bugental & Shennum, 1984 as cited in Johnston & Mash, 1989).

The relationship between parenting stress and parenting self-esteem seems to be bi-directional. Mash and Johnston (1983) found that parents of hyperactive children score lower in self-esteem and competence than parents of normal children, with parents of older hyperactive children scoring even lower than parents of younger hyperactive children. The stressors associated with parenting a hyperactive child, such as the need for more prolonged and intensive parental supervision and control and the failure of typical child-management strategies to evoke compliance, may thus have a cumulative detrimental effect on parenting self-esteem and sense of competence. In addition, these same parents also report higher levels of stress on every dimension of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI, Abidin, 1990) in comparison with parents of normal children. The PSI is a widely used instrument for assessing the role and degree of child related and parental characteristics in the stress of parenting.

Other researchers have also reported more depression, less competence, and more stress in parents of hyperactive children than parents of normal children (Beck, Young, & Tarnowski, 1990). However, after parents of ADHD children participated in a 9 week training in which they received information about ADHD and child behavior problems in general, and were taught and practiced specialized parenting skills, they increased their scores for sense of parental competence and lowered their scores for parenting stress significantly in comparison with a control group, and maintained the lower scores for two months after the training ended (Anastopoulis, Shelton, DuPaul, & Guevremont, 1993). A similar study also found significantly lowered scores for parents of children with ADHD in parenting stress and an increased

sense of competence after a parent training and at a 3 month follow-up, independent of observed changes in child behavior as assessed in a clinical setting (Pisterman, Firestone, McGrath, Goodman, Webster, Mallory & Goffin, 1992).

Because the Anastopoulis, et al, study (1993) did not include any observations of parent-child interactions it is difficult to determine whether the change in scores for parenting competence were a result of significant changes in child behavior or simply due to an increased understanding and acceptance of their child's ADHD and increased ability to cope with their behavior. Anastopoulis, et al, present partial support of the latter in the fact that while parents reported decreased ADHD symptomatology in their children, their stress scores on the PSI decreased significantly only in the Parent Domain (subscales are Parent Depression or Self-blame, Parent Attachment, Parent Restriction of Role, Parent Sense of Competence, Parent Social Isolation, Parent Relationship With Spouse, and Parent Health) and not the Child Domain (subscales are Child Adaptability, Child Demandingness, Child Mood, Child Distractibility/Hyperactivity, Child Acceptability, and Child Reinforces Parent). Stress scores in the Child Domain of parents who received training also did not differ significantly from the control group of parents of hyperactive children who had not received the training.

These results are consistent with Knussen and Sloper's (1992) conclusions drawn from a review of risk and resistance factors for stress in parents of handicapped children. Particularly relevant here is the evidence they found that indicates the importance of the quality of the parent-child relationship in reducing the risk of parental distress due to child behavior problems. A good quality relationship implies the absence of self-blame or a sense of failure on the part of the parent as well as a positive view of the child despite behavior problems. The increased knowledge and

understanding about the causes and nature of ADHD that parents gained in the trainings of the Anastopoulis, et al, (1993) and Pisterman, et al, (1992) studies would likely enhance the sense of competence of parents of hyperactive children, and facilitate a more positive view of their child. Whatever the cause, parents in both studies felt better about themselves and their ability to parent after the training and this was concomitant with a decrease in levels of parenting stress.

Middle class fathers of normal children also reported higher levels of competence on the PSOC along with lower levels of stress on the Depression and Sense of Competence subscales of the PSI Parent Domain after a 10 week parent education/play group program (McBride, 1991). Finally, because of the high correlation between stress and abusive behavior in parents, an association between parenting stress and parenting competence is inferred from a study comparing abusive and nonabusive mothers, in which abusive mothers reported lower scores on the PSOC (Mash, Johnston, & Kovitz, 1983).

More general measures of self-esteem also reveal it as being related to lower levels of parenting stress. Pearlin and Schooler (1978), in examining the role of psychological resources in mediating the relationship between objective stressors and subjective stress in a number of different areas, found that less self-denigration and a higher sense of esteem reduced the translation of strains into stress.

Parental Attachment/Internal Working Model of Caregiving. Another variable that has been found to have a strong association with child maltreatment and difficulties or distress in parenting is a parental developmental history of abuse or neglect as a child. Steele (1980) and his associates report that in their clinical experience it is quite rare to see an abuser without such a history. The importance of a history of abuse is hypothesized to derive from its detrimental effect on the quality of

attachment between a child and parent and the development of internal working models of relationships (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989).

Internal working models are described as intrapsychic representations of relationships which are constructed from early childhood experience with attachment figures and come with a set of unconscious mental rules which provide a framework for interaction and perception of others and self (Bowlby, 1969). When, as a child, a person has a neglectful or abusive parent, they come to believe that important others cannot be trusted to respond in the way they want and need, and they form an image of themselves as incompetent in eliciting a cooperative response and as unworthy of it (Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989). Such representations are believed to affect the ability of a person to form healthy social relationships as an adult, and, in particular, to affect the ability of a parent to empathize and form a secure attachment with her child.

Of course not everyone who was abused or neglected as a child grows up to abuse their children. In fact, only an estimated 30% of parents with a history of maltreatment end up as perpetrators (Kaufman & Zigler, 1989). Steele, and others (Bowlby, 1980 as cited by Cicchetti, 1989; George & Solomon, 1989) agree that internal working models may be modified by experiences throughout one's development or by relationships as a child with someone other than the abusive or neglectful parent. While much is often made of the intergenerational continuity of child maltreatment, Rutter (1989) argues that "there is very little that is unalterable even with respect to the sequalae of severe and prolonged maltreatment in childhood." (p. 344) He gives an example of how a few positive success experiences in school led to a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy in a high-risk sample of girls with a history of abuse and institutional care. Rutter suggests that any experience of pleasure,

success, and accomplishment in a few specific areas can constitute a protective factor against intergenerational continuity of maltreatment, implying that much could be done to alleviate the effects of abuse (and its concomitant low quality of attachment) by interventions that facilitate success experiences of maltreated children and improve contextual family variables (poverty, housing conditions, etc.).

Despite acknowledgment of its importance in determining quality of parenting and child developmental outcomes, the internal working model of caregiving and the ability to empathize has received relatively little attention in research on the determinants of parenting or child maltreatment (Feshbach, 1989). Quite a bit of attention has been given to whether or not the parents have a history of abuse and to the association of history with certain psychological and personality variables that affect parenting (Belsky, 1984; Belsky, 1993; Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Pianta, et al, 1989; Steele, 1980). But, as has been indicated, developmental history is ultimately a poor predictor of how a person will parent and, in a subtle way, leads to stigmatization of people with such a history. In considering the relationship between parents' developmental histories and their tendency to abuse, the relevant factor is the current state of their internal working models of caregiving, which includes their capacity to read, understand and respond to the child's cues, and their feelings and attitudes about caregiving. Such a capacity leads to the formation of secure parent-child attachment.

In a study of 32 mothers and their kindergarten children by George and Solomon (1989), the mothers' internal working model of caregiving was assessed through intensive clinical interviews and found to be highly correlated with the interactive attachment behavior observed between mother and child during the first five minutes of reunion after separation. Mothers who received low ratings on the internal working model of caregiving described themselves as having a limited

understanding of their children's needs They didn't perceive their children as needing comfort or support even in situations where they acknowledged the children were distressed, and they felt incapable of dealing with their children's needs, behavior, and emotions (p. 228).

A healthy and well-developed model of caregiving included a strong sense of personal identity in parents along with the feeling that their children deserve the parent's support (George & Solomon, 1989). This would facilitate parents' ability to be aware of their own needs as well as their children's and to find strategies to meet both responsibly. Such abilities are associated with a high level of conceptualizing about childrearing and linked with a reduced incidence of child maltreatment (Newberger & Cook, 1983). The bottom line is that a parent-child relationship which is characterized by secure attachment is mutually rewarding and reciprocal in that both parent and child are responsive to and enjoy each other. This has also been referred to as an experience of attunement (Stern, 1985)

It is logical to assume that a parent who has such a relationship with their child is likely to experience both less objective and subjective stress in parenting. The whining, clinging, and inconsistent behavior of an insecurely or anxiously attached child tends to be more stressful, and parents who lack empathy towards their child tend to have unrealistic expectations of them and react with hostility or rejection, or to feel helpless and ineffective in meeting the needs of the child or soliciting help to do so (Crittenden, 1985, 1988). Studies have shown that mothers who perceived their children as causing less stress were more sensitive in their parenting behavior (Moran & Whitman, 1985 as cited by Abidin, 1995; Passino, et al, 1993). Jarvis and Creasey (1991), in a study of 32 nonabusing families with healthy 18 month-old children, found that parenting stress was significantly correlated with the quality of attachment

of the child with the parent. Gray and his associates (Gray, Cutler, Dean & Kempe, 1977) found that an unempathic manner of caretaking by mothers of their newborns (i.e., done mechanically without warm, sensitive interaction) was a reliable predictor of future difficulty in parenting. In a review of the few studies examining the relationship between empathy and physical abuse, Feshbach (1989) reports that low empathy in caregivers is associated with a greater likelihood of maltreatment. Assessed in a number of ways and in a variety of settings and situations, then, the internal working model of caregiving, and the parental behavior and social cognitions associated with it, are found to have a significant relationship with parenting stress.

External Resource Variables

With the failure of the psychiatric model of child abuse to provide an empirically validated psychological profile that was useful for identifying potential perpetrators, attention became focused, in the 1970's, on an ecological model of child abuse (Belsky, 1978). An abundance of research was conducted examining contextual variables believed to be important to the healthy functioning of families. The variables receiving the most attention in this model are socioeconomic status, material resources, and neighborhood characteristics. Socioeconomic status has been clearly shown to be linked with quality of parenting (Lewis & Wilson, 1972). Nevertheless, it seems that the adequacy of financial resources will be directly linked with the degree of stress a parent might experience no matter what their education or occupational status. Thus, financial resources and neighborhood characteristics will be examined as external resources in the current study and studies showing the main effects of these variables on stress are herein reviewed.

Financial Resources. Economic hardship has a pervasive detrimental effect on the quality of one's life. It is not surprising, then, that poverty is highly correlated

with parenting stress (Belle, 1982) and child abuse and neglect (Belsky, 1993). During the 1960's, when the psychodynamic orientation towards child abuse was predominant (producing the Psychiatric Model), child abuse was believed to be evenly distributed throughout the social classes. The presence of poverty in a large percentage of reported cases of maltreatment was explained as a reporting bias resulting from the inability of the poor to maintain privacy, and their openness to public scrutiny from social service agencies and law enforcement.

In 1978, Pelton, in his classic paper, "Child Abuse and Neglect: The Myth of Classlessness," provided convincing evidence to counter the reporting bias argument. Pelton contended that the reporting bias could not account for the fact that even as public awareness increased and new laws resulted in more vigilant reporting, the pattern of association between income and reported cases of abuse remained the same. In addition, among those in the lower class who were equally vulnerable to public scrutiny, there was an association between degrees of poverty and the incidence and severity of abuse. Higher rates and more severe cases of abuse were found amongst the poorest of the poor.

In "The Meaning of Poverty in the World of Children," Garbarino (1992) reports the results of the National Incidence Study (National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1981), which was federally funded and dealt with many of the issues of class-biased reporting. This study found that in 1979 the rate of maltreatment was 27.3 per 1,000 for families with incomes under $7,000, 14.6 per 1,000 for families with incomes from $15,000 to $24,999, and 2.7 per 1,000 for families with annual incomes over $25,000.

In studies of changing rates of abuse within one community or area under changing economic conditions, the effect of the reporting bias is removed by using the

community as its own control. It is also not likely that the overall personality make-up of the community will change in relatively short periods of time. In a 30 month longitudinal study of changing child abuse rates in two distinct large metropolitan communities, Steinberg, Catalano and Dooley (1981) found that a significant increase in child abuse rates was preceded by a decline in the work force, measured by high rates of job loss. While this study doesn't measure the effects of long, enduring conditions of poverty or unemployment, it does indicate the stressful impact of economic hardship, and perhaps some loss of optimism about one's financial future well-being, on parenting behaviors. Likewise, Garbarino (1992) reports on a study (Birch, 1982 as cited by Garbarino, 1992) which found that when the lumber industry in Oregon became severely depressed in 1981, and the unemployment rates soared to the double digits, reports of child abuse increased by 46%.

Financial resources are found to be significantly correlated with parenting stress in nonabusive families as well. In comparing groups of parents with healthy children, with children diagnosed with mild heart lesions, and with children with an unexplained apnea incident, Phipps and Drotar (1990) found levels of financial resources to be more important in predicting parenting stress than the health status of the child. In a study comparing low income divorced mothers with moderate income divorced mothers and moderate income married mothers, the low income mothers reported the highest levels of stress (Colletta, 1981). In accord with Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping model (1984), Knussen and Sloper (1992), who found that "having the material benefits associated with higher social class was a protective factor against maternal stress for mothers of children with a disability" (p. 252), also reported that "Those with inadequate coping resources are more likely to appraise a

situation as stressful, and to be disadvantaged when deciding what they can do about it." (p. 253)

It is difficult to argue that the lives of the poor are not more stressful than those with adequate material resources. However, some would argue that the poor have created their own circumstances and are largely personally responsible for their stressful lives (Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Pianta, et al, 1989), while others contend that it is largely due to the way that society is structured, to political and economic forces, to racial and class discrimination, and to our strong cultural orientation towards individualism, that so many end up in the clutches of poverty and are unable to lift themselves out (Gil, 1970). This will be examined further in the discussion on the relationship between variables.

Neighborhood Characteristics/Community Support. Poor people are likely to live in poor neighborhoods. But a neighborhood's socioeconomic level alone is not enough to indicate whether it will have higher rates of child abuse and be considered high-risk. What's more important is the degree to which people are socially integrated and "free from drain," (Collins & Pancoast, 1976 as cited by Garbarino & Sherman, 1980) and how parents evaluate the neighborhood as "a place to raise children." (Garbarino & Sherman, 1980)

In comparing two neighborhoods that had similar socioeconomic levels but very different rates of reported child abuse, Garbarino and Sherman (1980) found significant differences in neighborhood characteristics. They describe the picture emerging from the high-risk neighborhood as one of "very needy families competing for scarce resources." (p. 194) Houses and families were "run down." There was a reluctance to engage in neighborly exchanges. Fewer people were perceived as taking an interest in a child's welfare. Children had fewer playmates in the neighborhood,

and there was a high percentage of "latchkey" kids. Families were reported as experiencing a moderately high level of life stress, or crisis. Overall, the neighborhood was perceived as being a hindrance in raising children.

On the other hand, those in the low-risk neighborhoods were described by Garbarino and Sherman as being "free from drain," a concept first used by Collins and Pancoast (1976 as cited by Garbarino & Sherman, 1980) in their studies of informal helping networks. "Free from drain" means that families were "sufficiently on top of their own life situations" to help others without fear of depleting their own "emotional and physical resources." (p. 28) Houses and families were "kept up." Families reported only a mild level of life stress or crisis. They were relatively self-sufficient, less needy, and in that context, engaged in reciprocal exchange with neighbors. Mothers were also more likely to engage the help of professionals than those in the high-risk area.

A later study by Garbarino and Kostelny (1992), also compared communities with comparable socioeconomic levels but varying widely in rates of maltreatment. The residents of communities with lower rates of maltreatment described their neighborhoods as a decent place to live and also had more services available, while in the high risk neighborhoods criminal activity was easily spotted and community programs were located in dark, depressed buildings.

Deccio, Horner, and Wilson (1994) conducted a similar study in which they compared two low income neighborhoods with different rates of reported child abuse, but found somewhat different results from Garbarino and Sherman (1980). Personal support and parenting support were not significantly different between the two neighborhoods as they were in Garbarino and Sherman's study. However, a number of differences between the two studies could explain the contradictory findings. Deccio,

et al used different instruments to measure support and administered them in closed ended interviews as opposed to Garbarino and Sherman's open-ended interviews. Garbarino and Sherman also interviewed what they called expert informants (public health nurses, mailmen, elementary school principals, clergy, policemen, etc.) in addition to parents, while Deccio, et al only questioned parents. Finally, the parents in the two studies differed significantly in age, race, number of children, and employment status.

Deccio, et al, did report some significant differences, however. They found that the high risk neighborhood had twice as many vacant housing units, three times as many families without telephones, and a greater percentage of families who had lived in their current home for less than five years. Also, while the mean income of the high-risk neighborhood was slightly higher than that of the low-risk neighborhood, the unemployment rate was three times higher and the percentage of families living below the poverty level was much larger in the high-risk neighborhood. The neighborhoods (census tracts) in this study contained four times as many people as the neighborhoods in Garbarino and Sherman's study (1980) and probably included a larger geographical area. A wider range of incomes and social status seems more likely in a larger sample and geographical area and is reflected in these demographics. Deccio, et al suggest that their findings reflect a difference in what they term as social integration. Residents in the low-risk neighborhood are more socially integrated because more of them work in the community, have incomes above the poverty level, have a history of stable residence and are connected to friends, neighbors and relatives by telephone.

The low income mothers in the Stress and Families Project (Belle, 1982) rated their neighborhood on an average somewhere between "not so good" and "good" in safety, quietness, protection of property and sense of community. While longer

residence in the neighborhood resulted in more sociability and exchange, it was not associated with a more positive view of the neighborhood. Although those mothers who were most desperate and hard-pressed, in terms of experiencing objective and subjective stress, reached out to their neighbors and engaged in more exchanges of money, shopping for one another, other forms of mutual assistance, and get-togethers, they were not as well supported as those women who had sources of support outside of the neighborhood. They had less reliable day-to-day assistance, less emergency and nonemergency childcare, and lacked a confidant. These neighborhood social ties obviously had costs as well as benefits. Belle argues that women whose choice about interpersonal relationships was limited were coerced into relationships they might otherwise avoid. And while they received much needed help from these relationships, they also were required to share some things which they themselves badly needed, whether it be money, food, or time, in order to maintain connections with sources of help for inevitable emergencies. These helping relationships were necessary for survival but not "free from drain." And so it was that in addition to their own overwhelming burdens, these mothers shared the burdens of those with whom they had ties. Obviously, having enough money for one's material needs, to hire a baby-sitter when needed, and to have more freedom of choice about one's relationships and one's neighborhood, results in more satisfactory support and a much greater ability to moderate the stress in one's life.

Social Support - an Internal & External Resource

Depending on how it is defined and operationalized, social support may be considered as an internal or external resource. As it has been studied in research, it often seems to contain both personal and contextual elements. The actions and accessibility of others in one's life is a contextual variable, but how one perceives and

interprets the presence and actions of those in one's social network is personal. This personal aspect of social support is believed to be closely linked to one's internal working model of relationships (Sarason, Shearin, Pierce, & Sarason, 1987).

The importance of social support as a resource for mediating parenting stress is well documented. This has resulted in the enormous growth of the family support movement in this country in the last decade. It has been suggested that social support, as a coping resource, operates as a protective factor through its potential for reducing the number of objective stressors and for mediating the effect of objective stressors on subjective stress (Antonucci & Depner, 1982; Pearlin & Schooler, 1978).

The construct of social support is very broad and has been reduced and operationalized in various ways. Sometimes support is classified as instrumental or emotional. In the literature on parenting and social support, *instrumental support* has been operationalized as assistance with daily household and childcare tasks, baby-sitting, the provision of material goods, advice about childrearing or childhood diseases, transportation, or help in an emergency. *Emotional support* includes the fulfillment of one's emotional needs in the form of recognition of worth, nurturance, encouragement, reinterpretation or reappraisal of events (such as difficult child behavior), being able to talk to an empathic listener, or perhaps simple companionship.

Social support might also be reduced into constructs of (1) one's *perceived availability of support*, (2) *enacted, or received support* that can be objectively verified, and (3) *social embeddedness* or belongingness, which may be reflected by one's involvement and sense of connection in a community, church, extended family, or other group (Barrera, 1986).

The categorization of support into these three constructs may help to explain what might seem like conflicting results in studies examining the nature of the

relationship between social support and stress. When a positive relationship is reported between social support and stress, it is usually *enacted support* that was measured. Such a relationship is a result of the fact that in more stressful circumstances people usually require, request, and receive more support. This would explain why, in a study of 99 mothers of newborns (Carveth & Gottlieb, 1979), a greater number of contacts with members of one's social network was found to be associated with higher objective and subjective stress scores.

In a study of low income women in the Stress and Families Project, Deborah Belle (1982) also reported a positive relationship between enacted support (more interactions with one's support network) and subjective stress. Barrera (1986) speculates that in some cases of a positive relationship between support and stress, enacted support may lower one's sense of self-esteem if seen as a sign of incompetence, or perhaps by creating a sense of obligation or indebtedness.

Perceived availability of support is usually found to have an inverse relationship with stress. Sometimes discrepancies exist between a person's perceived availability of support and objective assessments of support, such that someone with a greater amount of objectively assessed received support may report less perceived availability than someone with less objectively assessed support. It may be that when a parent's need for support is greater, such as in the case of a parent of a handicapped or chronically ill child, they may perceive a lack in available support while a parent with less need would perceive and report higher levels of available support for a comparable amount of objectively assessed support (Kazak, Reber, & Carter, 1988, as cited by Beresford, 1993). For this reason, Beresford suggests that it is important to assess *perceived* social support when examining its effect as a resource in preventing or alleviating stress. In another study of stress in parents whose babies required home

apnea monitoring (Phipps & Drotar, 1990), the perceived availability of social/emotional supports, along with financial resources, was highly significant in determining the level of stress experienced.

Social embeddedness, unlike perceived support and enacted support, has been found to have a negative relationship with subjective stress independent of life events stress (i.e., objective stressors). This would indicate the importance of preventive interventions that strengthened social embeddedness in a community, neighborhood, work, or religious organization. It has been suggested that measuring support as requests for aid may produce an inaccurate picture of the importance of social support because those who are strongly socially embedded may receive a lot of aid without needing to ask (Moos & Mitchell, 1982). However, Barrera also warns that social embeddedness may not always involve the provision of social support. It is important to identify the content and quality of social links, rather than simply the quantity of social ties.

Probably the crucial element in producing a positive relationship between social support and stress is a "goodness of fit" between one's desires and expectations regarding support and one's satisfaction with what is available and received. This has also been measured as *perceived adequacy of support*. (Barrera, 1986). A number of studies using measures of this type have found satisfaction with perceived and enacted support to be an important element in reducing parenting stress (Adamakos, Ryan, Ullman, Pascoe, Diaz & Chessare, 1986), discriminating between abusive (less satisfied) and nonabusive mothers (Chan, 1994), and increasing the number of positive mother-child interactions (Weinraub & Wolf, 1983).

Belle (1982), in her study of low-income mothers, reported that higher levels of interaction within the social network of the neighborhood were associated with less

perceived availability of support and more stress. Belle suggests that this may be because everyone in the neighborhood was as poor and needy as everyone else and when support was received it resulted in an increased sense of indebtedness. Belle cites support of this explanation from studies that show when people's economic resources increase and they have more choice about who they associate with, they disassociate from previous social networks composed largely of those who are socially disadvantaged (Stack, 1974, as cited by Belle, 1982, p. 142). Such findings suggest that network size and amount of enacted support are less likely to be related to perceived adequacy of support than is perceived availability of support. It seems likely that if parents were to report dissatisfaction with the support that is perceived to be available to them (i.e. perceive it as inadequate), they would also report low levels of perceived availability. In others words, these measures would probably have a high degree of overlap. In the current study, it is perceived availability of support that is measured and examined for its relationship to parenting stress.

Social support can also be categorized as formal and informal. Formal support involves the services of professionals or agencies while informal support consists of helping relationships among people that have developed in the course of their interactions with one another in their daily lives. In general, informal support is believed to be the more desirable of the two and found to have either a direct influence on well-being that can insulate a person from stress or a buffering effect during times of hardship.

Numerous studies report findings showing the isolation of abusive parents from formal and informal support systems (see Belsky, 1980, 1993). James Garbarino (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980) believes that social isolation is a central factor and necessary condition for child abuse and is strongly related to cultural beliefs in the

child as the property and sole responsibility of its caregivers, the condoning of the use of physical punishment on children, as well as the value placed on family privacy. He argues that the essential elements of social support for preventing maltreatment are nurturance and feedback, or control. In the absence of social connections, emotional needs, as well as needs for assistance with childcare and other household tasks (Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991), are not met and stress is more likely to become unmanageable. Without a source of feedback to assist with impulse control, particularly under highly stressful conditions, maltreatment is facilitated and much more likely to occur.

Garbarino's argument may be supported by the example of Sweden. Despite the fact that this country has an extremely efficient system of reporting and record keeping, the number of reported cases of physical abuse is about one fifth that of the United States (Gil, 1970, as cited by Tietjen, 1981). Sweden has demonstrated its commitment to the social and economic well being of families through its public family policies which have resulted in the development of a comprehensive network of formal and informal family support systems (Tietjen, 1981). Formal support systems that encourage and facilitate the development of informal social networks include the following:

1. Child health care clinics, where children are registered at birth, are located in every neighborhood and offer free maternity and child health care services. These clinics also sponsor parent and education support groups with the aim of facilitating the ability of parents to understand their children's needs and to support each other in taking initiative to solve problems related to parenting.

2. Open preschools involve parents in daily activities and encourage groups of parents and children to interact with each other while involved in tasks that increase the competency of each.

3. "Neighborhood work" is a new method of social work that encourages individuals in a neighborhood to participate and work together in a variety of community projects and events.

These provisions of support to families in Sweden reflect the cultural belief that society as a whole benefits when one generation accepts responsibility for the next and that the best way to meet that responsibility is to distribute it equally across various groups in the society. While elements of these components of Sweden's extensive social support system for families may exist in the United States (e.g., Head Start, Health Start, and Family Support Centers), in comparison the support given to parenting in this country is very limited and the likelihood of a family becoming socially isolated seems much greater.

Single mothers of young children in this country are at a particularly high risk for experiencing social isolation and parenting stress. If they are unemployed their income is probably low along with the amount of social support they perceive as available because income has been found to be positively correlated with social support (Pascoe, et al, 1981). Employed single mothers may experience role strain as well as have little time for social contacts outside of work. Goldberg, Greenberger, Hamill and O'Neill (1992) found that when high-quality child care was available, when neighbors could be counted on for instrumental as well as emotional support, and when they had people they could talk to in the workplace, employed single mothers experienced a greater sense of well-being, less role-strain, and perceived their children's behavior as less problematic, all indicators of less subjective stress.

Different kinds of support may also be important for different people. In a recent study of single adolescent mothers (Richardson, Barbour & Bubenzer, 1995), more material support was offered by relatives and more emotional support by peers,

and emotional support of peers played the crucial role in reducing parenting stress. This may be indicative of the importance to adolescent parents of maintaining social networks that are appropriate for their stage of development.

There is some evidence that the most important element of support is a confiding relationship (Brown, Bhrolchain, & Harris, 1975 as cited by Knussen & Sloper, 1992; Pharis & Levin, 1991). In evaluating an intensive intervention project that involved a wide array of services, Pharis and Levin asked for feedback from thirty mothers who had participated from one to four years and had been selected to participate because they were at particularly high risk for difficulties in parenting. These mothers ranked each of the services they received according to its value and importance to them in providing support and effecting change in themselves and their lives. The most highly ranked component of the program was the mothers' relationship with their primary clinician, because it provided them with "a person to talk to who really cared about you." Although concrete services (networking, transporting, helping to fill out forms, providing child-rearing information and classes, help with moving, etc.) were a part of the program, especially in the first few weeks and months of contact with the participant, it was suggested that the caring and concern attached to such services allowed them to "move beyond physical dependency on such services to renewed psychological growth". (p. 319)

One of the strongest protective factors for reduced stress and higher quality parenting is the presence of marital support (Belsky, 1984, 1993; Belsky & Vondra, 1989; Rutter, 1989). This is likely so because a supportive marital relationship has the potential for providing a comprehensive degree of both instrumental and emotional support. An unsatisfactory marital relationship, on the other hand, may itself be a source of stress and contribute to difficulties and stress in parenting (Pianta, Egeland,

& Erickson, 1989). Again, the "goodness of fit" between expectations and reality is important.

Relationships Between Resource Variables

It is unlikely that a lack in any one of the resource variables discussed above exists independently of any others. Some references and indications have already been given of correlations that have been found and reported. It has also been indicated that in reviews and discussions of the research on child maltreatment or the determinants of parenting, no single antecedent variable is believed to provide sufficient cause or explanation for parenting dysfunction. Each is simply a contributing factor. Debate does continue, however, about the relative importance of the different variables. In an attempt to unravel the relationships between variables, research using multivariate causal frameworks is becoming more common.

One such study was the Mother-Child Interaction Research Project at the University of Minnesota (Pianta, Egeland, & Erickson, 1989). This project was a 6 year longitudinal research project involving 267 primiparous women and their children who were considered to be at "high-risk" for maltreatment due to economic disadvantage. Extensive measures of parental cognitive function, emotional and other personal characteristics, interpersonal relationships, life stress, child characteristics and development, contextual circumstances, and home environment were obtained through interviews, home observations, numerous types of questionnaires, and various psychological tests every few months from the last trimester until the children were 6 years old. Numerous variables consistently distinguished maltreating mothers from a control group of good caretakers over the years, including maternal mood, emotional stability, stress, support, and interpersonal trust. These variables were entered into a discriminant analysis to determine the extent to which they could predict membership

in the maltreating or nonmaltreating groups. Eighty-three percent of the total cases were correctly predicted, with 25% false negatives and 13% false positives. The most powerful discriminating variable was maternal emotional stability, followed by total stress and total support.

Pianta, et al, concluded that maternal psychological characteristics in these low income mothers played a central, causative role in determining maltreatment, particularly those characteristics that affected a mother's ability to engage in healthy interpersonal relationships. Problems in intimate relationships seemed to account for a great deal of the stress they reported and led to a lack of social support in their lives. This, in addition to their emotional reactivity, depressed affect, and lack of self-esteem, seemed connected to a history of abuse in childhood and was explained by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). "It is our conclusion that attachment theory provides a powerful means of integrating the common findings in the maltreatment literature - that maltreating women share similar feelings and thoughts about caretaking, are generally under stress or in stressful relationships, are somewhat isolated, and tend to have experienced inadequate caretaking as children." (p. 249)

Steele (1980), in his claim that virtually all perpetrators of child maltreatment have had a childhood history of abuse or inadequate caretaking, would likely agree with Pianta's conclusion. As was previously mentioned, Steele, and other psychodynamic theorists, argue that it is such a history, and its effect on one's psychological make-up, that leads a person to respond to stressful circumstances, such as poverty, with abusive behavior. But while Pianta, et al (1989) contend that personal variables related to childhood history of abuse are the most central and influential variables leading to abusive parenting, it must also be remembered that they acknowledge the important role that economic resources play by deliberately choosing

a sample of economically disadvantaged mothers in order to ensure a high risk and greater likelihood of maltreatment.

Quinton and Rutter (1984) compared two groups of parents of low socioeconomic status in an attempt to unravel the relationship between current disadvantage and childhood adversities, and to determine which has the greater influence on parenting. One group of parents suffered parenting breakdowns resulting in out-of home placement for their children, and the other served as a comparison. Although Quinton and Rutter weren't entirely successful in their attempt, they did conclude that the relationship between childhood adversity and parenting breakdown was mediated by current circumstances. Neither current circumstances alone, nor childhood adversity alone, could distinguish those with severe parenting difficulties.

While a history of abuse was not measured in the Stress and Families Project, a history of childhood loss or disruption, which is more encompassing, was (Reese, 1982). In that study, a greater number of disruptive childhood events was associated with more adverse current life conditions and poor psychological functioning. However, through a multiple regression analysis, it was determined that current life stressors accounted for much more variance in measures of psychological functioning (depression, anxiety, mastery, self-esteem) than childhood difficulties. So, Reese suggests, while there is some association between one's psychological make-up and childhood experiences, current life conditions and the stress associated with them seem to play a much bigger role. This does not address the issue, however, of how much personal psychological variables alone determine the disadvantaged circumstances in which many parents live.

Belsky and Vondra (1989), in their review of the literature, note that a history of abuse is often associated with depression and low self-esteem, which are in turn

related to social isolation, marital difficulties and stress, and even choice of occupation, all of which have been shown to affect parenting. Like Pianta, et al (1989), they consider personal psychological resources as the most influential determinants of quality of parenting, due to direct and indirect effects. The availability of psychological resources is no doubt important in ameliorating and effectively coping with the everyday strains of parenting. However, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that, even more important than psychological resources in preventing strains from translating into subjective stress, is the size of one's coping repertoire and the flexibility with which one uses a number of different coping strategies. Socioeconomic status is related to the availability and use of coping strategies, with the affluent and better educated having the advantage. It is no surprise that contextual resources are inversely related to avoidance coping and positively related to active-behavioral coping (Hall, et al, 1991). When you are poor there is simply less you can do to cope effectively.

In their examination of the number of stressors, type of coping behavior, and coping outcomes of low income mothers in the Stress and Families Project, Dill and Feld (1982) paint a picture of these women as being extremely resourceful and persistent but facing frustration and discouragement on every hand. In comparison with a community sample, these mothers encountered many more life events (a mean of 14 events in 2 yrs. opposed to one or two events per year for control group). In addition they had limited coping options or unreliable outcome of their coping efforts due to inadequate financial resources, a lack of power, status, information, or advocates to move institutions in their favor. Dill and Feld provide several examples of "persistent, energetic and imaginative strategies" that "were used in attempts to alter threatening situations. These strategies were ineffective, not because they were

inherently deficient, but because institutions simply would not respond" or responded negatively (p. 190). One woman searched vigorously, but was unable to get help for her dyslexic, emotionally disturbed son. Another woman sought psychiatric help for her son, but her social worker ignored her worry over her son and focused only on her capacity to mother. Her son never received help and she eventually had to enlist legal aid to resist the incessant invasion of her privacy that resulted from her efforts. Another woman tried unsuccessfully to get the leaks in her apartment fixed by public housing authorities by talking to anyone who would listen, even the media. The apartment was declared unsafe by Public Health officials and years later, while a suit was pending in court, water continued to leak into her apartment.

Such frustrating coping experiences are determinants of poor mental health and lead to a diminished capacity for coping, making one increasingly vulnerable to stress. It would seem natural that many of these women were depressed. Those who were depressed had difficulties parenting, as was described earlier. Depressed mothers generally knew that they weren't parenting well and worried about it. But prior experience had them convinced there was little they could do about it.

Pelton (1989) has continued to argue that poverty remains the single most prevalent characteristic of families who have been identified as abusive, and that the strong link between poverty and child abuse (which is highly correlated with parenting stress) has been overwhelmingly empirically validated. This fact is generally acknowledged in reviews of the literature on the etiology of child maltreatment (e.g., Belsky, 1993; Zuravin, 1989). An example of one study providing evidence for Pelton's claim is Whipple and Webster-Stratton's (1991) examination of a wide range of personal and contextual variables that discriminated abusive families from nonabusive families. They reported that, in the final predictive model, social position,

as measured by income and level of education, accounted for the greatest amount of variance.

Those who believe that external variables, particularly poverty, are the central cause of difficulties in parenting, argue that, with adequate financial resources and the availability of adequate formal and informal support, many of those people with personality characteristics that increase their vulnerability to stress can do quite an adequate job of parenting. The low rate of abuse in Sweden, with its social policies providing much more financial and social support for parenting than exists in the United States, supports this argument (Tietjen, 1981).

Parton, in The Politics of Child Abuse (1985), argues that "poverty modifies attitudes, personalities, and behaviors" and that depression, apathy, and a sense of helplessness naturally result from the struggle to survive during chronic financial stress (p. 171). This seems to accurately describe the experience of the women in the Stress and Families Project (Belle, 1982). It was also discovered in this project that the women who grew up in middle class homes, but were currently experiencing financial hardship, had a very different experience than those who grew up in lower class families. The former women had more resources and support from extended family, and regarded their condition as temporary, while the latter saw little hope for themselves or their children to ever know a different life. Women who grew up in poverty were more likely to experience poor mental health and greater objective and subjective stress. While this provides evidence of the intergenerational continuity of poverty, it also provides evidence of the positive effect of environmental support on maintaining mental health and mitigating stress, even in extremely disadvantaged current circumstances. The women who grew up in middle class homes and had more

support were able to maintain what the others had lost - a sense of hope and optimism about the future.

Regarding the role of support in a multivariate causal model, Garbarino (Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980) has argued that while poor psychological resources and financial hardship may be important contributing causes for abuse, abuse will not occur without the necessary condition of social isolation. It is social isolation, and its concomitant lack of nurturance and feedback, that allows a parent to lose control of violent impulses that may result from severe stress. It is ironic that those who most need support because they live under chronic stressful conditions of poverty, often live in places where it is least likely to be found, as was evidenced in the Garbarino and Sherman (1980) study of high-risk neighborhoods. While the residents of such neighborhoods may be involved in neighborhood networks where exchange of material goods and favors occurs, the members of these network are not "free from drain." Consequently, those exchanges do not really possess the quality of support because they deplete one's own scarce resources and add to one's already overwhelming burdens (Belle, 1982).

Garbarino notes that people living in such conditions, especially abusive parents, are less likely to reach out or utilize the services that might be available. This may be attributed to personal characteristics such as their internal working model of relationships. But, as was pointed out in the Stress and Families Project (Belle, 1982), people who are judged and blamed for their difficult circumstances, as those living in poverty often are, may find that the costs of reaching out for help far exceed the benefits. The woman who sought psychiatric help for her son only accomplished putting herself under excessive scrutiny due to her life circumstances while her son never received the help he needed.

One of the greatest fears for poor families, particularly single parents, and a hindrance to their reaching out for help, is having their children taken away because they cannot adequately care for them (Fuller & Stevenson, 1983, p. 171, as cited by Parton, 1985). Poor parents are very aware of society's expectations regarding family life, and the ability of parents to care for their children. When they are unable to meet those expectations they suffer humiliation, loss of self-respect, depression, anxiety, and perhaps feelings of paranoia. Adverse life circumstances and negative personal attributes reinforce each other and are connected in a self-perpetuating relationship of chronic stress (Parton, 1985). It is no wonder, when they finally come into contact with social services, that these parents' personal attributes and psychological resources stand out as deficient and are deemed to be the main causative factor for their difficulties.

Effective intervention programs for families at risk include elements of support related to internal and external resources. Emotional support in the form of a therapeutic relationship (such as "someone to talk to who really cares" in the Pharis & Levin study, 1991) may be important for overcoming the psychological effects of an adverse childhood and current adverse circumstances. Pianta, et al (1989) found that many of the mothers in the Mother-Child Interaction Project who never maltreated or stopped maltreating their children, had some kind of intervention that allowed them to reform their view of themselves and interpersonal relationships (via change in their internal working models). A number of these women eventually married and were no longer living in poverty. Such reports could be interpreted as indicating the greater importance of internal, psychological resources. A therapeutic relationship constitutes emotional support in the form of a confidant, and emotional support is important in

overcoming the effects of an adverse childhood and improving psychological resources.

But the importance of external resources cannot be overlooked or reduced. One of the strongest factors associated with the failure of short-term intensive family preservation programs, such as Homebuilders, is the presence of extreme poverty and concomitant depression (Dore, 1991). Even under the best of circumstances, parenting can be a challenging and stressful job. In a country where more working families' incomes are falling below the poverty level every day, while, at the same time, social service programs are being cut from national and state budgets, it is no wonder that many parents continue to find themselves overwhelmed with stress and vulnerable to being abusive to their children. Under such circumstances can we really expect the rates of child abuse, and the even more widespread experience of parenting stress, to be significantly reduced with interventions that target individual changes rather than systemic changes? While parents' internal resources may buffer the influence of a lack of external resources, too often adverse circumstances lead to a depletion of internal resources as well, especially when the adversity is intergenerational.

Support for families in Sweden include the provision of adequate financial, medical, and educational resources as well as formal support systems that facilitate the formation of informal support networks. Such extensive support for caregiving is associated with a much lower rate of abuse than is found in the United States, where support for parents is, in many cases, sorely lacking. With provision of the kind of support Sweden offers, families are rarely socially isolated, parents are likely to have well-stocked coping repertoires, and the intergenerational continuity of poverty, as well as abuse, is greatly diminished.

In the current cross-sectional study of mother of small children, the internal resources of parenting sense of competence and a healthy internal working model of caregiving were examined for their influence on parenting stress. The external resources of neighborhood characteristics and financial status, and the combined internal/external resource of perceived availability of social support were also examined. As has been verified in past research, each of these resources was expected to be associated with parenting stress. It was also believed that financial resources would play a central role in relationship to the other resources, moderating their effect on stress.

Hypotheses

Predictors of Stress

The following hypotheses about the nature of the relationship between the predictor variables and parenting stress are formulated based on the findings from previous research discussed in the review of the literature:

1. Higher levels of parenting sense of competence will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.
2. Greater parental attachment and a positive internal working model of caregiving will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.
3. Higher levels of perceived availability of social support will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.
4. A more positive view of neighborhood characteristics will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.
5. Adequate and high income will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.

6. Greater stability of income will be associated with lower levels of parenting stress.

Relationships Between the Variables

None of the variables examined in this study is likely to be independent of all of the others. They are commonly found to be interrelated in the literature. It is not always clear, however, what the relationship between the variables is. Analyses will be done to test the following hypotheses about the relationships between different resources and the relative influence each might have on parenting stress.

Unique Effects and Interactions Among the Internal Variables and Among the External Variables

Unique effects among internal variables. In the literature, each of the internal variables has been examined individually and been found to correlate with parenting stress and behavior. It might be surmised that each alone will explain a significant amount of the variance in parenting stress.

7. Parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving will each make a unique contribution to explaining the variance in parenting stress.

Interactions among internal variables. Since no studies have examined or reported an interaction between parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving, an exploratory analysis will be conducted to test the following hypotheses.

8. A. The effect of parenting sense of competence on parenting stress will depend on the adequacy of the resource internal working model of caregiving.

   or

B. The effect of the internal working model of caregiving on parenting stress will depend on the degree of parenting sense of competence reported.

The nature of the interaction is not predicted but, if significant, will also be explored.

Interaction of financial resource items. When stability of income is measured and examined in the literature, it is usually done in a sample of low income families. It seems logical to assume that stability and predictability of income will interact with income level in one of the following ways:

9. The effect of income stability and predictability on parenting stress will depend on income level such that for mothers with a low income, high stability will greatly reduce parenting stress whereas there will be little (A) or no (B) effect of stability on parenting stress for mothers with a high income.

This predicted interaction is displayed in Figure 2.

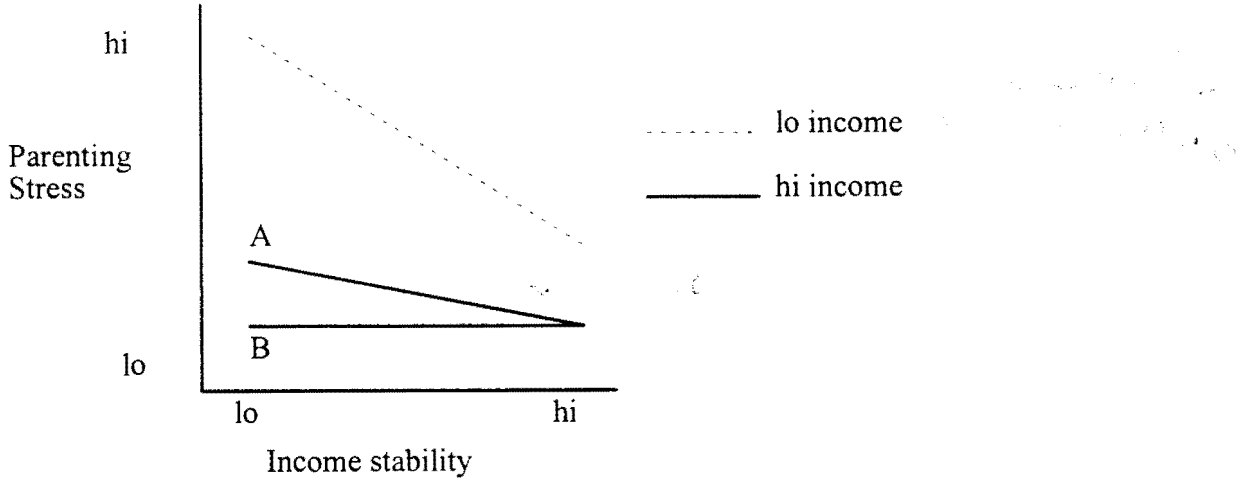

Figure 2. Predicted interaction between income and income stability.

Interaction between external variables. The effects of neighborhood characteristics are also examined in the literature in the context of a low income sample. Here, too, it is likely that these two external variables are highly related and interact in the following way:

10. Improving neighborhood characteristics will greatly reduce parenting stress when income is adequate/high, but have little or no effect when income is low.

This hypothesized interaction is displayed in Figure 3.

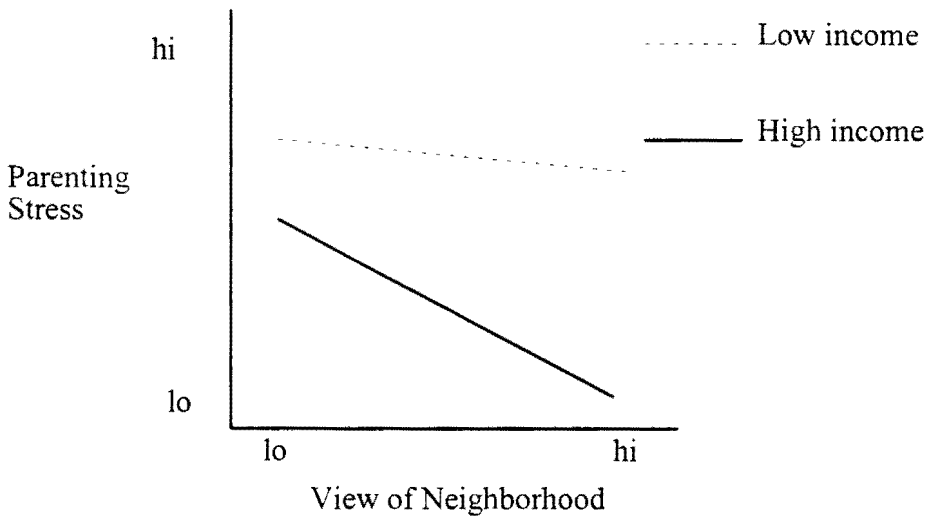

Figure 3. Predicted interaction between income and neighborhood characteristics.

Unique Effects of Internal Variables, External Variables, and Social Support

It is especially common to find studies which examine only internal variables, only external variables, or only social support. It might be surmised that each alone (internal resources, social support, or external resources) has a significant association with parenting stress over and above what is accounted for by the others, leading to the following hypotheses:

11. Internal resources will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of external resources and social support.
12. External resources will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of internal resources and social support.
13. Social support will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of internal resources and external resources.

Interactions Between Financial Resources and Other Resources

It is widely accepted and documented that parenting stress and behavior is determined by the interaction between a wide variety of variables. In particular, the influence of financial resources is pervasive and central. It is unclear, however, whether other resources will be more important, and thus have a greater effect on reducing parenting stress when financial resources are low, or whether they will only have an effect when financial resources are adequate/high. The latter may be the case if low financial resources override everything else and other resources are not able to compensate for the stress resulting from low financial resources.

14. The effect of parenting sense of competence on parenting stress will depend on the level of financial resources. If this interaction is significant, it may be that
    A. High parenting sense of competence will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or
    B. High parenting sense of competence will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are high, but will have no effect when financial resources are low.

15. The effect of internal working model of caregiving on parenting stress will depend on the level of financial resources. If this interaction is significant, it may be that
    A. High internal working model of caregiving resources will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or
    B. High internal working model of caregiving resources will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are high, but will have no effect when financial resources are low.
16. The effect of social support will depend on the level of financial resources. If this interaction is significant, it may be that
    A. High social support resources will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or
    B. High social support resources will greatly reduce parenting stress when financial resources are high, but have no effect when financial resources are low.

These hypothesized interactions are illustrated in Figure 4.

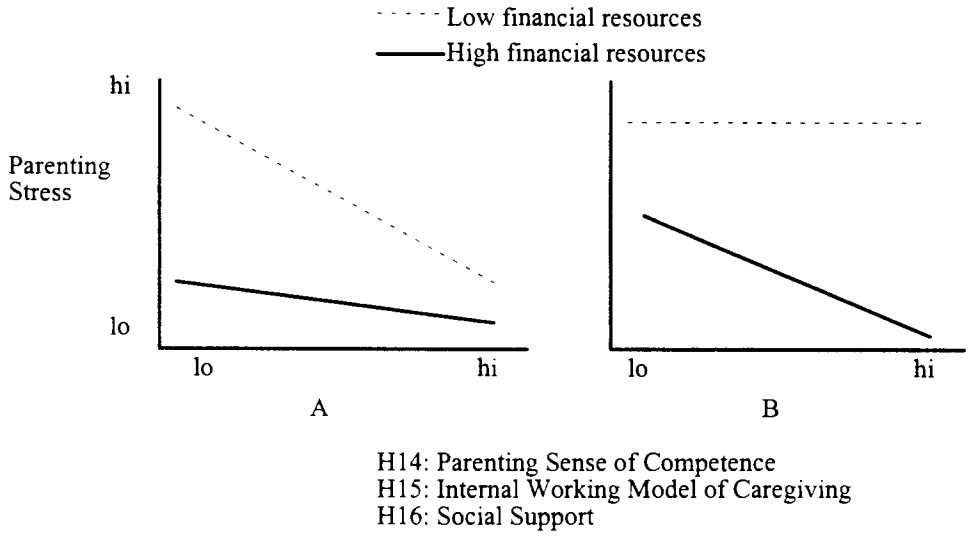

Figure 4. Predicted interaction between financial resources and 1) parenting sense of competence, 2) internal working model of caregiving, 3) social support.

Method

Participants

Participants were 58 mothers of at least one child aged five or under and were recruited through three public school kindergarten classes in Portland, Oregon and three Head Start Pre-schools in Beaverton, Oregon. Mothers ranged in age from 20 to 61 years, with a mean age of 31 years, and had one to six children, with a mean of 2.8 children. About half the mothers (53.4%) were married, and 60% were white. Forty-one percent were employed full time, 21% part time, and 38% were unemployed. The sample was primarily of low socioeconomic status. Income reported included income from sources other than wages. Sixty-two percent reported income sources that

included child support, welfare, or food stamps. Including all income sources, 50% reported a monthly family income under $1400. Only 5.2% reported having a two or four year college degree and 17.5% did not have a high school diploma or GED. Forty-five percent reported having some college, but no degrees, suggesting that perhaps they had started college but were unable to finish, or that they were currently attending.

Measures

Variables Measured.

Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire composed of 89 items measuring two internal resource variables (*parenting sense of competence,* and *internal working model of caregiving*), two external resource variables (*neighborhood characteristics,* and *financial resources.*), social support resources, and the criterion variable *parenting stress*. While not pertinent to this study, a measure of depression, to be used in later analyses, was also included on the questionnaire. Demographic information on age, marital status, level of education, employment status, occupation, income, income sources and stability, number and ages of children, and racial background was also collected.

Overview of Instruments

Selection of instruments. In deciding how to assess the constructs in the current study, numerous instruments were carefully scrutinized for conceptual clarity as well as appropriateness for application to the parenting domain. Consideration was especially given to the Parenting Stress Index (PSI; Abidin, 1995), which is probably

the most widely used instrument for assessing stress in the parent-child domain in clinical and research settings. This measure has 6 subscales examining stressors in the Child domain (Adaptability, Acceptability, Demandingness, Mood, Distractibility/Hyperactivity, and Reinforces Parent), 7 subscales examining stressors in the Parent domain (Depression, Attachment, Restrictions of Role, Sense of Competence, Social Isolation, Relationship with Spouse, and Parent Health), and a Life Stress Scale. In research, the PSI has most often been used as a measure of the criterion variable. In the current study, the criterion variable is restricted to the subjective experience of stress in parenting, so the complete PSI was not appropriate as a measure of stress.

Subscales in the Parenting domain of the PSI were examined for use as measures of predictors of stress. Only one of these subscales (Attachment) seemed useful and appropriate and was included on the questionnaire as a possible measure of *internal working model of caregiving*. All other scales came from other sources and are described below.

For most constructs one scale or subscale, which seemed the most conceptually clean and distinct from the other scales used, was chosen as a core measure. In some cases several additional items were created, or borrowed from other scales, to be used and included in the analyses only if they were needed to improve the internal consistency of the core scale.

Scaling of the instruments. The measures selected use a variety of response scales in their original forms, ranging from 3-points to 6-points. To simplify the

questionnaire format for this study, most measures were adjusted to a 6-point response scale. Most items on the questionnaire asked the respondent to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement (*1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-agree somewhat, 4-disagree somewhat, 5-disagree, 6-strongly disagree).* Neutral choices, such as *not sure*, were eliminated to achieve maximum meaningful differentiation in scoring. Because positive skewness was anticipated in the data, a 6-point scale was chosen over a 4-point scale in order to pick up more subtle differences in responses. For analyses, positively worded items were reverse coded so that a higher score on a scale always represented more of the resource it measured. In the scale measuring parents' perceptions of the seriousness of various neighborhood problems, items were reverse coded so that a higher score represented more of the resource (i.e., a good place for a family to live). For all scales, a total scale score was calculated by averaging item responses.

Psychometric properties of all scales and subscales used in the study were examined using Cronbach's Alpha. Internal consistency for all scales used in the analyses was acceptable, with all alphas above .80 except for the Neighborhood Parenting Support Scale which had an alpha of .72. All scales and subscales used in the study, with their original response scales, can be found in Appendix A along with their alphas. The entire questionnaire, with the adjusted response scales, can be found in Appendix B.

Criterion Variable

Parenting stress. The criterion variable in this study was the degree of a mother's subjective experience of stress and was measured with Pearlin & Schooler's (1978) Parental Stress Scale. This standardized scale asks, "When you think of your experiences as a parent, how _____do you feel? (1) frustrated, (2) tense, (3) worried, (4) bothered or upset, (5) unhappy, (6) emotionally worn out, (7) unsure of yourself." Two potential items were added - (8) overwhelmed and (9) stressed. Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they experience these feelings on a 6-point scale ranging from *1-Not at all* to *6-extremely*. Only the original 7items, which had an alpha of .90, were used in the analyses.

Internal Resources

Parenting Self-Esteem/Sense of Competence. The Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC; Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978) is a 17-item scale that was developed to assess parenting self-esteem. It consists of two subscales, Efficacy or Skill-Knowledge, and Satisfaction or Value-Comfort. Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman found that general self-esteem correlated with efficacy for mothers and satisfaction for fathers. For this reason, and also because the items on the Satisfaction subscale are closely related conceptually to items from the instrument used to measure Parental Attachment/Internal Working Model of Caregiving, only the 8-item Efficacy subscale of the PSOC was used for this study. Two items from Skinner's (1990) Parent Report of Social Context Questionnaire ("I wish I were more effective at parenting" and "I wish I were more competent at parenting") were also

included on the questionnaire. However, the alpha for the original, 8-item PSOC Efficacy subscale was quite high (.87) so the extra items were not included in the analyses. The original 6-point response scale ranging from *1-strongly agree* to *6-strongly disagree* was retained for the current study.

Internal Working Model/Parental Attachment. Research on the internal working model of caregiving as an internal parenting resource is in its early stages. Most measures of this construct have been in the form of observations and extensive, open-ended interviews, which was not possible for this study. It was originally planned to measure this construct using the 7-item Parental Attachment subscale of the PSI (Abidin, 1995). However, low correlations between the items and a low alpha (.65) led to closer examination and consideration of five additional items from Skinner's Parent Report of Social Context Scale (1990) which had been included on the questionnaire. They include two items under the construct of Parent's Psychological Need for Relatedness (e.g. "I wish I was closer to my child), and three items assessing the construct of Attunement as an aspect of Parental Involvement (e.g. "I really know how my child feels about things"). Analysis showed these five items to be highly related with each other and, as an aggregated scale, they produced an alpha of .81. The items also seemed cleaner conceptually than the PSI Attachment scale. It was thus decided that this five-item Attunement/Relatedness scale provided a more reliable and accurate measure of *internal working model of caregiving* than the PSI Attachment scale. It was subsequently used in all analyses testing the hypotheses.

Social Support

Social support in this study was operationalized as *perceived available social support* and was measured by the Social Provisions Scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984). The Social Provisions Scale consists of 6 subscales, or factors, modeled after Weiss's (1984) widely recognized conceptualization of the functions of social relationships. These functions, or provisions, of social relationships as described by Cutrona (1984) are:

> (a) *attachment*, provided by intimate relationships where the person receives a sense of security and safety; (b) *social integration*, provided by a network of relationships in which individuals share common interests and concerns; (c) *opportunity for nurturance*, derived from relationships where the person is responsible for the well-being of another; (d) *reassurance of worth*, provided by relationships where the person's skills and abilities are acknowledged and valued; (e) *reliable alliance*, derived from relationships where the person can count on others for assistance under any circumstances; and (f) *guidance*, provided by relationships with trustworthy and authoritative individuals who can provide advice. (p. 379)

The instrument asks respondents to indicate the degree to which they agree that each provision is supplied by their current relationships on a 6-point scale (*1-strongly agree* to *6-strongly disagree*). Each provision/subscale is assessed with two positively worded items and two negatively worded items. After recoding, high scores on this measure indicated a high degree of perceived social support.

The Recognition of Worth, Reliable Alliance, and Guidance subscales were adapted to be specific to the parenting domain in the following manner: 1) In the Reliable Alliance and Guidance subscales, the words "When it comes to parenting" were inserted in front of the original items (e.g., "When it comes to parenting, there is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I were having a problem"). 2) In the Recognition of Worth subscale, the statements were adapted by inserting the words "in parenting" or "as a parent" in the original statement (e.g., "I have relationships where my competence and skill 'as a parent' are recognized"). The Attachment and Social Integration subscales were used in their original form since they could not be adapted to be specific to the parenting domain.

In light of the fact that all respondents in this study were parents, the Opportunity for Nurturance subscale seemed irrelevant and perhaps even inappropriate. The feeling of being needed by others was considered by Weiss to be an important provision in one's relationships with others. However, all parents are needed by their children, and dependence of others besides their children, may seem to some, who are depleted in resources, as an additional stressor. This was the case for low-income mothers in a study by Belle (1982). For this reason the Opportunity for Nurturance subscale was not included in the measure of social support in this study.

Four additional items related to the subscale constructs had been created by the researcher and were included on the questionnaire. These, however, were not included in the analyses because the alphas for each of the 4-item subscales were all .70 or

higher. In the analyses *social support* was represented by an average of the scores for the 20 items in the overall scale, which produced an alpha of .92.

External Resources

Neighborhood characteristics. Resources from neighborhood characteristics for parenting were operationalized as perceptions of the degree of neighborhood problems and of neighborhood support for parenting. Parents' perceptions of the seriousness of certain problems in their neighborhoods were measured with the Neighborhood Problems Scale. This scale asked respondents to assess how serious they felt certain problems, such as "high unemployment," "assaults and muggings," or "drug use or drug dealing" were in the neighborhood in which their family lived. Respondents indicated their perception of the seriousness of a particular problem in their neighborhood on a 4-point scale (*not a problem, small problem, medium problem, big problem*). For analyses this scale was reverse coded so that a higher score indicated a neighborhood that was low in problems, thus providing a more positive environment for parenting. Although the number of items has varied with different studies, the form of the Neighborhood Problems Scale used in this study consisted of 23 items which had an alpha of .93.

Six items from Deccio, Horner, and Wilson's (1994) Neighborhood Parenting and Family Support Scale were also included on the questionnaire. These items assessed a mother's feelings about her neighborhood overall as a place to raise a family (e.g., "This neighborhood is a good place to bring up a child"). Respondents expressed their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements on a 4-point

scale (*1-strongly agree* to *4-strongly disagree*). Responses were coded for this resource so that higher scores indicated more positive feelings about the neighborhood as a place for families to live. The six items produced an alpha of .63. Psychometric data suggested that removing two of the items would raise the alpha. When these were removed the alpha rose to .72 . Thus, the remaining four items were retained as a measure of subjects' perception of *neighborhood parenting support.*

Financial resources. Respondents were asked to report the amount of income their family had received in the previous month from all sources, including welfare, child support, food stamps, etc. They were also asked to rate how predictable and stable they felt their income had been in the last six months on a 6-point scale ranging from *1-not at all predictable and stable* to *6-very predictable and stable.* Information about level of education completed and occupation were also collected so that they could be used to assess socioeconomic status if information on income was missing. As it turned out, only one participant failed to report family income.

Procedure

Three elementary schools in the Portland School District, with a high percentage of low income families, were targeted for recruitment, as well as three Head Start Pre-schools in the Beaverton School District. Permission was sought and granted from the principals and Head Start directors to send the questionnaire, a cover letter, and a business reply envelope home in manila envelopes with all students in the Head Start schools and with all kindergarten students in the elementary schools.

The cover letter informed the parents about the general purpose of the study and invited them to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher by placing it in the business reply envelope and mailing it. Since no identifying information was requested on the questionnaire all participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. The packet sent home with the students also contained a ticket stub that mothers could fill out and return with the completed questionnaire. The cover letter informed them that this would automatically enter them in a lottery drawing for a first prize of a $50 gift certificate from Fred Meyer's, and second and third prizes of $25 and $10 gift certificates. They were also assured that, although the lottery ticket contained identifying information, it would be immediately separated from the questionnaire when the envelope was opened and would not be connected to their responses. A date five weeks from the initial distribution of questionnaires was set for the lottery drawing.

Three hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed and, after three weeks, reminders to fill out the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible were also distributed. Fifty-eight questionnaires were completed and returned by mail, resulting in a response rate of 16.7%. The lottery drawing was held as scheduled and the gift certificates were distributed to the winners.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Assessment of Scales for Meeting Criteria for Assumptions of Normality in Multivariate Models

Means, standard deviations, possible range, and actual range for all of the measures of predictor variables and the criterion variable can be found in Table 1. As expected, several of the scales showed mild ceiling effects (Attunement/Relatedness, Neighborhood Problems, Social Provisions, and Neighborhood Parenting Support), but none produced scores higher than the highest possible value when the standard deviation was added to the mean. Nevertheless, means on the higher end of the range for these scales indicate that overall this sample reported a fairly high availability of resources for parenting from their internal working models, social support networks, and the neighborhoods in which they lived. Although not as high as the previously mentioned scales, the mean for Parenting Sense of Competence also falls above mid-range, indicating a relatively high availability of this resource in this sample. The mean for Parenting Stress falls exactly at mid-range, indicating that on average, this sample of mothers experienced a moderate degree of stress in their parenting role. Finally, the mean income is well below the middle of the range represented in this sample, indicating that most family incomes fell on the lower end of the range. On the other hand, the mean for income stability is above mid-range, and the median (5.0) and the mode (6.0) for this scale further indicate that most family incomes were fairly stable.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, Possible Range, and Actual Range of Scales and Subscales

Scale	M	SD	Possible Range	Actual Range
Parenting Stress	3.03	0.90	1 – 5	1.14 – 4.71
Parenting Sense of Competence	4.12	0.98	1 – 6	1.71 – 6.00
Attunement/Relatedness	4.50	1.06	1 – 6	2.40 – 6.00
Absence of Neighborhood Problems	3.23	0.57	1 – 4	1.83 – 4.00
Neighborhood Parenting Support	2.98	0.70	1 – 4	1.25 – 4.00
Social Provisions Scale	4.51	0.98	1 – 6	2.30 – 6.00
Total Monthly Family Income	$1588	$892	-	$400–$5000
Income Stability	4.36	1.58	1 – 6	1 – 6

N = 58

Distribution of scores on each of the scales was assessed to determine if assumptions of normality were met. Assessment included computing and noting the size of the skewness and kurtosis statistics, examining the distribution on a histogram, and examining Normal and Detrended Normal P-P Plots. Attempts to improve normality through transformations (natural log, square root, and the inverse) were conducted on the Attunement/Relatedness scale, the Neighborhood Problems Scale, the Neighborhood Parenting Support Scale, the income stability scale and on income

distribution. None of the transformations improved normality indicators for the distributions of Attunement/Relatedness (skewness = -.240, kurtosis = -1.075), Neighborhood Problems (skewness = -.590, kurtosis = -.390), or income stability (skewness = -.624, kurtosis = -.764). However, for these scales, the transformation was attempted primarily in order to improve the appearance of the histograms and the P-P Plots. The transformations did not produce the desired results and, as indicated by the skewness and kurtosis values, deviation from normality was not severe, so these scales were retained and used in their original forms. Reflection (subtracting scale scores from the highest possible score on the scale plus one) and a natural log transformation of the Neighborhood Parenting Scale improved the appearance of the histogram and reduced skewness on this scale from -.804 to -.014. Kurtosis remained around .25. A natural log transformation reduced the skewness (from 1.6 to .19) and kurtosis (from 3.27 to -.11) of the income distribution and also improved the appearance of the histogram and the P-P Plots for this variable. These transformed measures of neighborhood support and of family income were used in all subsequent analyses.

Bivariate Correlations

H1–6 predicted a negative association between each of the predictor variables and parenting stress. Correlations between the predictors, several demographic variables, and parenting stress were calculated and are reported in Table 2. Income stability, neighborhood problems and neighborhood support were not significantly correlated with stress. Thus, H4 and H6 were not supported. Parenting sense of

Table 2

Correlations Among the Scales and the Demographic Variables

Scale or demographic variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Parenting stress	-										
2. Parenting sense of competence	-.50**	-									
3. Internal working model	-.43**	.50**	-								
4. Social support	-.41**	.33*	.36**	-							
5. Income	-.46**	.28*	.13	.13	-						
6. Income stability	-.19	.17	.07	.31*	.38**	-					
7. Lack of neighborhood problems	-.17	.24	.17	.12	.16	.00	-				
8. Neighborhood support	.11	-.34**	-.33**	-.14	-.14	.05	.48**	-			
9. Number of children	.19	.05	-.17	-.19	.00	-.16	-.02	.02	-		
10. Marital status	-.33*	.19	.09	.21	.39**	.01	.08	-.08	.10	-	
11. Full-time employment	.29*	.00	-.05	-.36**	.07	-.14	.19	-.18	.02	-.06	-
12. Part-time employment	-.09	.01	.19	.24	.11	-.12	-.16	-.07	.05	.14	-.43**

Note: Employment status was dummy coded with unemployed as the control. Income was subjected to natural log transformation and neighborhood support to reflection and natural log transformation. Marital status was dummy coded with 1 representing "married" and 0 representing "unmarried." *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

competence, internal working model, social support, and income were negatively correlated with stress ($p < .001$), supporting H1–3 and H5.

While not formally predicted, it was expected, from past research in which multiple variables tend to come together to play a role in determining parenting quality, that the resources would be correlated with each other. A few such correlations were found. Parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving were correlated ($r = .50$, $p < .01$) as were neighborhood problems and neighborhood support ($r = .48$, $p < .01$). Neighborhood support was negatively correlated with parenting sense of competence ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) and internal working model of caregiving ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). Income was positively correlated with income stability ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) and parenting sense of competence ($r = .28$, $p < .05$) but, surprisingly, was not correlated with any of the other resource measures. Social support was positively correlated with parenting sense of competence ($r = .33$, $p < .05$), internal working model of caregiving ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), and income stability ($r = .31$, $p < .05$).

Bivariate correlations between demographic variables and parenting stress were also examined in order to determine which should be used as control variables. Although "number of children" was not significantly correlated with stress, it was decided that the effects of this variable would be removed in subsequent analyses because a wide body of evidence supports its effect on parenting stress. It would also help to control for family size when examining the effects of family income.

Marital status, which was dummy coded with 0 representing "unmarried" and 1 representing "married," was negatively correlated with parenting stress ($r = -.33$, $p < .05$). However, it was also highly correlated with income ($r = .39$, $p < .01$). In a regression model with marital status and income as predictors of parenting stress, income retained significance as a unique predictor of stress ($p < .01$), while marital status did not ($p = .08$). Due to this evidence of overlap between income and marital status it was decided that marital status would not be included in subsequent analyses as a control variable.

Employment status, a three-category variable, was recoded into two dummy variables, with one of the dummy variables representing full-time employment, the other representing part-time employment, and unemployment being the comparison group in regression models. The two dummy variables were used in all subsequent analyses.

Examination of the correlation of these dummy variables with stress revealed that mothers employed full-time were significantly more stressed than mothers employed part time or unemployed ($r = .29$. $p < .05$). Part-time employment, as compared to full-time employment and unemployment, was not correlated with parenting stress. Surprisingly, employment status was not correlated with income, perhaps due to the fact that most people in the sample population worked in low income jobs and income from sources other than wages were included in total family income.

Employment status was correlated with social support, however, such that the full-time employed had significantly less social support than the unemployed and part-time employed ($r = -.36$, $p < .01$). The correlation of part-time employment, as compared to full-time employment and unemployment, to social support was borderline ($r = .24$, $p = .08$). To determine whether or not to control for employment status in subsequent analyses, a hierarchical regression was run in which social support was entered on the first step and the dummy variables for employment status were entered on the second step. Employment status did not explain a significant amount of variance when it was added to the model ($R^2\Delta = .028$, $F\Delta = .95$, $p = .40$). In the full model, neither the coefficient of full-time employment (Beta = .194, $p = .176$) nor of part-time employment (Beta = .082, $p = .547$) was significant, indicating no difference between each of these employment statuses and being unemployed in predicting parenting stress. Social support remained a significant predictor of stress in the full model (Beta = -.358, $p < .01$). Employment status was thus not used as a control variable in subsequent analyses.

Tests of Unique Effects and Interactions Among the Resource Variables

Unique effects among internal variables. Although, as expected, internal working model and parenting sense of competence were highly correlated with each other and with stress, they were believed to be distinct constructs, which led to the formation of Hypothesis 7.

H7. Parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving will each make a unique contribution to explaining the variance in parenting stress.

To test this hypothesis, a regression analysis was conducted and the coefficients examined. The overall model was significant (R^2 = .296, F = 11.58, p < .001) but the hypothesis was not supported. The coefficient of internal working model fell just below significance (Beta = -.240, p = .072) while the coefficient of parenting sense of competence remained significant (Beta = -.382, p < .005). Multicollinearity was also evidenced by the size of the partial correlations (-.240 and -.367) in comparison to the zero-order correlations (-.432 and -.503). This evidence of overlap between the two variables, along with the lack of a significant interaction between them (see below), led to the decision to aggregate them into a single measure of *internal resources for parenting*. Aggregation was achieved by taking the mean of the two scale scores, with each scale score being the average of its item scores. This method of aggregation gave equal weight to both scales.

Interactions among internal resource variables.

H8. A. The effect of parenting sense of competence on parenting stress will depend on the adequacy of the resource internal working model of caregiving, or

B. The effect of the internal working model of caregiving on parenting stress will depend on the degree of parenting sense of competence reported.

The possibility of this interaction was explored using Aiken and West's (1991) method for testing interactions in multiple regression with continuous variables. Following this method, the variables were first centered by subtracting individuals'

scores on each scale from the scale's mean. The interaction variable was then computed using these centered variables to control for multicollinearity. Subsequently, the centered variables and the interaction variable were entered into a regression model predicting parenting stress. The results of the regression are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Regression Coefficients for Test of Interaction between Parenting Sense of Competence and Internal Working Model of Caregiving in Predicting Parenting Stress

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Parenting Sense of Competence	-.351	-.382	-2.92	.005
Internal Working Model	-.205	-.240	-1.83	.066
Interaction	-.062	-.071	-.62	.540
(Constant)	3.060			

$R^2 = .301$, Adjusted $R^2 = .262$, $p < .001$ $N = 57$

Since the full model accounted for a significant amount of variance in stress ($R^2 = .301$, $p < .001$), the coefficient of the interaction variable was examined to determine if it was a significant predictor. As can be seen, the interaction was not significant. Therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 4

Regression Coefficients for Test of Interaction between Income and Income Stability in Predicting Parenting Stress

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Number of children	.143	.165	1.34	.186
Income	-.774	-.450	-3.45	.001
Income Stability	-.024	-.043	-.31	.759
Interaction	-.053	-.052	-.41	.685
(Constant)	2.670			

R^2 = .245, Adjusted R^2 = .187, $p < .01$ $N = 56$

Note: Income was transformed using the natural log.

Interaction of financial resource items. Although income stability was not significantly correlated with stress, it was significantly correlated with income level. In addition, the following hypothesis of an interaction between these variables had been made:

H9. The effect of income stability and predictability on parenting stress will depend on income level such that, for mothers with a low income, high stability will greatly reduce parenting stress whereas there will be little or no effect of stability on parenting stress for mothers with a high income.

Again, Aiken and West's (1991) method for testing interactions was used and the hypothesis was not supported. Results are reported in Table 4. Due to the lack of a significant interaction between the two financial resource items, and because income

stability was not correlated with parenting stress, it was decided that financial resources would be represented by family income level alone in all subsequent analyses.

Interaction between external resource variables.

H10. Improving neighborhood characteristics will greatly reduce parenting stress when income is adequate/high, but have little or no effect when income is low.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients for Test of Interaction between Income and Neighborhood Problems in Predicting Parenting Stress

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Number of children	.156	.180	1.49	.142
Income	-.770	-.448	-3.69	.001
Neighborhood problems	-.122	-.078	-.64	.524
Interaction	-.151	-.058	-.48	.633
(Constant)	2.625			

R^2 = .250, Adjusted R^2 = .193, $p < .01$ $N = 56$

Note: Income was transformed using the natural log.

The Neighborhood Problems scale and the transformed Neighborhood Support scale and income variable were centered and used in a regression test for interactions between income and each of the neighborhood scales. Neither of the interactions was significant and, thus, the hypotheses were not supported. Results are reported in

Tables 5 and 6. The lack of significant interactions, plus the fact that neither of the neighborhood measures was a significant predictor of stress, led to the decision to use family income as the sole external resource variable in all subsequent analyses.

Table 6

Regression Coefficients for Test of Interaction between Income and Neighborhood Support in Predicting Parenting Stress

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Number of children	.153	.176	1.48	.146
Income	-.795	-.462	-3.83	.000
Neighborhood support	.122	.055	.45	.653
Interaction	-.661	-.129	-1.06	.293
(Constant)	2.610			

R^2 = .259, Adjusted R^2 = .202, $p < .01$ $N = 56$

Note: Income was transformed using the natural log and neighborhood support was transformed by reflection and the natural log.

Exploration of relationship between social support and internal working model of caregiving. Because of the high correlation between social support and internal working model of caregiving, this relationship was further explored. A regression model, with both variables predicting stress, was run. The model was significant (R^2 = .26, F = 5.43, $p < .05$) as were the coefficients of both social support (Beta = .290, $p < .05$) and internal working model (Beta = -.328, $p < .05$) indicating

that each contributed uniquely to explaining the variance in parenting stress. A regression test for a possible interaction between these variables indicated that they did not interact in predicting stress (Beta = .005, p = .966).

Table 7

Hierarchical Regression Results Testing for Unique Effects of Internal Resources, Income, and Social Support on Parenting Stress

Step/Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	$R^2\Delta$	FΔ
Unique effects of internal resources:					
1. Number of children Social Support Income	.373	.337	10.50**		
2. Internal resources	.496	.457	12.77**	.123	12.65**
Unique effects of income:					
1. Number of children Internal resources Social support	.387	.352	11.15**		
2. Income	.496	.457	12.77**	.109	11.21**
Unique effects of social support:					
1. Number of children Internal resources Income	.453	.422	14.63**		
2. Social Support	.496	.457	12.77**	.043	4.39*

N = 56 *p < .05 **p < .01

Unique Effects of Internal Resources, External Resources and Social Support

H11. Internal resources will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of external resources and social support.

H12. External resources will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of internal resources and social support.

H13. Social support will have an effect on parenting stress over and above the effect of internal resources and external resources.

These hypotheses were tested with 3 separate hierarchical regressions in which number of children and the other two resources, whose effects were being removed, were entered in the first block, and the resource whose unique effects were being assessed was entered in the second block. The $R^2\Delta$ was significant for each of the tests, supporting all three hypotheses, and can be found in Table 7. Coefficients of

Table 8

Regression Coefficients for Full Model of Resources Predicting Parenting Stress

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Number of children	.081	.094	.93	.173
Internal Resources	-.386	-.389	-3.56	.001
Social Support	-.206	-.229	-2.10	.041
Income	-.584	-.340	-3.35	.002
(Constant)	9.65			

Note: Income was transformed through the natural log. N = 56

each variable in the full model are reported in Table 8. Results indicate that internal resources were most important for predicting stress in this model, followed closely by income, and then by social support.

Interactions Between Financial Resources and Other Resources

H14. The effect of parenting sense of competence on parenting stress will depend on the level of financial resources. It may be that either

A. High parenting sense of competence will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or

B. High parenting sense of competence will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are high, but have no effect when financial resources are low.

H15. The effect of the internal working model of caregiving on parenting stress will depend on the level of financial resources. It may be that either

A. High internal working model of caregiving resources will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or

B. High internal working model of caregiving resources will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are high, but will have no effect when financial resources are low.

H16. The effect of social support on parenting stress will depend on the level of financial resources. It may be that either

A. *High social support will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are low, but will have little effect when financial resources are high, or*

B. *High social support will greatly reduce stress when financial resources are high, but will have no effect when financial resources are low.*

Table 9

Regression Coefficients for Tests of Interaction between Internal Resources and Income and of Interaction between Social Support and Income

Variable	B	Beta	t	p
Internal resources and income:				
Number of children	.100	.115	1.12	.270
Internal resources	-.463	-.467	-4.45	.000
Income	-.627	-.365	-3.47	.001
Interaction variable	-.212	-.110	-1.05	.297
(Constant)	2.799			
Social support and income:				
Number of children	.086	.099	.911	.367
Social support	-.336	-.373	-3.40	.001
Income	-.687	-.400	-3.72	.000
Interaction variable	-.352	-.194	-1.82	.075
(Constant)	2.843			

Note: Income is transformed through reflection and natural log. Income, internal resources, and social support were centered before being entered into the model and before computing the interaction variables. N = 56

Discussion

This study attempted to determine the influence that the availability of different resources for parenting had on the amount of parenting stress experienced by mothers of young children. Internal resources for parenting (parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving), perceived available social support, and external resources (income level and stability and neighborhood characteristics) were assessed as predictors of parenting stress. In this sample, mothers who reported a high sense of competence, more positive internal working models of caregiving, more perceived available social support, and higher family income levels also reported less parenting stress. Income stability and neighborhood characteristics were not related to stress in this study.

The availability of internal resources, social support resources, and income each had an independent effect on the level of stress mothers experienced over and above the effect of the availability of the other resources. So, for example, mothers with limited internal resources experienced a higher level of stress than mothers with more internal resources no matter what their level of family income and social support. At the same time, a deficiency in either income or social support would significantly increase a mother's level of stress over and above the increase associated with deficient internal resources.

Several hypotheses about the interaction of the internal resources, and of social support, with financial resources in predicting stress were tested. To determine which

variables should be included in these analyses, interrelationships between the predictors were examined. The internal resources, parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving were highly related to each other and had a moderate degree of common overlap in predicting stress. They were thus aggregated into a single "*internal resources*" variable. With regard to the external resources, income was not related to neighborhood characteristics and neighborhood characteristics were not related to stress no matter what the level of income. Mothers with low incomes were also more likely to report unstable incomes. However, income stability did not predict stress, no matter what the level of income.

It was therefore hypothesized that the effect of "*internal resources*" and of social support on stress would be moderated by income alone. For this sample, however, the effect of internal resources on parenting stress did not depend on income level. Neither did the effect of social support on parenting stress depend on income level, although the results of this last analysis were borderline and suggestive and will be discussed in the interpretation of the results.

Limitations of the study

Before the results, as summarized above, can be interpreted, the limitations of the study, and their effects, must be considered. The low return rate of 16.7% is the most obvious limitation, leading to a small sample size with concomitant lack of statistical power, and indicating the presence of a strong self-selection bias. Compounding the effect of a small sample size was the experimentwise error rate associated with the small sample size and the large number of analyses that were

performed. With each analysis the likelihood of Type I error, or finding a significant result that is simply due to chance, increases. Reducing the alpha to decrease the possibility of Type I error, however, may raise the likelihood of Type II error, or failing to find a significant relationship that exists, to unacceptable levels, especially with the concomitant lack of power associated with the relatively small sample size. The lack of power and the problems with the error rate warrant accepting the results of the study, particularly those results that are less robust, as unstable and any conclusions that are drawn must be considered as tentative until replication with a larger sample is completed.

The recruitment technique and length and complexity of the questionnaire likely resulted in a biased sample. Invitations to participate (including the questionnaires) were widely, and fairly randomly distributed to a predominantly low income population of mothers through the caregivers or teachers of their young children. Mothers would have had to have been "psychologically available" and to have possessed a high degree of interest in the research topic to have been motivated to even examine the materials. In addition, they would have had to have a fair amount of personal initiative to take the time to complete the questionnaire. It seems logical to assume that mothers experiencing severe deficiencies in resources and high levels of stress wouldn't have been "available," nor possessed such interest or motivation. This could account for the mild ceiling effects and positive skewness in the distribution of scores for internal resources, social support, and neighborhood

characteristics. Most of the mothers completing the questionnaire had high availability of these resources or only mild deficiencies.

The length and complex wording of the questionnaire also made it difficult for respondents with a low level of education to fill out. It could be surmised, then, that those who were motivated enough to fill out the questionnaire, because they could do so with a minimal amount of effort, would be fairly high functioning in terms of education and intelligence. This is evidenced in the fact that 45% of the sample had some college education and another 5% had two or four year college degrees. These self-selection biases limit the generalizability of the results.

A social desirability bias may also have accounted for some of the positively skewed scales. Although participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality, returning the lottery ticket in the same envelope with the questionnaire may have counteracted that assurance somewhat. The respondent had to trust that the ticket, which contained their name, address, and/or phone number, would be taken from the envelope and separated from the questionnaire immediately after it was opened without being identified with their responses. People who have lived under the stressful conditions of chronic poverty, or had difficulties in parenting, tend to be sensitive to scrutiny and judgment from others, particularly those of a higher class, and so would be less likely to have such trust.

Most participants also fell within a narrow income range towards the low end of the income range of the sample. This may be the result of targeting a predominantly low income population. Those with the lowest incomes in the

population were likely too stressed to be able to fill out the questionnaire. This was, therefore, a relatively small sample of low income mothers who were fairly high functioning in terms of intelligence and accessing resources. The limited variance of such a sample contributes to making the results unstable.

Limitations related to measurement exist as well, specifically in the instruments used to measure internal resources, social support, and parenting stress, and in the use of self-report. The exclusive use of self-report from a single respondent limits the conclusions that can be drawn about the relationships between these variables. Only conclusions about mothers' perceptions of those resources and their subjective experience of stress related to those perceptions would be valid. It would be helpful, in designing support programs, to know how a parent's perception of and orientation towards their support network matches up with more objective measures of that network's characteristics, such as size, proximity, density, or number of support enactments. People's perceptions of the same environment can vary widely. Nevertheless, people's perceptions of their support system can be valuable because perception greatly affects behavior and experience. Research has shown that maltreating mothers, for instance, while more in need of support, are less willing and able to see and make use of social support in their neighborhoods than others living in the same neighborhood are (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1995).

Interpretation of results regarding the relationship between internal resources and stress may also be based on incomplete information. A mother may report low confidence in her parenting skills and a poor relationship with her child due to child

characteristics more than a lack of internal resources. The behavior problems associated with a child with ADHD, for instance, can erode a parent's sense of confidence and make a harmonious relationship with the child difficult. Parents with such a child may also report high levels of stress, due to child characteristics more than any lack of resources.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of the study makes it impossible to make any assumptions or statements about causality or direction of association. As was mentioned earlier, it is likely that many of the relationships between the variables are reciprocal, but only a longitudinal design could establish this. As stress decreases does a mother's sense of confidence in her parenting skill increase? Or as a mother's sense of confidence increases because she learns more effective parenting skills, does her parenting stress decrease? Both of these seem possible and logical and collection of data at numerous time points could unravel such relationships. The relationship between support and stress seems likely to be reciprocal as well and could be more thoroughly informed by a longitudinal design. By collecting data at more than one time point, it can be determined whether, for instance, when perception of support increases from Time 1 to Time 2, stress decreases at time 3. Or, perhaps if stress is high at time 1 and also at time 2, support may decline at time 2 and time 3, indicating either the erosion of one's network, or increased need, and thus, increased dissatisfaction with one's current support.

Interpretation of Results

Relationship between resources and stress. For those interested in how to support parents in this society this study provides information about which mothers of young children are stressed out and how certain resources are related to levels of stress. Mothers who reported high levels of parenting stress also reported a lack of confidence in their parenting skills, poor understanding of and the desire for a closer relationship with their children, low family incomes, and few or no people they could turn to for advice, material aid, social interests, and emotional nurturance. The relationship of each of these resources with stress was quite robust, with p's $< .001$. Even with the lack of power and limited variance associated with this sample, each increment in these resources seems to matter with regard to the amount of stress such mothers experience.

Unique effects of each resource type. Even more revelatory about the importance of each kind of resource (internal, social support, and external as represented by income) is the finding of unique effects. The effects of the different resources are additive. Having one kind of resource does not compensate for a lack in another kind of resource. Mothers with adequate incomes and good support systems for parenting will still experience a significant amount of parenting stress if they lack confidence in their parenting skills. Mothers with confidence in their parenting skills and a good support system will still experience a significant amount of parenting stress if they don't have enough money. Mothers with enough money and confidence in their parenting skills will still experience a significant amount of parenting stress if

they don't have people who can assist them with parenting responsibilities and provide them with emotional and esteem support. A mother lacking in two or three of these resources will experience significantly more parenting stress than a mother lacking only one. The finding of unique effects speaks to the importance of developing comprehensive family support programs with a wide array of services that may be tailored to individual needs.

Relationships between resources. Access to resources tends to be generalized rather than restricted to a single type. Income, in particular, is often associated with impoverishment of other resources within the social context. While availability of some of the resources examined in this study seemed to be related, others did not. For instance, a sense of confidence in parenting, a good relationship with and understanding of one's children's needs, and a perception of having adequate support were inter-related. Mothers who had one of these resources tended to have the other two as well. Considering that each of these resources had to do with the quality of one's relationships with other people, it makes sense that they hung together. The relationship between parenting sense of competence and internal working model of caregiving was particularly robust ($p < .001$), which seems logical given that they may both be considered a part of the self-system.

The relationship between social support and the internal working model of caregiving is of particular interest in the light of recent discussions in the social support literature. In debates over the usefulness and interpretation of effects of various conceptualizations of social support, some have argued that perceived social

support, which is how support was conceptualized in this study, is really just an extension of one's cognitive model of relationships (Sarason, et al, 1987). The strong correlation between social support and internal working model of caregiving in this study might provide some support for this theory. However, the fact that perceptions of the degree of social support provided unique effects over and above those of internal working model suggests that it is different conceptually. It must be remembered, though, that internal working model in this study was specifically operationalized in relationship to caregiving. A more global operationalization of internal working model may have more overlap with perceived social support.

It was surprising that income was not related to more of the other resources. It was found that a mother with low income also tended to have an unstable income and to lack confidence in her parenting skills. Income, on the other hand, was not related to the severity of problems in a neighborhood nor to a mother's sense of feeling supported in her parenting role by the neighborhood. Neither was the amount of social support a mother perceived related to how she perceived her neighborhood. These findings might be explained by the lack of variance noted in the limitations. This was a sample of mothers whose incomes fell within a narrow range of low income who, for the most part, viewed their neighborhoods positively. Based on their responses, these mothers did not live in deteriorating, high crime neighborhoods where, perhaps, families with even lower incomes than the average income of this sample often live. Past research has shown that it is families with very low incomes and who also live in deteriorating neighborhoods, who tend to be socially isolated (Garbarino & Sherman,

1980) or to feel they don't have adequate emotional or instrumental support (Belle, 1992).

Interactions between resources. None of the five interactions tested in this study was found to be significant. One of the interactions explored the relationship between parenting competence and internal working model of caregiving. Neither variable's effect on parenting stress was moderated by the level of availability of the other. Mothers reporting a sense of confidence in their parenting skills and knowledge reported low levels of stress no matter how little or how well they understood their children or how close they felt to them. Likewise, mothers who felt close to their children and believed that they understood them reported low levels of stress no matter how much confidence they had in their parenting skills. It must be remembered, however, that most of the mothers in this sample had a fair or good sense of confidence in their parenting skills and most felt they understood their children fairly well and felt relatively close to them.

The other four interactions predicted that mothers' level of income would moderate the effect of income stability, neighborhood characteristics, internal resources, and social support on mothers' levels of parenting stress. The narrow range of income level in this sample, as well as the adequacy or presence of only mild deficiencies in the other resources, along with the relatively small sample size, suggests Type II error as a possible explanation for the lack of significant findings related to these interactions.

Intuitively it seems that income stability would be more crucial in reducing stress when income is low. Thus it was expected that for mothers with low income, having a stable income would greatly reduce stress, and that for mothers with high income, stability wouldn't make much difference on their stress level. However, that was not the case. Income stability had little effect on mothers' reported stress levels no matter what their income level was. Most mothers in this sample, however, had fairly stable incomes. It would be interesting to examine the relationship between these variables in a larger sample with a wider range of income and more variance in stability.

Studies by Garbarino and his associates (1980, 1992) have found that abuse and neglect rates are higher in those low income neighborhoods that are viewed more negatively by residents, indicating that parents in these neighborhoods experience more severe stress than residents of positively viewed low income neighborhoods. In the current study, mothers' views of their neighborhoods had little association with their stress levels no matter what their level of income. But it must be remembered that most mothers viewed their neighborhood as having few problems and as being fairly supportive of parenting. A sample of mothers with more diverse views of their neighborhoods might produce different results.

It was expected that income would moderate the effect of internal resources on stress. Those with high incomes who were deficient in internal resources might be able to compensate through their access to other resources (e.g. high quality child care, nannies, etc.). However, the results suggest that a lack of confidence and/or a poor

relationship with one's child makes parenting less enjoyable, and thus more stressful, no matter how much money one has. Thus, consistent with the finding of unique effects of the different kinds of resources, the effects of internal resources and income are simply additive rather than interactive. This would also indicate that the lack of sufficient income makes parenting more stressful no matter how well equipped one is with internal resources.

Interaction between social support and income. While the test for interaction between social support and income was not significant, it was close enough to be suggestive, and to arouse curiosity about what the nature of an interaction between the two might be. A power analysis, with power set at .8, determined that with a sample of 130, the interaction would have been significant at .05. With regard to income, the sample seemed fairly representative of the population targeted for recruitment. Statistics for the schools from which the sample was recruited showed that 90.9% of those enrolled qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. In the sample, 89.5% reported that they qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. Considering the results of the power analysis, and with evidence of representativeness in this aspect, which improves the validity of inferences drawn from the results, it was thus decided to graph and interpret the results of this analysis.

The usual protocol for examining the nature of an interaction between two continuous variables is to compute nine different equations using all combinations of the values of each variable at one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. Following this format, regression lines can

then be plotted showing the effect of social support on stress for those with low incomes, medium incomes, and high incomes. Because of the small sample size, the distribution of cases was checked by a crosstab showing the number of participants falling within the boundaries of each combination of values used for the two variables (e.g., n for those with low incomes (i.e., one standard deviation or more below the mean) and low support, n for those with low income and medium support, etc.). The

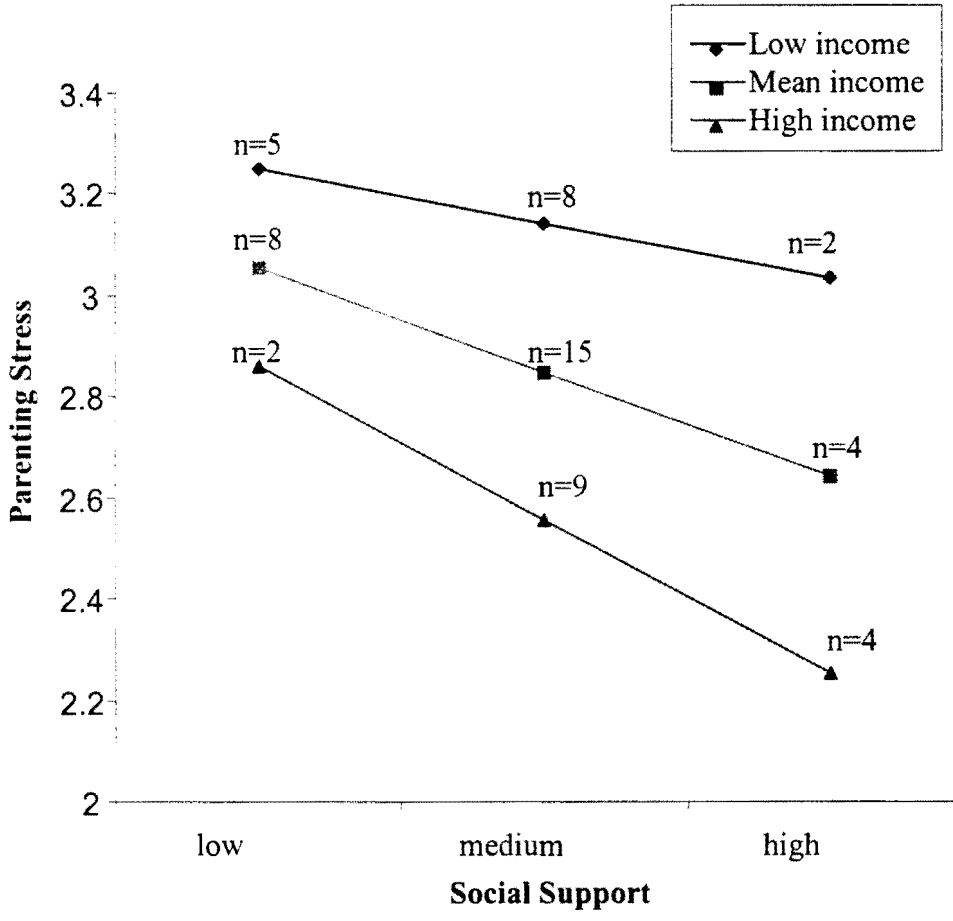

Figure 5. Interaction of Social Support and Income in Predicting Parenting Stress

n's in some of the cells of the crosstab were extremely small (n = 1 or 2). To try to remedy this, crosstabs were run using .75 standard deviations above and below the mean for each of the variables. The regression equations were computed using these values and the results were plotted.

The nature of the interaction and the n associated with each point are represented in Figure 5. As can be seen, some of the n's are still very small, rendering the results unstable. It is, however, notable that the smallest n's are associated with the cells for low income and high support, and high income and low support. This is consistent with past research showing the association of economic impoverishment and social impoverishment (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1995). One underlying mechanism for this association may be revealed by the fact that chronic stress leads to the erosion of individuals' support resources (Barrerra, 1986).

The main effect of income is evident in the placement of the lines representing low, medium, and high income. Those with high income report less stress than those with medium income who report less stress than those with low income. At the same time, it also appears that, for mothers with high family incomes, the difference in stress between those who feel they have low support and those who feel they have high support is about three times greater than it is between low income mothers reporting low support and high support. It is also notable that even low income mothers with the highest levels of social support did not report levels of stress below the mean (3.03) for this sample.

An interaction of this nature would have wide implications for the family support movement. Family support programs and centers abound in economically impoverished communities. The value of such programs is based on direct-effect and buffering models of the relationship between social support and stress (Antonucci & Depner, 1982). While some programs include services to try to improve parents' self-sufficiency, in an impoverished community they can only experience very limited success in doing so. And, suggested in such an interaction between income and social support, is that as long as families continue to experience the stress of poverty, the beneficial effects of social support will likewise be limited.

Relationship of marital status and employment status with parenting stress and resources. An unpredicted, but intuitively interesting finding is the inverse association of mothers' full-time employment with stress. Past research on the relationship between mothers' employment status and psychological distress has shown that unemployed mothers tend to be more depressed, and mothers who want to be employed but aren't have lower quality relationships with their children (Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1995). This study does not examine the congruence between a mother's employment status and her desires related to employment. The results only indicate that being employed full-time is more stressful to parenting and is associated with perception of less support from one's social network than being unemployed or employed part-time.

On the other hand, although the relationships of part-time employment with stress or with social support are not significant, their direction is reversed from that of

full-time employment with stress and social support. That is, the part-time employed mothers experience less stress and perceive more social support than the unemployed or the full-time employed mothers. One reason for this might be that those who work part-time benefit from the contact with others that goes along with working outside of the home, and also from the sense of accomplishment associated with working, which buffers them from the stresses of parenting. At the same time, they are not overburdened with the responsibilities of a full-time job added to the responsibilities of parenting, which may decrease a mother's threshold for experiencing stress associated with parenting. In other words, the results may indicate that what is needed is a balance between mothers' roles as workers and as caregivers.

It was suspected that the effect of employment status on parenting stress might depend on the level of income. Perhaps working full time was stressful only if one's income remained low despite the fact that one was working full time. Perhaps, if working full time was associated with a high income, it would not be so stressful because one could afford high quality day care and some luxury items or recreational activities. This possible interaction was tested through a hierarchical regression, with the interaction variables entered on the second step. Results did not support this explanation ($\underline{R}^2\Delta = .029$, $\underline{F}\Delta = 1.12$, $\underline{p} = .335$). Working full time seemed to be stressful no matter what one's level of income. Once again, however, the restricted range of income in this sample must be considered as an explanation for the lack of a significant result.

It was also conjectured that perhaps working full time was only stressful for single mothers, and that married mothers, who might have more assistance from a partner in child care responsibilities would not find working full time so stressful. Again, this interaction was explored through hierarchical regression with the interaction variables entered on the second step. Again the results were not significant ($R^2\Delta = .063$, $F\Delta = 2.27$, $p = .113$) and this explanation was ruled out for this sample.

As was expected, mothers who were married experienced less parenting stress than those who were single, probably because it is more likely that they had someone living with them to share some of the responsibilities of parenting. Single mothers were no more likely to work full-time ($r = -.06$) or part-time ($r = .14$) than mothers who were married. Neither did single mothers perceive themselves as having any less social support ($r = .21$) than married mothers. This is consistent with research showing that women, due to their socialization, tend to be emotionally supportive and nurturing and to be adept at securing emotional support from outside of the marital relationship, primarily from other women (Basow, 1992).

The value of these additional exploratory analyses is questionable, given the low power associated with the small sample and considering that they inflate the already considerable experimentwise error rate. They are presented as logical post hoc analyses based on the results of the planned analyses, but the results must be regarded as tentative and they may be more appropriately pursued in a future study with a larger sample with a greater range of income and resources.

Implications for Future Studies

Studying relationships between variables in a social context presents special challenges because the network of such relationships is invariably complex. The first challenge in examining one small part of a social system is to assess which variables, or groups of variables, are relatively weakly linked with the rest of the system and may thus be appropriately isolated for analysis. Cohen and Cohen (1983) note that too often, in soft areas of research, like the behavioral sciences, too many variables are included in a study because researchers are afraid of missing something. They remind us that "having more variables when fewer are possible increases the risk of both finding things that are not so and failing to find things that are. These are serious costs, indeed." (p.170)

While such advice is well to heed, there is no getting around the complexity of the multiple systems in which parenting is embedded and, thus, the relatively large number of interrelated factors within those systems that may contribute to the stress associated with that role. Fortunately, enough research has been done in this area to indicate which variables are important to consider. The results of the current study clearly indicate that all three kinds of resources, internal, external, and support are important and, therefore, should be included in future studies. Longitudinal designs and multivariate models, which accommodate and allow examination of the web of relationships between these variables, must be employed and tested to adequately study the dynamics of the relationships between resources and parenting stress.

The validity of inferences drawn from such studies must be supported by an adequate sample size. The factor analysis that could be done with an adequate sample size could also insure distinction between constructs and perhaps even reduce the number of factors involved through aggregation. In addition, adequate sample size can increase power and provide results that are more stable and reliable, even in the face of the multiple hypotheses and increased experimentwise error rate that tend to accompany the inclusion of numerous variables.

It is important that future studies of this nature also strive for a sample that is representative of the population in order to improve validity and generalizability of inferences. Such a sample would have a wide range of income and of the other resources. The self-selection bias that characterized the sample in this study can be reduced in future studies through the use of a stronger incentive, such as a stipend paid to each and every participant. Recruitment through direct and individual contact with parents would also be helpful, as well as the use of an interview format so that participants can be assisted in understanding the questions. These techniques would help to counteract self-selection due to a potential subject's level of personal initiative, education, intelligence, access to resources, and stress. With greater representativeness of the population, assumptions of normality are also more likely to be met.

As previously discussed, understanding of the relationship between resources and parenting stress could be enhanced through triangulation of self-report measures of the perception of availability of resources with more objective measures of their

availability, particularly external resources like social support and neighborhood characteristics. Also, collecting information about child characteristics, and controlling for their effects on parenting stress, would eliminate the possibility of their confounding the effect of resources. Ideally, it would be helpful for such information to be gathered through parent reports as well as more objective measures (e.g., clinical assessments if they exist, teacher or other third party reports, etc.). This would help to clarify whether parents' perceptions of their children as difficult stem from a lack of internal resources (such as a lack of ability to understand children's needs or discomfort with the parenting role), or whether difficult child characteristics might be eroding a parents' confidence in their parenting ability or the pleasurable aspects of the parent-child relationship.

The effect of socioeconomic status was not examined in the current study but might be usefully included in future studies. While low income is likely to be stressful for parents no matter what their level of education or the status of their occupation, it is also possible that these elements of social class might moderate the effects of income on stress. Examination of social class might also reveal whether the stressful effect of working full time depends on occupation.

A more refined measure of financial and/or material resources, along with a measure of tangible social support related to material resources, could also be enlightening. Child support, alimony, welfare, and food stamps were reported as a part of total family income in this study, but they might be more appropriately separated from wages and investment earnings and considered as a form of formal

tangible social support. Separating material resources in this way would allow assessment of possible differences or similarities in their effect on stress. Parents' assessments of how close they live to the edge of experiencing a financial crisis would also be enlightening with regard to the amount of stress they experience. For instance, would they be in a crisis if their car broke down, or their child got sick, or do they have a buffer for such events? A measure of the availability of formal (e.g., access to health care) and informal (e.g., a friend to lend money or repair a car) tangible support related to such crises would provide important information about, and, perhaps, be shown to moderate the relationship between, material resources and stress.

Finally, studies with a qualitative component would serve well to enrich the understanding of quantitative findings. Open-ended questions, such as asking mothers to explain, in their own words, what they find makes parenting most stressful, and what would be most helpful in reducing that stress, may help to determine what are the most important variables to include in a study. What would be most relevant to the context of their daily lives? Asking more specific questions could also evoke information that might enlighten the relationship between variables, such as that between employment status and support and stress.

The use of longitudinal, multivariate designs, the recruitment of a large, representative sample, and the inclusion of a qualitative component all increase complexity and cost in time and money of a study, but the improvement in validity and reliability and depth of understanding are well worth it. Such efforts are essential in this area of applied research if we are to effectively inform and convince policy

makers, program developers, and service providers as to how to best support overburdened parents in this society.

Most importantly, however, future studies should be designed so that the effects of poverty are not underestimated, but, rather, are thoroughly examined in relationship to other resources. Past studies have not adequately tested the likelihood that financial resources play a central role in determining quality of parenting or parenting stress, perhaps even moderating the effects of other resources. Researchers often start with a low income sample, then examine the effects of other resources on levels of stress or quality of parenting within that sample. Those who conduct such studies, then report results with something else, such as personal variables, being a central factor in determining quality of parenting (Pianta, et al., 1989), may be underestimating the importance of money.

The effect of income on stress in this study was substantial and robust, over and above the effects of other resources. Results also suggest that income moderates the effect of social support on stress, such that providing a family with adequate financial resources would magnify the benefits of social support. Conducting further research in which the pervasive effects of poverty are revealed, would reinforce and elucidate the need for more programs that address the economic needs of a community, as well as strive to strengthen its formal and informal social networks.

The effect of multiple deficiencies in resources is cumulative and devastating. Parents who are severely stressed and lacking in resources are at high risk of being abusive. Many programs and policies provide services that attempt to improve social

support and personal resources. Some also provide assistance with material resources for individual families, but virtually none address issues of community economic impoverishment which trap so many families in poverty. The reticence of legislators, program developers, and policy makers to address the central importance of reducing poverty in efforts to support families and prevent child abuse is a reflection of the values of the political and cultural system in which we are all embedded. Researchers operate within this system as well. Yet a few are recognizing and acknowledging the devastating effects of economic impoverishment on individuals and communities, and are voicing the need for programs that target community level needs (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1992; Hay & Jones, 1994), or aim for social reform:

> "Although existing research does seem to demonstrate the possibility of altering families and their social relations without fundamental community change, we should not too readily discard the hypothesis that sustained widespread prevention will come only as a feature of efforts more in keeping with 'total reform prevention,' such as reducing poverty" (Garbarino, 1981, p. 109).

References

Abidin, R. R. (1990). Introduction to the special issue: The stresses of parenting. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 19(4), 298-301.

Abidin, R. R. (1995). Parenting Stress Index: Professional Manual (3rd ed.). Odessa, Fl: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

Adamakos, H., Ryan, K., Ullman, D. G., Pascoe, J., Diaz, R., & Chessare, J. (1986). Maternal social support as a predictor of mother-child stress and stimulation. Child Abuse and Neglect, 10, 463-470.

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Ammerman, R. T. (1990). Etiological models of child maltreatment. Behavior Modification, 14(3), 230-254.

Anastopoulos, A. D., Shelton, T. L., DuPaul, G. J., & Guevremont, D. C. (1993). Parent training for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder: Its impact on parent functioning. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 21(5), 581-596.

Antonucci, T. C., & Depner, C. E. (1982). Social support and informal helping relationships. In T. A. Wills (Ed.), Basic processes in helping relationships (pp. 233-254). New York: Academic Press.

Barrera, Jr., M. (1986). Distinctions between social support concepts, measures, and models. American Journal of Community Psychology, 14(4), 413-445.

Basow, S. A. (1992). Consequences for friendships and love relationships. In Gender stereotypes and roles (pp. 203-229). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Beck, S. J., Young, G. H., & Tarnowski, K. J. (1990). Maternal characteristics and perceptions of pervasive and situational hyperactives and normal

controls. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 29(4), 558-565.

Belle, D. (Ed.). (1982). Lives in stress: Women and depression. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Belsky, J. (1980). Child maltreatment: An ecological integration. American Psychologist, 35(4), 320-335.

Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. Child Development, 55, 83-96.

Belsky, J. (1993). Etiology of child maltreatment: A developmental-ecological analysis. Psychological Bulletin, 114(3), 413-434.

Belsky, J,. & Vondra, J. (1989). Lessons from child abuse: The determinants of parenting. In D. Cicchetti and V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect, (pp. 153-202). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Beresford, B. A. (1994). Resources and strategies: How parents cope with the care of a disabled child. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 35(1), 171-209.

Birch, T. (1982). Child abuse and unemployment. Chicago: National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss: Vol. I. Attachment. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and loss: Vol. III. Loss. New York: Basic Books.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. American Psychologist, July, 1977, 513-531.

Brown, G. W., Bhrolchain, M. N., & Harris, T. (1975). Social class and psychiatric disturbance among women in an urban population. Sociology, 9, 225-254.

Bugental, D. B. (1987, April). Caregiver attributions as moderators of child effects. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore.

Bugental, D. B., & Shennum, W. A. (1984). "Difficult" children as elicitors and targets of adult communication patterns: An attribution-behavioral transactional analysis. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 49 (1, Serial No. 295).

Carveth, W., & Gottlieb, B. (1979). The measurement of social support and its relation to stress. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 11, 179-187.

Chan, Y. C. (1994). Parenting stress and social support of mothers who physically abuse their children in Hong Kong. Child Abuse and Neglect, 18(3), 261-269.

Cicchetti, D. (1989). How research on child maltreatment has informed the study of child development: Perspectives from developmental psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti & V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 377-431). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Colletta, N. D. (1983). Stressful lives: The situation of divorced mothers and their children. Journal of Divorce, 6(3), 19-31.

Collins, A., & Pancoast, D. (1976). Natural helping networks. Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers.

Crittenden, P. M. (1985). Social networks, quality of child-rearing, and child development. Child Development, 56, 1299-1313.

Crittenden, P. M. (1988). Distorted patterns of relationships in maltreating families: The role of internal representational models. Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 6, 183-199,

Crittenden, P. M., & Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Child maltreatment and attachment theory. In D. Cicchetti & V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 432-463). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Culp, R. E., Culp, A. M., Soulis, J., & Letts, D. (1989). Self-esteem and depression in abusive, neglecting, and nonmaltreating mothers. Infant Mental Health Journal, 10(4), 243-251.

Cutrona, C. E. (1984). Social support and stress in the transition to parenthood. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 93, 378-390.

Cutrona, C. E., & Russell, D. W. (1987). The provisions of social relationships and adaptation to stress. In W. H. Jones & D. Perlman (Eds.), Advances in personal relationships, (Vol. 1, pp. 37-68). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Deccio, G., Horner, W. C., & Wilson, D. (1994). High-risk neighborhoods and high-risk families: Replication research related to the human ecology of child maltreatment. Journal of Social Service Research, 18(3/4), 123-137.

Dill, D., & Feld, E. (1982). The challenge of coping. In Deborah Belle (Ed.), Lives in stress: Women and depression (pp. 179-196). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Dore, M. M. (1993). Family Preservation and poor families: When "Homebuilding" is not enough. Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, November, 1993, 545-556.

Dumas, J. E., Gibson, J. A., & Albin, J. B. (1989). Behavioral correlates of maternal depressive symptomatology in conduct disorder children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57, 515-521.

Feshbach, N. D. (1989). The construct of empathy and the phenomenon of physical maltreatment of children. In D. Cicchetti and V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 349-376). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fuller, R., & Stevenson, O. (1983). Policies, programs and disadvantage: A review of the literature. London: Heinemann.

Furstenburg, F. F., Cook, T., Eccles, J., Elder, G. H., & Sameroff, A. A. (1991). Philadelphia Management Study. Unpublished manuscript.

Garbarino, J. (1992). The meaning of poverty in the world of children. American Behavioral Scientist, 35(3), 220-237.

Garbarino, J. (1981). An ecological approach to child maltreatment. In L. H. Pelton (Ed.), The social context of child abuse and neglect (pp. 228-267). New York: Human Services Press.

Garbarino, J. (1987). Family support and the prevention of child maltreatment. In S. L. Kagan, D. R. Powell, B. Weissbourd, & E. F. Zigler (Eds.), America's family support programs: Perspectives and prospects (pp. 99-114). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Garbarino, J., & Gilliam, G. (1980). Understanding abusive families. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath & Co.

Garbarino, J, & Kostelny, K. (1992). Child maltreatment as a community problem. Child Abuse and Neglect, 16, 455-464.

Garbarino, J., & Sherman, D. (1980). High-risk neighborhoods and high-risk families: The human ecology of child maltreatment. Child Development, 51, 188-198.

George, C., & Solomon, J. (1989). Internal working models of caregiving and security of attachment at age six. Infant Mental Health Journal, 10(3), 222-237.

Gibaud-Wallston, J., & Wandersman, L. P. (1978, August). Development and utility of the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto.

Gil, D. (1970). Violence against children: Physical child abuse in the United States. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goldberg, W. A., Greenberger, E., Hamill, S., & O'Neill, R. (1992). Role demands in the lives of employed single mothers with preschoolers. Journal of Family Issues, 13(3), 312-333.

Gottfried, A. E., Gottfried, A. W., & Bathurst, K. (1995). Maternal and dual-earner employment status and parenting. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), Handbook of parenting: Vol. 2. Biology and ecology of parenting (pp. 139-160). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gray, J. D., Cutler, C. A., Dean, J. G., & Kempe, C. H. (1977). Prediction and prevention of child abuse and neglect. Child Abuse and Neglect, 1, 45-58.

Hall, L. S., Gurley, D. N., Sach, B., & Kryscio, R. J. (1991). Psychosocial predictors of maternal depressive symptoms, parenting attitudes, and child behavior in single-parent families. Nursing Research, 40(4), 214-220.

Hay, T., & Jones, L. (1994). Societal interventions to prevent child abuse and neglect. Child Welfare, Vol LXXIII(no. 5), 379-403.

Hillson, J. M., & Kuiper, N. A. (1994). A stress and coping model of child maltreatment. Clinical Psychology Review, 14(4), 261-285.

Jarvis, P. A., & Creasey, G. L. (1991). Parental stress, coping, and attachment in families with an 18-month-old infant. Infant Behavior and Development, 14, 383-395.

Johnston, C., & Mash, E. J. (1989). A measure of parenting satisfaction and efficacy. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 18(2), 167-175.

Kaufman, J., & Zigler, E. (1989). The intergenerational transmission of child abuse. In D. Cicchetti & V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 129-152). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kazak, A. E., Reber, M., & Carter, A. (1988). Structural and qualitative aspects of social networks in families with young chronically ill children. Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 13, 171-182.

Knussen, C., & Sloper, P. (1992). Stress in families of children with disability: A review of risk and resistance factors. Journal of Mental Health, 1, 241-256.

Lahey, J. J., Conger, R. D., Atkeson, B. M., & Trieber, F. A. (1984). Parenting behavior and emotional status of physically abusive mothers. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 52(6), 1062-1071.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Stress, appraisal and coping. New York: Springer.

Lewis, M, & Wilson, C. D. (1972). Infant development in lower-class American families. Human Development, 15, 112-127.

Longfellow, C., Zelkowitz, P., & Saunders, E. (1982). The quality of mother-child relationships. In Deborah Belle (Ed.), Lives in stress: Women and depression (pp. 163-176). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Mash, E. J., & Johnston, C. (1983). Parental perceptions of child behavior problems, parenting self-esteem, and mothers' reported stress in younger and older hyperactive and normal children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51(1), 86-99.

Mash, E. J., Johnston, C., & Kovitz, K. (1983). A comparison of the mother-child interactions of physically abused and non-abused children during play and task situations. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 12(3), 337-346.

McBride, B. A. (1991). Parental support programs and paternal stress: An exploratory study. Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6, 137-149.

Milner, J. S., & Chilamkurti, C. (1991). Physical child abuse perpetrator characteristics: A review of the literature. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 6(3), 345-366.

Moos, R. H., & Mitchell, R. E. (1982). Social network resources and adaptation: A conceptual framework. In T. A. Wills (Ed.), Basic processes in helping relationships (pp. 213-232). New York: Academic Press.

Moran, G., & Whitman, T. (1985). The multiple effects of a play-oriented parent-training program for mothers of developmentally delayed children. Analysis and Intervention in Developmental Disabilities, 5, 73-96.

Newberger, C. M., & Cook, S. J. (1983). Parental awareness and child abuse: A cognitive-developmental analysis of urban and rural samples. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 53(3), 512-524.

Parton, N. (1985). The politics of child abuse. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Pascoe, J. M., Loda, F. A., Jeffries, V., & Earp, J. A. (1981). The association between mothers' social support and provision of stimulation to their children. Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, 2(1), 15-19.

Passino, A. W., Whitman, T. L., Borkowski, J. G., Schellenbach, C. J., Maxwell, S. E., Keogh, D., & Rellinger, E. (1993). Personal adjustment during pregnancy and adolescent parenting. Adolescence, 28(109), 97-122.

Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19, 2-21.

Pelton, L. H. (1978). Child abuse and neglect: The myth of classlessness. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 48(4), 608-617.

Pelton, L. H. (1989). For reasons of poverty: A critical analysis of the public Child Welfare System in the United States. New York: Praeger.

Pharis, M. E., & Levin, V. S. (1991). "A person to talk to who really cared": High-risk mothers' evaluations of services in an intensive intervention research program. Child Welfare, Vol. LXX(no. 3), 307-320.

Phipps, S., & Drotar, D. (1990). Determinants of parenting stress in home apnea monitoring. Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 15(3), 385-400.

Pianta, R., Egeland, B., & Erickson, M. F. (1989). The antecedents of maltreatment: Results of the Mother-Child Interaction Research Project. In D. Cicchetti, & V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the

causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 203-253). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pisterman, S., Firestone, P., McGrath, P., Goodman, J. T., Webster, I., Mallory, R., & Goffin, B. (1992). The effects of parent training on parenting stress and sense of competence. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 24(1), 41-58.

Quinton, D., & Rutter, M. (1984). Parents with children in care - II: Intergenerational continuities. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 25(2), 231-250.

Reese, M. F. (1982). Growing up: The impact of loss and change. In Deborah Belle (Ed.), Lives in stress: Women and depression (pp. 65-82). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Richardson, R. A., Barbour, N. E., & Bubenzer, D. L. (1995). Peer relationships as a source of support for adolescent mothers. Journal of Adolescent Research, 19(2), 231-250.

Rutter, M. (1989). Intergenerational continuities and discontinuities in serious parenting difficulties. In D. Cicchetti & V. Carlson (Eds.), Child maltreatment: Theory and research on the causes and consequences of child abuse and neglect (pp. 317-348). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sarason, B. R., Shearin, E. N., Pierce, G. R., & Sarason, I. G. (1987). Interrelations of social support measures: Theoretical and practical implications. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52(4), 813-832.

Sigelman, C. K., & Shaffer, D. R. (1995). Life-span human development. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole.

Skinner, E. A. (1990). Item by Construct List: Parent Questionnaire - Parent Report of Social Context.

Skinner, E. A., & Wellborn, J. G. (1994). Coping during childhood and adolescence: A motivational perspective. In D. Featherman, R. Lerner, & M. Perlmutter (Eds.), Life-span development and behavior. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stack, C. (1974). All our kin: Strategies for survival in a black community. New York: Harper & Row.

Steele, B. (1980). Psychodynamic factors in child abuse. In C. H. Kempe & R. E. Helfer (Eds.), The battered child. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Steinberg, L. D., Catalano, R., & Dooley, D. (1981). Economic antecedents of child abuse. Child Development, 52, 975-985.

Stern, D. (1985). The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology. New York: Basic Books.

Tietjen, A. M. (1980). Integrating formal and informal support systems: The Swedish experience. In J. Garbarino and H. S. Stocking (Eds.), Protecting children from abuse and neglect: Developing and maintaining effective support systems for families (pp. 15-36). San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.

Webster-Stratton, C., & Hammond, M. (1988). Maternal depression and its relationship to life stress, perceptions of child behavior problems, parenting behaviors, and child conduct problems. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 16(3), 299-315.

Weinraub, M., & Wolf, B. M. (1983). Effects of stress and social supports on mother-child interactions in single- and two-parent households, Child Development, 54, 1297-1311.

Weissman, M. M., and Paykel, E. S. (1974). The depressed woman: A study of social relationships. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Whipple, E. E., & Webster-Stratton, C. (1991). The role of parental stress in physically abusive families. Child Abuse and Neglect, 15, 279-291.

Zelkowitz, P. (1982). Parenting philosophies and practices. In Deborah Belle (Ed.), Lives in stress: Women and depression (pp. 154-162). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Zuravin, S. J. (1989). The ecology of child abuse and neglect: Review of the literature and presentation of data. Violence and Victims, 4(2), 101-120.

Appendix A

Table of Measures

Parental Stress Scale

Parenting Sense of Competence Scale

Parenting Stress Index, Attachment subscale

Social Provisions Scale

Neighborhood Problems Scale

Neighborhood Parenting Support Scale

Appendix A

Table of Measures with Alphas from Current Study

CONSTRUCT	SCALE NAME	REFERENCE	# OF ITEMS	ALPHA
Parenting Stress	Parental Stress Scale	Pearlin & Schooler, 1978	7	.90
Parenting Sense of Competence	PSOC, Efficacy Subscale	Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978	7	.87
Internal Working Model of Caregiving	PSI, Attachment Subscale	Abidin, 1995	7	.65
	Attunement/ Relatedness	Skinner, 1990	5	.81
Perceived Social Support	Social Provision Scale, 5 of 6 subscales:	Russell & Cutrona, 1984		.92 overall
	Reliable Alliance		4	.87
	Recognition of Worth		4	.70
	Attachment		4	.77
	Guidance		4	.78
	Social Integration		4	.83
Neighborhood Support	Neighborhood Problems Scale	Furstenburg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1991	23	.93
	Neighborhood Parenting Support	Deccio, Horner, & Wilson, 1994	10 total 4 used	.72

Appendix A

PARENTAL STRESS SCALE

Pearlin, L. I. & Schooler, C. (1978) The structure of coping. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 19, pp 2-21.

Original Scale - Choose from 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely) for each of the following:
Revised to 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely)

When you think of your experiences as a parent:

how frustrated do you feel?

how tense do you feel?

how worried do you feel?

how bothered or upset do you feel?

how unhappy do you feel?

how emotionally worn out do you feel?

how unsure of yourself do you feel?

Added Items:

how overwhelmed do you feel?

how stressed do you feel?

Appendix A

Parenting Sense of Competence Scale
(PSOC, Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersman, 1978)

Original scale: 6 point scale ranging from strongly disagree (6) to strongly agree (1). Original scale retained for this study.

Skill/Knowledge/Efficacy

The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired.

I would make a fine model for a new mother/father to follow in order to learn what she/he would need to know in order to be a good parent.

Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved.

I meet my own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child.

If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one.

Considering how long I've been a mother/father, I feel thoroughly familiar with this role.

I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother/father to my child.

Added items:
I wish I were more effective at parenting (Skinner, 1990)
I wish I were more competent at parenting (Skinner, 1990)

DELETED FROM THIS STUDY:
Value/Comfort/Satisfaction
Even though being a parent could be rewarding, I am frustrated now while my child is at his/her present age.
I go to bed the same way I wake up in the morning, feeling I have not accomplished a whole lot.

Appendix A

I do not know why it is, but sometimes when I'm supposed to be in control, I feel more like the one being manipulated.
My mother/father was better prepared to be a good mother/father than I am.
A difficult problem in being a parent is not knowing whether you're doing a good job or a bad one.
Sometimes I feel like I'm not getting anything done.
My talents and interests are in other areas, not in being a parent.
If being a mother/father of a child were only more interesting, I would be motivated to do a better job as a parent.
Being a parent makes me tense and anxious.
Being a good mother/father is a reward in itself.

Appendix A

ATTACHMENT SUBSCALE, PARENTING STRESS INDEX
(Abidin, 1995)

Original Scale: Strongly Agree Agree Not sure Disagree Strongly disagree
Revised Scale: (1)Strongly Agree, (2)Agree, (3)Somewhat agree, (4)Somewhat disagree, (5)Disagree, (6)Strongly disagree

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

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

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

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

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

The number of children I have now is too many.

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

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

Added items:

I know a lot about what goes on for my child (Attunement, Skinner, 1990)
I really know how my child feels about things (Attunement, Skinner, 1990)
I don't understand my child very well (Attunement, Skinner, 1990)
I wish I had a better relationship with my children. (Psychological need of relatedness, Skinner, 1990)
I wish I was closer to my children. (Psychological need of relatedness, Skinner, 1990)

Appendix A

SOCIAL PROVISIONS SCALE, adapted to parenting
(Russell & Cutrona, 1986)

Original Scale: Strongly agree(4) Agree(3) Disagree(2) Strongly Disagree(1)
Revised Scale: Strongly agree(1), Agree(2), Somewhat Agree(3), Somewhat Disagree(4), Disagree(5), Strongly Disagree(6)

Reliable Alliance	
When it comes to parenting:	There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.
	If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance.
	There is no one I can depend on for aid if I really need it.
	There are people I can count on in an emergency.
	Added item: *[I don't know anyone who would watch my child if I needed a break]*
Attachment (someone who cares), Confidant	I feel that I do not have any close personal relationships with other people.
(Keep general)	I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.
	I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person.
	I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person.
	Added items:
	[I feel like no one cares how I am doing.] *[I'm afraid to trust others.]*

Appendix A

Guidance When it comes to parenting:	There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress.
	There is someone I could talk to about important decisions.
	There is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I were having problems.
	There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with.
Reassurance of Worth	
	Other people do not view me as a competent parent.
(wording changed to be specific to parenting)	I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities in parenting.
	I have relationships where my competence and skill as a parent are recognized.
	There are people who admire my talents and abilities as a parent.
Social Integration, Companionship	There are people in my life who enjoy the same social activities I do.
(Keep general)	There is no one who shares my interests and concerns.
	There is no one who likes to do the things I do.
	I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.

Appendix A

Neighborhood Problems
(Furstenburg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1991)

Original Scale: Not a problem Somewhat of a problem A big problem
Revised Scale: Not a problem(1), Small Problem(2), Medium Problem(3), Big Problem(4)

In your neighborhood, how much of a problem is.....

High unemployment
Different racial or cultural groups which do not get along with each other
Vandalism
Little respect for laws and authority
Prostitution
Abandoned houses
Sexual assaults or rapes
Illegal gambling
Run down and poorly kept buildings and yards
AIDS
Assaults and muggings
Delinquent gangs or drug gangs
Transients, street people
Drug use or drug dealing
City officials ignoring problems
Unsupervised children
Teenage mothers
Teenagers hanging out, making a nuisance of themselves
Transportation not available
Medical services too far away
Police not caring about your problems
Poor schools
Teachers that don't care about kids

Appendix A

Neighborhood Parenting Support
(Deccio, Horner & Wilson, 1994)

Scale: Strongly agree(1) Agree(2) Disagree(3) Strongly disagree(4)

*Items used

*This neighborhood is a good place to bring up a child.

*I feel there should be more places for children to play in this neighborhood.

*My child has age mates that play together in this neighborhood.

*Our house (apartment) is <u>not</u> a good place for a family to live in.

It is easy to find the right kind of person in this neighborhood to take care of my child when I'm not home.

I would worry about my child walking home from school without adult supervision in this neighborhood.

My neighbors are warm and friendly to me and my child(ren) when we run into each other.

I would certainly not turn to my neighbors for advice about child rearing.

*There is no one in this neighborhood that causes problems for my family.

*Taking everything into account, I would have to say that this neighborhood is not a very good place for parents and children to live.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

PARENTING STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MOTHERS

Thank you for your interest and willingness to participate in this study. To be eligible to participate you must have at least one child aged 6 or under. Do not write your name on the questionnaire or return envelope. All responses will be kept totally anonymous. Please answer all the questions as accurately and truthfully as possible and try to answer them in the order presented.

What is your age? _____

Your highest level of education is:

_____completed elementary school
_____completed middle school
_____completed high school
_____completed some college
_____completed 2 year college
_____completed 4 year college
_____completed Master's degree
_____completed a higher degree (Ph.D, Ed.D., etc.)

Are you currently employed? Full time_____ Part time_____ Not currently employed_____

Your Occupation:_____

Marital status: Single____ Married____ Divorced/Separated____ Living with/not married_____.

.....

Answer the following if it applies:

Spouse/Partner's Age:_____

Spouse/Partner's highest level of education:

_____completed elementary school
_____completed middle school
_____completed high school
_____completed some college
_____completed 2 year college
_____completed 4 year college
_____completed Master's degree
_____completed a higher degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)

Is your spouse/partner currently employed? Full time_____ Part time_____ Not employed_____.

Spouse/Partner's Occupation:_____

.....

Please provide the following information about all the children you are parenting who live with you (including those over the age of 6 yrs):

	Sex	Age		Sex	Age
1.	_____	_____	5.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	6.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	7.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	8.	_____	_____

Is there any other adult living in the household who helps you with parenting (other than a spouse/partner)?

Yes_____ No_____.

My family's racial background(s) is/are: (check all that apply)

____White ____African-American ____Hispanic ____Asian ____Native American ____Other

Is your child on the free or reduced lunch program? No_____ Free program_____ Reduced program_____

Sources of your family's income (Check all that apply)

_____Wages
_____Child Support
_____Alimony
_____Welfare
_____Food Stamps
_____Investments
_____Inheritance
_____Other

Keeping in mind all the sources of your family's income, what was your total family income last month?

$_____

On the following scale circle the number that you feel represents how predictable and stable your family income has been in the last 6 months.

Not at all predictable or stable					Very predictable and stable
1	2	3	4	5	6

How many people does your family income support?_____

The following scale is designed to assess the amount of stress you feel in parenting. For each item circle the answer that best describes how strongly you experience the feeling listed.

When you think of your experience as a parent:	Not at all	A little bit	A medium amount	Quite a bit	Extremely
1. How frustrated do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. How tense do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. How worried do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. How bothered or upset do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. How unhappy do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. How emotionally worn out do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. How unsure of yourself do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
8. How overwhelmed do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5
9. How stressed do you feel?.....	1	2	3	4	5

In the following sections please circle the answer that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

SECTION A **When it comes to parenting:**	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. - there are people I can depend on for help if I really need it	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. - if something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. - there is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. - there is someone I could talk to about important decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. - I don't know anyone who would watch my child if I needed a break	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. - there is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I were having a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. - there is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. - there is no one I could depend on for aid if I really need it	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. - there are people I can count on in an emergency	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION B

1. I feel that I do not have any close personal relationships with other people	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel a strong emotional bond with at least one other person	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I feel like no one cares how I am doing	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I am afraid to trust others	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I am loved and valued by another person for who I am	1	2	3	4	5	6

In the following sections please circle the answer that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

SECTION C	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Other people do not view me as a competent parent	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities in parenting	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I have relationships where my competence and skill as a parent are recognized	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. There are people who admire my talents and abilities as a parent	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION D						
1. There are people in my life who enjoy the same social activities I do	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. There is no one who shares my interests and concerns	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. There is no one who likes to do the things I do	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I often feel lonely	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION E						
1. The problems of taking care of a child are easy to solve once you know how your actions affect your child, an understanding I have acquired	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I would make a fine model for a new mother to follow in order to learn what she would need to know in order to be a good parent	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Being a parent is manageable, and any problems are easily solved	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I meet my own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child	1	2	3	4	5	6

In the following sections please circle the answer that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

SECTION F

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. If anyone can find the answer to what is troubling my child, I am the one.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Considering how long I've been a mother, I feel thoroughly familiar with this role.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I honestly believe I have all the skills necessary to be a good mother to my child..	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I wish I were more effective at parenting...	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I wish I were more competent at parenting	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION G

1. It takes a long time for parents to develop close warm feelings for their children.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my children than I do and this bothers me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Sometimes my children do things that bother me just to be mean.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. When I was young I never felt comfortable holding or taking care of children.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The number of children I have now is too many.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

SECTION H

1. My child knows I am his or her parent and wants me more than other people.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I know a lot about what goes on for my child.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I really know how my child feels about things.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I don't understand my child very well.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I wish I had a better relationship with my children.....	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I wish I was closer to my children.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. How easy is it for you to understand what your child wants or needs? (Circle one)

1. very easy 2. easy 3. somewhat easy 4. somewhat hard 5. hard 6. very hard

This next section asks how serious you feel certain problems are in the neighborhood in which your family lives. Circle the answer which you feel best describes how much of a problem the item is in the block or street on which you live.

SECTION I In your neighborhood, how much of a problem is:	Not a Problem	Small Problem	Medium Problem	Big Problem
1. High unemployment	1	2	3	4
2. Different racial or cultural groups which do not get along with each other	1	2	3	4
3. Vandalism, buildings and personal belongings broken and torn up	1	2	3	4
4. Little respect for rules, laws, and authority	1	2	3	4
5. Prostitution	1	2	3	4
6. Abandoned houses	1	2	3	4
7. Sexual assaults or rapes	1	2	3	4
8. Burglaries and thefts	1	2	3	4
9. Illegal Gambling	1	2	3	4
10. Run down and poorly kept buildings and yards	1	2	3	4
11. Assaults and muggings	1	2	3	4
12. Delinquent gangs	1	2	3	4
13. Transients, street people	1	2	3	4
14. Drug use or drug dealing	1	2	3	4
15. Unsupervised children	1	2	3	4
16. Teenage mothers	1	2	3	4
17. City officials ignoring problems	1	2	3	4
18. Groups of teenagers hanging out in public places and making a nuisance of themselves	1	2	3	4
19. Teachers that don't care about kids	1	2	3	4
20. Transportation not available	1	2	3	4
21. Medical services too far away	1	2	3	4
22. Police not caring about our problems	1	2	3	4

On the following items, circle the answer that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement about the neighborhood in which your family lives.

SECTION J	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. This neighborhood is a good place to bring up a child	1	2	3	4
2. I feel there should be more places for children to play in this neighborhood.	1	2	3	4
3. My child has age mates that play together in this neighborhood	1	2	3	4
4. Our house (apartment) is <u>not</u> a good place for a family to live in	1	2	3	4
5. There is no one in this neighborhood that causes problems for my family	1	2	3	4
6. Taking everything into account, I would have to say that this neighborhood is not a very good place for parents and children to live	1	2	3	4

On the following items, circle the answer that best describes how often you felt or behaved that way <u>DURING THE PAST WEEK</u>.

SECTION K DURING THE PAST WEEK:	Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	Occasionally or a medium amount of time (3-4 days)	Most or all of the time (5-7days)
1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me	1	2	3	4
2. I did not feel like eating: my appetite was poor	1	2	3	4
3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends	1	2	3	4
4. I felt that I was just as good as other people	1	2	3	4
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing	1	2	3	4
6. I felt depressed	1	2	3	4
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort	1	2	3	4
8. I felt hopeful about the future	1	2	3	4
9. I thought my life had been a failure	1	2	3	4
10. I felt fearful	1	2	3	4
11. My sleep was restless	1	2	3	4

Continue to circle the answer that best describes how often you felt or behaved that way DURING THE PAST WEEK.

SECTION K (continued) DURING THE PAST WEEK:	Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)	Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)	Occasionally or a medium amount of time (3-4 days)	Most or all of the time (5-7 days)
13. I talked less than usual	1	2	3	4
14. I felt lonely	1	2	3	4
15. People were unfriendly	1	2	3	4
16. I enjoyed life	1	2	3	4
17. I had crying spells	1	2	3	4
18. I felt sad	1	2	3	4
19. I felt that people disliked me	1	2	3	4
20. I could not get "going."	1	2	3	4

YOU'RE FINISHED! RETURN COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN RETURN ENVELOPE. THANK YOU.